

Bay Pines, Florida
September 23, 1935

JOSEPH WOJTKIEWICZ, a patient at the Veterans' Hospital, Bay Pines, Florida, made the following response, under oath, to questions propounded by D.W. Kennamer, Central Office Investigator, in the case under investigation entitled:

FLORIDA STORM

Q State your full name and home address?

A Joseph Wojtkiewicz.

Q Now your home address?

A 4029 E. 143rd Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

Q Were you a member of the veterans Camp during the hurricane?

A Yes, sir.

Q Were you there during the hurricane?

A All the way through.

Q What camp were you a member of?

A Camp No. 3.

Q How long had you been down there?

A I was sent January 28th out of Washington and been there since February first.

Q Were you injured in the hurricane?

A Yes, sir.

Q Just state what injuries you received?

A Well, I got a smack here on the back, a cut here and some bruises around on my hand and around the ankle and one over here on my knee, but it's all over with now, you know.

Q Did you identify any of the dead, if so give their names?

A Well, I tell you, so far as that goes, you see them fellows all had

nick names.

Q Well, any name you knew them by?

A I help carry a couple out of there, but so far as that is concerned some, they were identified then weren't there, and I don't know, I couldn't exactly tell you who it was, their names, understand.

Q Well, any names you knew them by, if only their first names, nick name or whatever name they went by?

A I couldn't tell you, the clerk out of the office was one of them and I don't know - no use putting that down.

Q Do you know the name of any veteran who left the camp prior to the hurricane?

A Jake Karns was one of them, Jake Karns, you know, he was in Miami and a fellow that worked with me, what's his name - Mike I guess, he went down to Key West, and the garageman, Joe, I don't know his last name, he was head mechanic there; he left in a truck, pick-up, you know.

Q You know of your own knowledge that they were not there when the hurricane struck?

A Yes, sir, they went out before that.

Q Was anything said or done to prevent the men from leaving camp before the hurricane?

A Well, Sunday, I will tell you the whole thing, Sunday I was up at the warehouse there and seen them loading up the life boats on the warehouse platform and I said: "What are you doing", I knew the shoreman, you see, and I got to talking with him, and the deputy sheriff of Tavernier there by the name of ~~Shup~~ Bob, I don't know his last name, and some of those others were hurrying to do this extra work and some were paid off you know, only the operators were left, so far as that goes, and some of the helpers, time keepers and some of the engineers, and they told me they were getting ready for it, that was Sunday, started Sunday morning and worked all day putting everything up and I was told by Bob I had better get out of there and I said "Is that right" and he said "Sure" and I asked him how much water would back up there and he told me about the back water, and I understood him to say about 8 foot of back water will get up here. It seems he knew more about it than I did. So I just went on back to Camp, see. Well, Monday, they give us orders at 2 o'clock, I guess, said we was to get ready, everything, said

there was a train coming out to get us, see, said it will be here about 5 o'clock, that was the word that was passed around, a man came to the shack and passed the word around, so I packed up everything, you know, together, my valuables and some money I had in my pocket and everything and, of course, my working clothes, I left them in the other place, so I waited there - I went down to the mess hall and got a couple of sandwiches, they didn't serve any hot supper, just sandwiches, and then I beat it back to the shack. Most of the fellows stayed down to the mess hall, and the fellow there in my shack, said "Come on down to the mess hall; it's safer than here" and me and a fellow by the name of Ed Maxwell, a heavy set fellow ~~went~~ in the next shack to me, and another fellow I pulled in with sticks you know to my shack and we stayed there until, well until the blow was over, most of it was over, you see, and as soon as it got light I said the shacks are blowing down, and I didn't know too but though it would blow our shack down, so we got ready for the outside. We picked up one man and put him on the track, and picked up another out of some debris with a broken back and put him on the railroad track and then Captain Davis come along and another man by the name of Maxwell and I said stand by him and he stood by him and Davis came back and said go up to the tank and get help to carry this fellow down to the tank and we wasn't there 5 minutes, to tell you the truth, not even 5 minutes when the water come up and it wasn't 2 minutes, wasn't three minutes until the whole track just raised right up against the water ~~tank~~ we had there full of water that we thought was the best place to hang on to, and I was on the side the railroad was and pinched in and I jumped out and jumped into the water and I stayed down below and finally I got on back to the car and was hanging onto it and got hit with a railroad tie, and finally when the water got too deep I got up and got held of this handbrake and made an anchor out of that, but the next morning she was still blowing and raining, you know, and wind, and that's all there is to it. We put the night in all right, any place we could get a chance you know.

Q At what time did the wind start blowing pretty hard to indicate a hurricane was approaching?

A Well, as far as a storm approaching, the whole afternoon Sunday seemed like, you know, there was something coming anyway, because the wind began to blow, see, and the first thing I noticed one of the shacks, where the cook slept, you know, toppled right over on that machine that was sitting there close to it, and that was about 3 o'clock.

Q Sunday?

- A Three or four o'clock, I should say.
- Q Sunday?
- A No, Monday. I am talking about Monday.
- Q Well, what was the condition of the weather on Sunday?
- A Cloudy and the rain was drizzling too.
- Q How about Monday morning?
- A Monday morning?
- Q Yes.
- A Monday, it was clear for a while, then it started about dinner time, started getting all cloudy, clouded up and later it was drizzling rain, then stopped, and the wind blew too and Monday afternoon.....
- Q I know, in the afternoon, after it was too late to get you out of there, there were visible signs of the storm?
- A Oh, yes.
- Q But, was there anything before that time?
- A Well, I didn't hear anything, all I heard was there was a hurricane coming; that's all I know, from first one then another, you know.
- Q Did you have any motor transportation?
- A Plenty of trucks there, but the trucks were divided, the bridge party had their own and we had about two trucks and a pick-up assigned to us. In fact, there was only one truck and a ~~pick-up~~ pick-up assigned to us. The others, we had to borrow from the bridge party. The dump trucks and everything went over to the bridge party, see.
- Q What time did the real hurricane first hit the Keys?
- A About 6 - oh, the real hurricane?
- Q Yes?
- A About 9 o'clock that evening.
- Q Well, you had one before that?

Joseph Weitzkewicz

- A We had one before that.
- Q What time was that?
- A 6 o'clock, or I should judge a little before that - around 6 o'clock.
- Q You knew about - the 5:30 train had been delayed, didn't you?
- A Knew at 5 o'clock it was delayed because they said at 5 o'clock the train would be there to take us out; that was the rumor.
- Q And there was every indication at that time you was going to have a pretty severe storm?
- A Why sure, anybody could have seen it.
- Q Could you have taken any of that motor transportation at that time and gotten out?
- A At 5 o'clock?
- Q Yes?
- A Don't believe you could have made it.
- Q Was anything said about using the motor transportation?
- A No, not to my knowledge.
- Q Or getting it out to a safe place?
- A Not to my knowledge.
- Q What time did Captain Davis return to his camp?
- A I couldn't tell you; I didn't see Captain Davis until after the first blow; I was in my shack.
- Q You do know he was away on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and Monday morning, don't you?
- A That I can't recollect; I couldn't tell you.
- Q Well, do you recall seeing him during that time?
- A I seen him Monday after the first blow; that was when I seen him.
- Q Did they have drivers for the trucks?

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- A Plenty. Oh, half the camp was drivers; we had been changing around, you know.
- Q Were all of the men, most of the men drunk and unable to get about?
- A Oh, no, not to my knowledge. Of course, as you say, there was beer at the canteen, but Monday to my knowledge all the men was, I will say, all was sober; there was not to my knowledge anyone that wasn't sober; everyone I knew was in good condition.
- Q Is there anything else you wish to state - do you know of any other facts you haven't related?
- A No, that's all I know.

I, JOSEPH WOJTKIEWICZ, DO HEREBY SOLEMNLY SWEAR that the answers made herein to questions propounded by D.W. Kennamer, Central Office Investigator, are true and correct, with such initialed corrections as may appear therein, to the best of my knowledge and belief, so help me God!

(S) Joseph Wojtkiewicz
JOSEPH WOJTKIEWICZ

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO this 75 day of September, 1935,
before Geo. W. Burke, under "Authority: Veterans'
Administration, Form 4505".

Dated 9-16-35

(S) Geo. W. Burke

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