STATEMENT OF JOHN SPEARS, (Negro MP)

John Spears, Private, Military Police Detachment, Station Complement, (Cld.), Camp Beauregard, Louisiana made substantially the following statement to the undersigned on November 20, 1942.

"I was born December 24, 1918 in Marianna, Florida and lived there until April 25, 1941, when I was inducted into the Army at Camp Blanding, Florida. I went through the 4th grade in school, and, prior to induction, I did odd jobs at a lumber mill and performed other manual labor. After induction at Camp Blanding, I was first stationed at Ft. Benning, Georgia, then at Camp Claiborne, and then Camp Livingston, Louisiana. In June, 1942, I was transferred to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana. In January, I had been assigned to military police duties, and I continued such duties in the MP Detachment at Camp Beauregard. During my service as an MP, I have done duty in Alexandria on numerous occasions, although I had never been assigned to the Washington street beat, until the night of October 31st, 1942. I had been instructed many times previous to that night that my authority, as an MP, did not cover civilians or disturbances caused by them where no soldiers were involved. My orders on the night of October 31-November 1, 1942 were to walk the Washington Street beat, in company with Pvt. Raymond Carr, keeping order among soldiers on the street and prevent large crowds of soldiers from gathering in the street. Our beat covered approximately two or three blocks on Washington Street, from about 9th Street south to the railroad. Carr and I would walk down one side of the street, cross the street, and continue back up the street. Our hours were from 7:00 P.M. Saturday, October 31st to about 2:00 A.M. Sunday morning, November 1st, when all the soldiers were off the streets.

At about 1 o'clock in the morning, Carr and I were walking together on the east sidewalk on Washington Street, in a southerly direction, approaching the intersection of Washington Street and a narrow gravel road, known as Thorn Street, that runs parallel to the railroad. When we reached a point approximately 10 paces from the intersection, I saw two colored civilians (an older man and a woman), who were at the northeast corner of the intersection and who were in the act of crossing Washington Street. I observed that the two were under the influence of liquor, and they apparently were having an argument.

As they crossed the street, Carr and I continued up to the corner and crossed to the west side of Washington Street behind them. Just after reaching there, we passed the two civilians who were on the corner. I had paid them little mind up to this point, but from their conversation, it was evident that the negro man was trying to get the woman to go some place with him. As we passed them, the woman turned to us and said:

'These MPs aren't going to let you bother me.'

I replied: 'We haven't got anything to do with that. That's your business.'

Carr and I continued to walk north on Washington, but when we had gone

Exhibit 1.

only a short piece, I saw that the woman was following us and that the negro man was behind her. We did not want to have anything to do with them, so we turned around, passed them, went to corner, and crossed again to the east side of Washington Street. We stopped about 4 paces from the corner. The two civilians turned, and with the woman in the lead, they followed us back across Washington Street, and standing on the corner, they continued their argument. Although they were talking in loud tones, they had not struck any blows and had not engaged in a fight. We were standing about 4 paces from them. There were no other persons present at the time. Neither Private Carr or myself had made any more statements to the two civilians. We did not want to have anything to do with them. At that time, a state police car, which had been proceeding south on Washington Street, stopped on the west side of the street, and two state troopers got out, each armed with a gun, in their belts. They crossed the street, accosted the two negro civilians and asked:

'What's the matter there? What's the hell's going on here.'

At that point, the woman grabbed her arm, started to cry, and said:

'This man hit me.'

Thereupon, one of the two state troopers, brandishing his club, motioned the man back and motioned him to go on his way. Neither of the troopers had made any attempt to arrest either of the two civilians. On the contrary, the policemen were merely separating the two negroes and were making them go on their ways.

When the policeman began to force the man back, Carr said:

'That man didn't hit that woman.'

Carr did not address the remark to anyone, and I don't know who he was talking to. This was the only remark made by him up until this time. Hearing the statement made by Carr, the policeman who was with the man turned his back on the man and he and the other policeman, who had been standing by the woman, came up to us saying:

'What you all got to do with it. You all trying to prevent us from making an arrest. You are trying to take authority over civilians. We should arrest you. You are under arrest. Drop your clubs and get in the car.'

I said: 'We can't leave our posts. We can't leave until we are properly relieved. You can't take us away.'

One of the policeman repeated:

'You are under arrest. Get in the car.'

He might have cursed us. I don't remember about this. During the time he was talking, he placed his hand on his gun holster as if to draw his gun. However, he did not draw his gun.

Private Carr then spoke up.

'We are on duty and can't leave until properly relieved.'

One of the policemen said: 'You will go.'

With that, he and the other policeman turned, went back to their car, and drove off.

At no time during the meeting did either Carr or myself threaten either of the policemen with our clubs. Our clubs were fastened to our belts at all times during this meeting. During the time all of this took place, I saw

Statement of John Spears (Continued)

no one else at or near the scene. No crowd collected. During the time the two policemen were talking to us, the two civilians had walked off down the street. And when they drove away, there were only two persons present - Carr and myself.

We continued to stand in about the same place, after the troopers left. I did not know the state police were coming back or else I would have reported the matter to Lieut. Ellis and asked him to make them stop bothering us.

Within 10 minutes, the same police car drove up, coming from the south. It stopped again in about the same place it had been before, and 4 state police got out of the car. Carr and I were standing on the sidewalk facing the street. Carr was at my side and slightly behind me. One of the policemen, who was in the lead, had a shotgun. Before he reached the sidewalk, and while he was still in the street, he pointed it at me and said: 'Don't run nigger. I'll blow your head off'.

The other 3 policemen advanced upon Carr as if to surround him. While they were surrounding him, he stepped back about 2 steps, then did an about face, and ran down the gravel road parallel to the railroad.

The man with the shotgun backed me up almost against the wall and I stayed there. Two or three policemen started after Carr. Within 4 or 5 minutes, I heard a shot. A little later, the 3 policemen returned. They put me in the police car and took me to State Police Headquarters. During the ride, I heard none of the policemen say anything about Carr being shot, and I did not find out about it until I heard one of the troopers tell another policeman at Headquarters that a MP had been shot.

November 20, 1942.

Thomas M. Phillips
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