

Paul Vander Schueren  
 Spt. 27, 1935  
 by Farmer

48. A. Then I went on with the general work of directing the handling of bodies of the dead, etc. in Miami and then when Mr. Van Hyning left I was put here to represent him in the area.
49. Q. Will you relate at this point, in your own words, just how the dead were cared for?
- A. My work in handling the dead was entirely specific cases. For instance, I did not see anybody at all, no bodies as they were brought in; I did not see any; in fact I thought I could do better work if I didn't see any of them. I was under very high pressure and I left that to the people who were in charge of handling the bodies themselves and simply arranged for things. I was really contact with the outside, rather among the ones who were handling the dead. I made arrangements with the undertakers for instance, and arrangements for paying them, all of those things. I was really sort of representative of the organization with the public more than anything else.
50. Q. What arrangements were made with the undertakers to care for the bodies of the veterans?
- A. Arrangements were not made by me as far as actual handling of the bodies; they had already placed the bodies in the boxes and packed them with formaldehyde-soap-sawdust; those things had already been done. After that they were placed in metal caskets. To begin with they were in inner boxes and these boxes placed in metal lined boxes but none of the physical arrangements were actually under my supervision or handling.
51. Q. Can you give me the names of the veterans whose bodies were shipped?
- A. Yes, I can give them to you. There were only eight veterans bodies shipped; all those shipped had died in hospitals after they reached Miami. Some of them died the first night. They were:  
 Harry Sickler, Saugerties, N. Y.  
 Marshall E. Howell, Franklin, Va.  
 William Jones, Baltimore, Md.  
 James Murray, Titusville, Pa.  
 Wm. J. Clark, Newark, N. J.  
 Walter R. Wise, Cleveland, Ohio  
 Osip Nepsha, Minneapolis, Minn.  
 Dr. D. C. Main, Palatka, Florida.  
 Dr. Main was the only exception; he died before coming into Miami but his body was taken away before the State Board of Health made a ruling of any kind.
52. Q. What is the State Board of Health ruling with respect to shipment of bodies now buried in Woodlawn Cemetery?

52. A. The State Board of Health has definitely ruled that no body can be shipped out of the state except through their permit and they further state that this permit will not be given until the body has gone through certain stages of decomposition, which will take from six months to a year.
53. Q. Does that apply to all veterans' bodies buried in Woodlawn Cemetery?
- A. It does, yes.
54. Q. How many such veterans are there?
- A. I would have to check the records. All those veterans buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, a large number of them are not sufficiently identified to designate them as veterans. Indications are that they were veterans by the clothing; on the other hand we know that it was not unusual for this clothing to be sold to fishermen wearing veterans' dungarees and shoes; they were probably drowned as the veterans were. (After checking the record he gave the total number of veterans buried in Woodlawn Cemetery as 96.)
55. Q. Has any other government official taken a statement covering these matters from you?
- A. No.
56. Q. Has anyone cautioned you against giving a full statement?
- A. No, not in any way.
57. Q. Having in mind that it is our desire to learn all the facts and to have each person interviewed express any worth while opinion they may have, is there any further statement that you want to make?
- A. I think, far as the facts are concerned, I have stated them exactly and the time would not in any case be off more than ten minutes; I am sure of that. Now as far as the general attitude down there is concerned, I think among those who were entirely rational --by that I mean those who had not been drinking at all--there was not much concern. They thought there was going to be a hurricane but nobody began to appreciate the potential danger of it and among those that were there there was somewhat the spirit of adventure as well as anything else. They thought they were going to get somewhat of a thrill from it; they had no idea it was going to be as serious as it was going to be and up to the time I left no one was in fear whatever. They thought they were going to see



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57. A. something they had never seen before perhaps. Some said, "I have been through them before and I can take them" or something like that. So any fear that came up was something that came up later. Now I will say this, when I left there the barometer was dropping very rapidly and your ears began to feel the difference in pressure very decidedly and when I felt that I knew there was a hurricane just about to hit. I was glad to get out of there. As I turned out at one point, I think Whale Harbor, where the road is quite low, the waves were already splashing across the road so they splashed - the spray from them splashed clear across the windshield of the car, and I thought it was a very good idea to get out of there. When I left the camp it seemed to be coming quite rapidly, I mean the wind was picking up quite rapidly and I also noticed when I came to a place in the road where I had to make a sharp turn, the wind in back of me, and my car did not stop anywhere near as quickly as I thought it was going to. Probably a fifty mile wind behind me and I was driving about 55 miles an hour, and that made a lot of pressure of course. There is nothing to say, outside of the attitude as I left there. Undoubtedly it changed very soon after because you have a very ominous feeling when a hurricane is about to strike; you know it. Up until almost the time I left that feeling had not struck there.

I, PAUL VANDER SCHOUW, DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR that I have read the above responses made by me in answer to questions propounded by H. W. Farmer, Investigator, and they are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, so help me God.



Sworn and subscribed to before me, H.W.Farmer, an Investigator for the Veterans' Administration, this 27 day of September, A.D.1935.



H. W. FARMER, INVESTIGATOR.

Miami, Florida,  
Sept. 27th, 1935.

Responses made under oath by Paul Vander Schouw, Assistant State Director of the Transient Division of the FERA, Exchange Building, Jacksonville, Florida, to questions propounded by H. W. Farmer, Investigator, at Miami, Florida, Sept. 27, 1935.

1. Q. State your full name, occupation and address, please.  
A. Paul Vander Schouw, Assistant State Director of the Transient Division of FERA, Exchange Building, Jacksonville, Florida.
2. Q. Are you a veteran of the World War?  
A. I am, yes.
3. Q. Native of Florida?  
A. No, I lived in Florida ten years.
4. Q. Do your duties bring you in contact with the three Veterans' Camps on the Keys?  
A. It did, yes. Not officially; now let me explain this to you. At the time that I went down there I was acting State Director of the Transient Division in the absence of Mr. Redkey who was on vacation for three weeks. The plan was already made for the Transient Division to take over all veterans' camps at Florida, as they have done since the hurricane. It was in the plan before that time and I went down to the Keys for two purposes, one to see just what physical properties there were that would have to be moved and, secondly, to see what sort of social service records they had so that, if necessary, we could recommend immediately certain changes in the methods of keeping records to comply with our own requirements.
5. Q. In your regular duties, did you in any way supervise the activities of these camps?  
A. No. Had no connection whatever with them, officially.
6. Q. On what date were you last in the camps?  
A. I was there on Monday, September 2nd.



7. Q. Anyone accompany you?
- A. Yes, Mrs. Leila Bagg, who is my acting case worker supervisor for the State Transient Division.
8. Q. Where is she at this time?
- A. At the present time she is in Jacksonville.
9. Q. How long were you in the camps on Monday, Sept. 2nd?
- A. We left Miami about 9:30 and went down there directly; it was raining and probably got there about I would say around twelve o'clock, something like that; noon.
10. Q. And when did you leave there?
- A. Possibly a little before twelve, when we arrived. I left there about two or not later than 2:15 P.M.
11. Q. Did you know at that time a hurricane was expected in the neighborhood of the Keys?
- A. When I went down, of course I had heard of a hurricane being off the Florida coast somewhere but every summer we have a good many reports of hurricanes in the vicinity and there was no more than considerable wind and rain and the sky was not completely overcast like it is usually before a hurricane, that is, there were periods when you would see clear places in the sky, when I went down. From that it indicated to me there was no immediate danger, because usually you have cloudy, heavy overcasting for quite a period before, maybe several hours anyway.
12. Q. Who, if anybody, among the camp officials did you contact while you were there?
- A. I stopped first at No. 1 camp and inquired about where I would find either Sam Cutler or Bert Davis. They were two men I knew personally. I had contacted them in previous work. Cutler was safety inspector and he had passed through my area before, and Davis at one time worked for the Transient Division. That is the reason I knew both of them and, naturally, looking for information, I would go to someone whom I thought would give it to me freely.
13. Q. Go right ahead and tell me who else you contacted.
- A. Bert Davis was not in camp at the time; he had gone to Miami. But I went on down to the Matecumbe Hotel. They told me at the hospital that he just left and gone to the hotel so I went on down there and found him almost



19. Q. called?

A. There were three or four calls made, right close, one after another. All of those calls were made before I left there and the matter of the train coming was settled before I left. I am sure of that. As far as they were able. It seems the Railroad Co. in Miami had to have verification from St. Augustine before they could start the train off. Of course I didn't hear the conversation at the other end of the line but it was very apparent from what was said in the conversation and what he said afterwards that it was necessary for verification to be given before the Railroad Co. in Miami was able to send the train off.

20. Q. Then at the time you left there, it was not definitely arranged that a train would be sent?

A. Yes, it was definitely arranged as far as they were concerned there. The train was definitely ordered.

21. Q. Subject to verification?

A. Subject to the railroad company officials getting together and making it official as far as they were concerned.

22. Q. At what time did you leave Sheldon's office?

A. I left there not later than 2:15 because I was back in Miami, back at the Pan American Airways in Miami and saw the Nassau plane. It had just landed - was already on the water but had not gotten up to the dock yet. I stayed there, I said, "I want to see this" because it was very rough and the wind blowing hard and it took them probably fifteen minutes to get the plane up to the dock so the passengers could be taken off. I was rather surprised they were flying a plane at that time because it was very windy. That was 4:15. The plane was due 4:15 but it came in fifteen minutes early because of the tail wind.

23. Q. Was the card game in Sheldon's office still in progress when you left the office?

A. Yes, it was.

24. Q. What kind of cards were they playing?

A. I think they were playing rummy; not sure. I didn't pay much attention.

25. Q. Who was engaged in the game?

A. I didn't know any of them. I have seen some of those men since but I didn't know any of them at all.

26. Q. That was not later than 2:15 Monday?

A. That was not later than 2:15 P.M.



27. Q. How much earlier than 2:15 might it have been?

A. I would say nearer two than two fifteen. I am placing 2:15 at the very latest possible time I could have left there. After I had gone up there I found they were very busy and I saw that being an outsider if I tried to get any of the information I wanted, I would be interfering with their preparations and plans, etc. but I did break in and ask them where the records were and they told me where they were and I think one of the clerks or somebody around there showed me the room where they were and I went around to the files and saw where they were and called Mrs. Baggs upstairs. She came upstairs and we looked at the records just a few minutes and all of this was done before 2:15, the time we left there.

28. Q. You say that Sam Cutler had worked under your supervision?

A. No, not under my supervision. I have had charge of various Transient Bureaus in the state and at the time that I knew him he was safety inspector for the state itself.

29. Q. What are the duties of a safety inspector?

A. There are certain rules and regulations that are required of all camps and lodges, imposed both by the state and federal governments and he came around about once a month on an official inspection and went over everything as to sanitary conditions, sleeping conditions and whether or not buildings were properly constructed.

30. Q. Were you well acquainted with Mr. Cutler in an official capacity?

A. Well, I would not say I was well acquainted. I had known him for several months, and in the intervening time of probably six months since I had seen him.

31. Q. Do you know him well enough to tell me what his reputation was for good judgment and reliability?

A. Mr. Cutler was a man whom I considered rather an exceptional person because he had all the markings of a gentleman and he was very conscientious; at the time he made inspections he was very conscientious in his reports. He was a man who could be rigid in his official duties and still be quite agreeable in personal relationships. That is the way I always found him and therefore respected him for his ability to combine the two. When Mr. Cutler -- I don't know; I guess I will put this in the record as quoting -- it might as well be there I suppose -- when Mr. Sheldon went upstairs the second time, Mr. Cutler turned to me and said, "This thing looks bad to me and I want to go on record with you, if I don't see you



31. A. again or if anything happens, that I want to get these men out of here?" I said, "Well, I will remember that if anything happens." He said that in the presence of myself and Mrs. Baggs.
32. Q. Did he indicate whether or not he had acquainted Mr. Sheldon with his views in this matter?
- A. He did not although it was rather indicated that he probably had, but I think it was intangible the way I drew that deduction; I don't think it hardly fair to say or guess.
33. Q. What evidence did you note of apprehension among the officials or veterans prior to the time Mr. Sheldon told you arrangements had been made for the train?
- A. I saw no signs of any apprehension anywhere except one man in camp three; when we were down there he came around to Mr. Cutler and seemed to be very much concerned about getting out. He was one of the veterans. I saw no indication anywhere on the staff of anybody that seemed anxious to get out.
34. Q. Did any of the staff members mention the probability of a hurricane before Mr. Sheldon returned from answering the telephone at or about 1:30?
- A. No, but I didn't talk to any of them. The only reason I heard this one veteran say anything is because he came around to Mr. Cutler who was with me and said something about it. I didn't talk to any of the staff at all except the matter of inquiring about the way there.
35. Q. You did talk to Mr. Cutler?
- A. I mean outside of Cutler and Sheldon. They were the only ones on the staff that I talked to at all. I was introduced to several other fellows but just as a casual introduction; that is all.
36. Q. Did Mr. Cutler express apprehension before 1:30 P.M.?
- A. No, he expressed no apprehension at all. He told this veteran who came up and questioned him that arrangements were going to be made for a train there to get them out and for him to rest easy, etc. He showed no apprehension; as a matter of fact I felt no apprehension myself.
37. Q. Did he appear to be unduly nervous and excited?
- A. No, he is not the kind that ever looks that way; I don't think he would in any case.
38. Q. About what time did he talk with this veteran who was apprehensive?



38. A. Well, that would have been some time before one o'clock; between 12:30 and 1:00, some time.
39. Q. Did he indicate to either you or the veteran what, if any, definite arrangements had been made for a train other than to say one was coming?
- A. Well, from him and also from Fred Ghent, whom I talked with about three days previous to this in Jacksonville, I had been told that arrangements had been made with the Railroad Co. to have a train ready to go down there. I met Ghent-- my office is in Jacksonville in the same building as his-- I met Ghent and said, "This is a bad time of year for your men down on the Keys; what are you going to do if a hurricane comes?". He said, "Nothing for a couple of weeks anyway; the moon is not right." I said, "I didn't think the moon had anything to do with it, but in case there is one, what are you going to do?" He said, "Well, we have made arrangements with the Railroad Co. We will get a train down there and get them out; it will only take two or three hours to get them out." I said, "Well, how are you going to handle them when you get them out on the train; it will be kind of a proposition, won't it?" He said, well, it would be but they would get them out. So I knew before that, just because of the location, etc. it might be a problem; I was just interested in it - that was all.
40. Q. Did that indicate to you rather definite arrangements had been made with the railroad officials?
- A. It indicated definitely some plans had been discussed with the railroad.
41. Q. The nature of those plans were not fully disclosed?
- A. No.
42. Q. Did you see any appreciable number of veterans while you were on your visit to the camps September 2nd?
- A. No, there were very few of them around. Most of them were in their shacks.
43. Q. It was raining; was it not?
- A. No, it was not raining while I was there. Just happened it had stopped raining by the time I was making the rounds. There was a little shower at camp three for a few minutes; I stayed in one of the buildings. It stopped and I went on. The clouds very spotted at the time; had not come to the point when I was down there that it really set in with any constant rain.
44. Q. Did you notice any evidence of drunkenness among the officials or veterans?



44. A. Well, I noticed considerable evidence among the veterans but I didn't see any evidence at all among the officials, none whatever.

45. Q. What percentage of the veterans would you say were under the influence of intoxicants?

A. Well, I talked to the steward of camp No. 3. They had just finished their dinner down there and I don't know what his name was but he was back there. I remember he had his hand, fist doubled up in a cast and a black eye; that is the only thing I remember. Evidently had had a fight and got in in both ways. I said, "Well, some of the fellows don't seem to be very hungry." He said, "Well, there were 114 at dinner." He kept track of it.

46. Q. At which camp?

A. No. 3, and there were supposed to be somewhat over 200; at least he considered those that ate were not as many as should have been or might have been. I noticed there were a lot of men lying in their bunks and evidently they were not interested in much of anything. I looked over the whole place and I asked Mr. Cutler where they got their liquor and he said, "There is a saloon or place right here where they get it" and I said, "Let's go over and see the place" so I went over and there were a lot of them around there that were pretty drunk. You know how they want to talk so I got away from there as quickly as possible. Cutler said, "This is the first time I been in this place" and he was very glad to get away from it because they knew him and would come around tackle him about something or other; you know, wanted to talk to him.

47. Q. Have you been in Miami continuously since Sept. 2nd?

A. No, on Tuesday, that would be the 3rd, I went out to the Transient Camp and inspected the damage done there by the wind and I left Miami 5 o'clock Tuesday night and drove into Jacksonville and got in about 1:30 in the morning. Mrs. Baggs was with me; we went in together. I went to the office about 9 o'clock next morning and stayed in the office and Mr. Van Hynning asked me to come back with him that same night; that was Wednesday night. So I came back to Miami and immediately took part in the storm relief program.

48. Q. What was your part in the storm relief program?

A. I took no part in identification as such. I took charge of transportation of both the living and the dead and arranged for feeding the relief crews that went down there, all from Miami. I did not leave Miami at all; just made physical arrangements for feeding one day 500 and next day 1,000.



13. A. immediately. I told him what I came down for and he said, "Well, would you like to see the other camps, to look around the camps?" and I told, yes. So he took Mrs. Baggs and I in his car and we drove on down to No. 3 on Lower Matecumbe. It was about noon then; in fact they had just finished eating their dinner at Lower Matecumbe camp when I got there. We went all through the camp and inspected all the buildings and so forth. Mrs. Baggs stayed in the car while we went around because some of the --we just felt it would be better for her to stay in the car.

14. Q. Did you contact anyone at the headquarters at Matecumbe Hotel?

A. No one at the time I first got there. I only saw Cutler; the only one of the staff. I didn't go upstairs. I was not familiar with the building or how the offices were arranged. In fact I didn't know there were offices on the second floor at the time.

15. Q. Did you see Ray Sheldon, the Assistant Director?

A. I didn't see him at this time. I walked in the front door and just by chance Cutler walked down stairs and I told him what I wanted and we went on, so I didn't see Ray Sheldon until I came back to the hotel. From camp No. 3 we returned to No. 5 and I looked over the equipment there and Mr. Cutler spoke of the site being rather undesirable and very temporary; that they had chosen another place which was turned down and so had put the camp at the location I found it, temporarily. We did not stay there very long because Cutler said if we wanted to get dinner we would have to get back to the hotel. We went back there not later than 1:15, probably a little before that, and Cutler took us in the dining room and we sat down and had a very nice dinner and while we were there, Cutler stepped out and got Ray Sheldon, who was evidently in the building, and brought him down and introduced him to us as the director in charge down there. He sat down at the table with the two of us and talked to us about things in general until about 1:30 when he was called on the telephone. It was 1:30 within a couple of minutes one way or the other, because I noticed the time. You know, taking out your watch and just looking at it, a minute or two does not matter one way or the other. The telephone was upstairs and he excused himself and went up and answered the telephone. He was gone a very few minutes and came back and said that he was sorry but that he had to get busy and get some telephone calls through because the storm had been reported approaching and he was going to arrange for a train and call Fred Ghent in Jacksonville; so he went right back upstairs and left us there.



16. Q. Do you know who it was called him to the telephone about 1:30?
- A. I don't know who called at 1:30; no.
17. Q. Did he indicate with whom he had been talking?
- A. He indicated a weather report from some source; I am not sure where it came from. I don't know where it came from. He said it was a weather report and that he was sure it was coming there because they gave him the barometer readings both in Miami and Key West and they had taken the barometer reading there,-- they had a barometer on the table, as I found out later when I went upstairs,--and the barometer reading was considerably lower at Matecumbe than it was either at Miami or Key West, which indicated to him they were right in line of the storm.
18. Q. What time would you say he finally left you?
- A. Well, he went upstairs at 1:30 and was not gone more than five minutes and he came back just a minute and went right back up again. He just came down to tell us he would have to leave us and get busy on this thing.
18. Q. Did he indicate that he was going to ask for a train or he was going to report such weather information as he had to Ghent?
- A. Right at that moment I thought he was more interested in trying to plot the position of the storm on the map he had there. Now I stayed downstairs for probably another ten minutes after that,-- not exceeding ten minutes-- which would have made it not over quarter to two at the latest. Then I left Mrs. Baggs and went upstairs. As I say, I did not know what the lay-out was up there; didn't even know they had offices up there. I found the office there and quite a group of men sitting around a table playing cards, and a couple of ladies there. One was a stenographer and I don't know who the other one was. Mrs. Fritchman was one. She was in the room, and some other woman. So when I came up, he was telephoning at the time. He turned from the telephone and said, "I have called the railroad and they tell me that they have got to get verification from St. Augustine". Then he called Ghent or Ghent called him,-- I am not sure which it was. At least he talked to Ghent and when he turned from the telephone a second time he said, "Ghent is on the way down and he is calling --(either is calling or has called) St. Augustine and verified my request for a train."
19. Q. Do you know whether or not he had just previously to that