

Statement of Roy Lester, Camp No. 1 to Miss Margaret Hatch

Q Will you please tell us what facts you knew relative to conditions in camp leading up to the storm? What orders did you receive, or fail to receive?

A There were none that I received, only Captain Hardacre said the train was coming for us but it turned over.

Q What did you do in camp?

A I was a mechanic, in charge of the trucks.

Q Who had the keys for the trucks?

A Mr. King.

Q Was he in camp?

A He was in his home two miles below camp.

Q Do you know if any attempt was made to get the keys?

A I know that one man in camp went down there for a truck but Mr. King refused to give him the keys without orders.

Q Who had the power to order the keys?

A Captain Hardacre.

Q If Captain Hardacre had ordered the keys would you have gotten them?

A Yes. Anyways I could have started the trucks without the keys if I had had orders to do so.

Q Did you personally make any attempt to secure orders?

A No. He said the train was coming.

Q You, of course, know the statements that have been in the paper. Do you feel that there were enough sober men to have driven the trucks out without disaster?

A There were not over 20 men drunk. It was after pay day and most of us were broke by then. There were plenty of men killed there that do not even drink and they could have driven out the trucks and taken every man out of there.

Q Did the train come?

A The train came by Camp No. 1 about 10 minutes before the hard storm hit it, at about 7:30. About seven caught it. One of the ropes was across the track and they stopped to get it off.

Q Did you ever receive any instructions that you were not to leave camp?

A No.

Q Did you personally identify any of the dead?

A One man named George Sherman - he was a mechanic and worked under me.

Q Have you any other statement that you would like to make as to your personal feelings regarding who was responsibility for the failure to evacuate the camps in time?

A No. The only thing I have to say is that if they had turned the trucks over to me as late as 9:00 Monday morning, I could have gotten every man out of there. Camp No. 1 was hearest the shore. But the train was reported to leave Miami and no one bothered.

Q When did you get this report?

A We got our first orders that the train was on the way about 11:00 on Monday morning.

Q Do you feel that ample warning was given to the officials that the storm was coming for them to have ordered the camps evacuated?

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A Yes.

Q When did you hear the first warnings?

A They were in the paper on Sunday.

Q Is there anything else you wish to say?

A No.

Miss Hatch: Thank you very much for coming in.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct transcript of the statement made by the above named Veteran.

Marguerite Scull
Marguerite Scull, Stenographer.