

On this 18th day of September, 1935, at Ft. McPherson, Fulton County, State of Georgia, before me, C. E. Hawk, A Field Examiner of the Veterans' Administration, personally appeared Eugene Lowkis, who having been first duly sworn according to law, deposes and says:

Q. State your full name and address.

A. Eugene Lowkis. My address is my brother's home, Edward Lowkis, Box W, Pine Island, New York.

Q. Are you a veteran?

A. A Foreign War veteran. Yes, I was the youngest one at the camp.

Q. What is your age?

A. Twenty-seven.

Q. Are you a World War veteran?

A. No. A foreign war veteran.

Q. Were you employed at the veterans' camp on the Keys?

A. Yes, at Camp One.

Q. Were you at the camp during the hurricane?

A. No, sir.

Q. Where were you?

A. At Miami.

Q. When did you leave the camp?

A. Friday with the ball team. We had a ball game Sunday and we all left Friday morning.

Q. Where did you play ball?

A. At Ojus, Florida.

Q. Why did you not return to camp?

A. Well, during the ball game, Mr. King, he's in command of all transportation - he got word during the game and he seemed to be in a hurry to get back to camp after the game. He said all of you ball players get on the trucks and go straight into camp. I asked 'what's the rush?' and he said 'I got orders to report back to camp, stand by with all the trucks and have the gasoline tanks all filled.'

Q. This was at Ojus?

A. Yes, between three and four o'clock Sunday afternoon during the game.

-2-

- Q. You left Ojus on the trucks?
- A. The ball players went on the trucks, and I went with a party to the hotel. A fellow by the name of Porter went with me.
- Q. Did the trucks get on back to camp?
- A. Yes, straight on back.
- Q. Porter was the one man besides yourself that didn't go back to camp with the ball team?
- A. There was other ball players like Nabel, who was a member of the ball team but didn't play Sunday. He stayed in Miami and did not return. The ball players had permission to stay away from camp until Wednesday morning and that is the reason Nabel stayed in Miami. The majority of the team did return to camp Sunday evening by truck. I wanted to go back the next day but I saw Nabel Monday morning and he called up the camp. It was windy and rainy Sunday night. Monday morning it was pretty bad and he told me to stay where I was and they said that all the veterans in Miami were to stay too. Monday he called Shelton two or three times at the camp and he said to stay where we were. Monday afternoon we couldn't get calls in further than Homestead. The wires were down beyond Homestead.
- Q. Did you get to the railroad station in Miami?
- A. Yes, Monday night. We had orders to stay there and wait for the rescue train to come back with the veterans and from there to go to Hollywood.
- Q. Did you identify any of the dead?
- A. No, sir.
- Q. Do you know any other veterans other than Porter and Nabel, who left the camp before the storm, except the ball players who went back?
- A. Porter himself went back, William R. Porter. He went back to camp Monday morning and wanted me to go with him but I refused. He is reported to have been killed.
- Q. Is there any statement that you would like to make in addition to what you have already stated?
- A. Tuesday morning after the storm I went back as far as we could go towards the camps with Mr. Wright, purchasing agent for the camps. There at Snake Creek we met Mr. Ghent and Mr. Cutler.

-3-

- A. Habel also went up there about one o'clock in the morning. During the storm he drove up there. That was between eight and nine o'clock in the morning Tuesday.
- Q. Did you hear any of the conversations?
- A. I heard them ask Mr. Ghent 'Do you think there's any killed over there?' He said, 'I don't think so.' Habel and Wright volunteered to swim across there (Snake Creek), and let them know what had happened. Day was coming, but they couldn't get across. I went on the railroad trestle and signalled Mr. Johnson that help was coming. We couldn't hear one another. He seemed to be in a daze and yelled. We turned back and Mr. Ghent asked me 'What did the man on the other side say and who is he?' I told him I couldn't find out. The only thing I know about the train leaving Miami is that the train was made up as early as noon, box cars and all with the coaches, Monday at Miami, but didn't leave Miami until between three and four o'clock. It seemed to be waiting for orders was the way it looked to me. I seen the crew walking up and down restlessly, go in and come out again. We had tried to call camp and couldn't get it. I assisted in identifying Harry Wroten at Snake Creek, in company with Mr. Cutler, Mr. Habel, Mr. Ghent and Mr. Wright. Wroten was the first dead veteran found by the party. Our bulletin board at Camp Number One said that we were guaranteed evacuation of the camp within six hours prior to a storm. It was signed by Mr. Ghent, who made arrangements with the railroad for such an emergency.

I have read the above and my statements have been correctly recorded. I make these statements of my own free will.

Affiant

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 19th day of September, 1935, and I certify that the contents were read by the affiant before signing.

C. E. HAWK, Field Examiner,
Veterans' Administration,
Authority: V. A. Form 4505.

1666

ADDITIONAL STATEMENT OF EUGENE LOWKIS MADE ON THE 19th
DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1935, AT FT. MOPHERSON, FULTON COUNTY,
STATE OF GEORGIA, BEFORE ME, O. E. HAWK, A FIELD EXAMINER
OF THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION:

On Thursday, September 5th, I was with a civilian, Mr. Berlin, or Rock Harbor, Florida, in a small outboard motor boat helping him to find his family on the Keys. As we neared a point close to the Matacombe Hotel we observed Mr. Ghent, Mr. Outler and Mr. Patterson, the surveyor, and one other man removing some papers from the headquarters and loading them on another boat. Due to the fact that it was getting dark and we had not yet found Mr. Berlin's family we did not stop at the Matacombe Hotel but proceeded on up the channel.

I have read the above and my statements have been correctly recorded. I make these statements of my own free will.

AFFIANT

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 19th day of September, 1935,
and I certify that the contents were read by the affiant before
signing.

O. E. HAWK, Field Examiner,
Veterans' Administration.
Authority: V. A. Form 4305.