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Lewis Riddell (#8)
Sept. 19, 1935
by Hawk

On this 19th day of September, 1935, at Ft. McPherson, Fulton County, State of Georgia, before me, O. E. Hawk, a Field Examiner of the Veterans' Administration, personally appeared Lewis Riddell, who having been first duly sworn according to law, deposes and says:

- Q. State your full name and address.
A. Lewis Riddell, Lexington, Kentucky, R. F. D. # 8.
- Q. Are you a veteran?
A. Yes.
- Q. What is your age?
A. Forty-six.
- Q. Name your nearest relative?
A. Ellis Riddell, brother, at the same address.
- Q. Were you employed at the Veterans' Camps on the Keys?
A. Yes, Number Three.
- Q. Were you at camp during the hurricane?
A. I was at Islamorada on the train.
- Q. Were you injured?
A. I got a few scratches, scars and bruise on the chest. These injuries are not serious.
- Q. Did any one prohibit or discourage you from leaving camp prior to the storm?
A. No, sir.
- Q. Has any one attempted to prevent you from making a statement regarding events during the storm?
A. No, sir.
- Q. Did you identify any of the dead?
A. No, sir.
- Q. Do you know the name of any veteran who left camp prior to the storm, now listed as missing?
A. I left camp in company with B. L. Bradfield on Friday before the storm on leave. On Monday morning we got the truck and went to Homestead. There we got another ride from Homestead to Tavanier. We met a fellow named Hollis Morris. It was raining then. We knew nothing about the storm at that time.

A.

He stepped us and said, "Boys, where are you going?" We told him on the way back to camp, and he said, "We are leaving camp. There's some talk of a hurricane coming through. Get in the car and come back with us." We got in the car with them. We got to Homestead and found out this train was going back to Camp Three to pick up these men. I asked the conductor if he thought we would be safe to go back. We had some belongings there we wanted to get. He told us we could take a chance if we wanted to. They was going to try and make it up there and back before the hurricane. We got to Number One Camp and the wind was blowing the windows out. The telephone poles were hitting the train, and then found a cable wire across the track. We went over and got a woman and her family out of a shack over there and put them on the train. Then the train left Number One and reached Islamorada about 8:30. We reached Number One about 6:50 and were probably stuck there an hour. We reached Islamorada Station - had to take water there and didn't even cut the engine off. The wind blew us fifty or sixty feet from the track. There was nothing left on the track but the engine. The windows were blowing out, and telephone poles sticking into the train. When we left the train, water was up to our neck. We were in the baggage car and stayed Monday and Monday night and up until eight o'clock Tuesday morning. We couldn't get out.

Q.

When were you rescued?

A.

I would say Wednesday morning, probably about eight or nine o'clock.

Q.

Did you identify any of the dead?

A.

No, sir.

Q.

Do you know the name of any other veteran other than those you have mentioned, who was not in camp during the hurricane?

A.

Clarence Talent was driving the truck that took us back to Homestead, where we boarded the rescue train.

Q.

Did Talent and Myers survive the storm?

A.

Yes. Well, Myers got a little bruised place and a finger hurt.

Q.

They all went back to camp with you?

A.

Yes. We didn't get any farther than Islamorada.

Boat deck
+ rain
Homestead

Delayed
by
\$300
Overheard

Q. Is there any further statement that you wish to make concerning any facts that you know that you havenot made?
A. No, no more than that the conductor made some remarks there that the train was held up on account of some \$300.00. I heard the conductor make these remarks, but don't remember just exactly how he stated them. He made this statement on the train, after it left Homestead.

Q. Did he say how long the train was held up?
A. No, I didn't hear him say. I heard him talking about this to some other fellows but didn't get all of it.

Q. What time did the train leave Homestead?
A. Probably 5:00 or 5:15.

Q. How many veterans were on the train going back to the camp?
A. Maybe five or six leaving Homestead and we picked up some out of the rock quarry at Number One.

Q.

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 4505.

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