

TO: Mr. Charles A. Gates, Disaster
FROM: Mr. Edward Cushing, First Aid
SUBJECT: REPORT ON COCOANUT GROVE FIRE

At 10:45 P.M. Saturday evening, November 28th, I arrived at my home in Brighton and turned on the police radio as the fifth alarm came in. I proceeded to the Chapter House and arrived there at about 11:00 o'clock. There were several station wagons loading stretchers and blankets. Knowing what the situation would be at the fire, I did not stay but proceeded to the Cocoanut Grove, leading an ambulance whose driver did not know the location of the fire. I parked my car and went up Piedmont Street to the front entrance of the Cocoanut Grove where the last of those alive were being brought out and immediately loaded into ambulances. For about an hour I remained there helping to remove bodies and take them across the street into a garage which Medical Examiner Brickley was using as a temporary morgue. From there, I went to the rear of the building, which is on Shawmut Street, and continued carrying out the dead for about another half hour. While working there, a sailor cut his hand rather badly, and having a First Aid kit with me, I cared for it.

Going to Church Street, I met a Canteen Unit headed by Mrs. Loring of Canteen and Mrs. Wilson of Motor Corps who were told to report to Mr. Kinchla, but were unable to find him. I escorted Mrs. Loring to the fire area and she spent about twenty minutes looking for Mr. Kinchla but was unable to locate him. Next, I met Miss Seccomb of the Motor Corps who was looking for the Canteen Unit to tell them were Mr. Kinchla wanted them. We notified Canteen and returned to the Park Square Garage, where Mr. Amory and Mr. Kinchla had established headquarters. While there, we encountered two army officers and two women who had been in the fire, and one of the women had lost her shoes. They asked if we could take them to Beacon Hill, where she lived. We did this in Miss Seccomb's station wagon. We returned and went to the garage which was being used as a morgue and in which the Canteen had set up tables and were serving coffee.

I returned to the Chapter House at about 3:00 A.M. and reported to Mr. Gates. At about 4:15 A.M. I went to the City Hospital, Dowling Building, with Canteen and helped to take coffee and food through the building for doctors and nurses, etc. I then returned to the Chapter House and was dismissed by Mr. Gates at about 8:00 A.M.

At 5:15 P.M. I reported to the Chapter House again and was sent by Mr. Gates to the City Hospital, Fenwald Laboratory, with a truck load of blood plasma. At 8:15 P.M. I left the Chapter House and notified Miss Cullen in the Disaster Office that I was doing the same.

TO: Mr. Charles A. Gates, Disaster

December 1, 1942

FROM: Mr. Edward Cushing, First Aid

SUBJECT: REPORT ON COCOANUT GROVE FIRE (Cont.) MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1942

At 3:30 P.M. Mr. Gates called and asked me to go to Waterman's Garage in Roxbury on Shawmut Avenue, which was being used as a mortuary, and relieve Mr. Seabury who was representing Red Cross. When I arrived, there were about fifteen bodies still unidentified. Whoever sent Mr. Seabury had neglected to instruct him to phone the identifications into the Chapter House as they were made; but I was able to get a list from Mr. Waterman which I telephoned to Mr. Gates. There were about eight identifications made while I was there, and I telephoned those to Mr. Gates as they were made.

There was a Canteen Unit of the Women's Defense Corps at the garage.

Several people fainted or became hysterical, and I rendered First Aid to them. A social service worker from the Boston City Hospital, Mrs. Scott, asked me about Red Cross's responsibility as far as helping financially charity cases who were involved, and I gave her the information and called Motor Corps for a car to take her to Charlestown to relay this information to a family whose past social service work she has been handling.

I remained at the morgue from 4:00 until 9:30 PM when the three remaining unidentified bodies were removed to the Southern Mortuary. I returned to the Chapter House and reported to Mr. Binnian, and also, gave Mr. Giblin some information about First Aid work during the fire and afterwards.

I left the Chapter House at 10:30 P.M.