

March 25, 2010

Statement By Earl W. Somnitz, Jr.

I went to Florida School for Boys, Marianna, in October 1960 for missing too much school. I was released August 8, 1961.

Sometime in July 1961, I don't know the exact date or day of the week, but it wasn't too long before I was released to go home, I, along with my cottage, Cleveland, went to the swimming pool which was right next to the gym. I didn't dress out because I never went swimming in that soap hole they called a swimming pool. I was sitting on the bench facing the gym. They had both doors of the gym open and I could see guys in there running around.

I saw one of the guys running what I thought was laps because he kept running into my view. He was running a long time I know. The next thing I noticed some of the staff took him to the water fountain and told him to drink the water. While drinking his knees buckled and he started sagging, they yanked him up and pushed his head back to the water fountain and forced him to drink again. I could see this plainly because I was about 25 feet or less away.

- 1 of 4 pages -

3-25-10

He dragged a couple of more times and they would pull him up and force him to drink again. I thought the forced drinking was dangerous because my father, not our elementary school back home would let the kids drink a lot of water after exercise or playing hard because they said it could hurt you. So this really got my attention.

The boy then turned to walk back in the gym where he had been and I saw him fall to the floor. I saw Mr. Tidwell and Mr. Halton walk up and look down at the boy but they never rendered any aid or tried to revive him in any way. The two of them never even bent down to get a close look at him. I could see the boys lips and face starting to turn an odd color and he didn't seem to be breathing. I saw his legs shaking and he then wet himself.

Another boy sitting on the bench next to me on my right, punched me in the side and said the guy laying there was dying. I knew the boy who had collapsed was a football player but I didn't know his name. The guy sitting next to me said the boys name was Edgar Elton.

5-25-10

The staff just left Edgar laying there. I, along with my collage, was at the scene for at least another 30 minutes and ~~down~~ during that time the staff didn't move Edgar, render any aid and just did nothing. In a little while two State cars pulled up and more Mauiama staff got out and passed right in front of me. I don't know who they were but they were not Dr. Wexler or the nurse because I knew what they looked like. These two new arrivals went inside the gym, looked at Edgar while they were standing, but didn't do anything and walked on into the gym. By then at least 25 minutes had passed since Edgar collapsed.

When I and the other boys in my collage left the pool area, Edgar was still laying in the floor. He hadn't moved at all since falling and none of the staff had tried to help him at all. I was positive he was dead, and other boys said the next day that Edgar had died when he collapsed. That was the first time I had seen anybody die and I've never forgotten it. I've seen other people die since then, up close.

I married my wife, Martha, on April 19, 1965, almost 45 years ago. I told her back then about this incident. I swore her to secrecy because I had escaped from Mariamma in November 1963 after being sent there again in September 1963. I did not know if they were still hunting me or what they would do to me or my family.

This is my account of what happened to Edgar Elton in July 1961. It was first written by Martha Lomont, my wife and power of attorney, at my request because of nerve damage in my hand due to diabetes which affects my writing. Earl W. Lomont Jr.