

Gus Linawik of 39 Cedar Road, Worchester, Mass., who first being duly sworn by D. W. Kennamer, Central Office Investigator, made the following responses to questions propounded by Miss Barbara Sabiston in the case under investigation relative to Florida Storm, September 2, 1935.

Q Please state you name and home address.

A Gus Linawik, 39 Cedar Road, Worchester, Mass.

Q What is the name and address of your nearest relative?

A My sister Monica is Mrs. Anthony Zilkas, 39 Cedar Road, Worchester, Mass.

What camp were you in?

A Camp No. 5.

Q Were you injured at all?

A Yes, I was. My ears were skinned from the waves and wind and sand and a coconut tree fell on my back.

Q Are these injuries well?

A I had pains in my back for a while and still do have them.

Q Do they seem to be muscular strain?

A No just strain, like the Doctor says, they will wear off.

Q When were you rescued?

A About 8:00 or 9:00 Monday night.

Q- Did anyone attempt to keep you from leaving the camp either Sunday or Monday?

A Sergeant at Camp No. 5 - Buck - he told us to pack up our personal property. He told us in the morning that we were going to

leave at 12:00. That is all I heard the first time. That was Monday morning. He came in again at 12:00, we were getting sandwiches for our dinner. All the dishes were packed up ready to be taken to the train. A little after 12:00, after we had had the sandwiches we went back to our shacks. In a little while he came around to the shacks and told us in each tent to pack up our personal property as we were leaving at 2:30 on the train. So I packed up my personal property. We waited there and waited and did not know what to do, whether to go away or wait for the train. Some of the boys said what was the use of leaving there as a train was coming to take us away. We waited until 4:30 that afternoon. At 4:30 we hadn't heard anything from the locomotive coming to take us away so we just kept on waiting for a train. Around 5:00 a big storm that you could hear miles away like big machinery going around, the wind was blowing so fast. It just rained a second or two and then stopped at that time. Just about 5:00 it commenced raining harder and the clouds were coming from both directions and we were right there in the middle. We commenced to get excited and there was no train and so we just naturally could not do anything but stand in the shanties.

Q How were the houses in your camp built?

A Just like summer tents, screened in and just piling driven in for foundations, and screened. We let the blinds down over the screens before the storm came in an effort to save the tents. We tried to save ourselves too, at the same time. We thought it was just a little storm - we didn't know much about storms then. I have been in storms before that though I knew all about them. I

thought it was going to be just a little storm. I picked up a paper and saw it was so many miles away and I was scared then, so I said we would just have to wait for the train. It started raining bad after a while. All of our tents just shook and cracked and pulled out of the nails and pilings. When it got so bad a bunch of us got out of the soaked tents - there was a cement cess-pool with three holes in it about 4 1/2 feet high or maybe 5 feet high. So we got out of the tents and went to the cess-pool. Then the wind started blowing bad, so bad we could not talk to each other. We stopped up the escape pipe as well as we could. The pipe was going through from the cess-pool to the ocean - we packed coats and blankets in the pipe and stayed there until the water pushed the packing out, then we came out as we did not know how much water was outside and were afraid the water coming through the sewer pipe would drown us. So about 30 of us got out of the cess-pool to keep from drowning. We came up through the trap holes and we could not hang on, the wind blew us away so fast. Some of them just hung on to each other and I grabbed a couple of men and hung on an edge of the cess-pool and we saved ourselves from blowing into the water. Finally the water was level with the cesspool and getting higher and higher all the time. The tents were blown away and floated on top of the water. We finally grabbed on boards floating in the water until there was a 25 foot tree, maybe only 21 feet and I and the two guys I was holding onto went to try to climb up a little higher. We went towards the tree, a palmetto tree was blown across part way up and we climbed up it and the others followed us. Three of us climbed up the palmetto tree and stayed

there until next morning. Well, the water was getting higher and higher around eight or nine feet high, some guys stood hollering and praying and hollering for help. There was no one there to help us. No one up there to come down with trains or airplanes or boats to help us. Some of the guys went over towards the railroad thinking they were high and safe on the railroad and the waves took them away. While I was in the tree I hollered to them to come up there. After a little, they were still hollering out there but in about two minutes a big wave came, it just naturally came. That was the last of the hollering I heard. It washed them across the railroad and there was no protection for them on the other side - no tree or ground, just rain and sea on that side and canal on the other side and the highway and railroad in the middle. That is the last time I saw about 30 of the men.

Q Do you know of any men that left camp before the storm that might be reported missing now?

A No, not exactly. I never saw any men leave camp that day. They might have left before, but not on Monday.

Q Was there any way that you could have gotten away except by train?

A There were a bunch of trucks in there, we had two trucks in Camp No. 5 besides the pick-up and that would have carried all the men out if we had had permission. Even if they had not gone more than 15 miles an hour, we could have loaded up and gotten out of there.

Q Who had the keys?

A Either headquarters or the company commander, I don't

know who had the keys.

Q Was there any attempt to keep the men in the camp after the storm warnings came in?

A No. No attempt to keep the men on Sunday, but on Monday they were told they should go out on the train.

Q Who gave the orders?

A Robertson gave order to stay until the train came so we did hang on until the hurricane beat the train to us.

Q Do you personally know whether the men were drinking or not?

A Practically none. All day the canteen was closed. You couldn't get soda or beer or anything, but the canteen was closed with a big piece of paper.

Q Has any effort been made to keep you from talking or telling about the situation?

A I am telling what I know. I am not listening to anybody. I have been up there all the time, in that tree, and I know all about it. That is all I can tell you except there were 133 men in that camp, besides the ones on pass and there are only 32 or 33 of us here now and the rest were washed away in the waves.

Q Can you identify any of them?

A Yes. Hines who was in my tent. A fellow from Kentucky named Joe Burns, and Hill is alive and in the C.C.C. The others I do not know their right names.

Q What names do you know them by?

A I could tell you different faces when I see them or maybe knick-names - theres "Whitey" from New York, he just got in about

15 days before - he was there. A fellow by the name of Cox, he was a Swedish fellow. Smitty from Virginia was there. Whitey a buddy, he left the tree and started to the railroad, I called him back and said stay with us on this tree and stick, but he would go, he wouldn't listen to me and he went and he is gone.

Q Is there anything else that you think might help us to get to the bottom of the responsibility for the trouble?

A That's all I know. When I came down on Tuesday my eyes were full of sand and water, my ears were burning me up with sand and waves and blocks while I was on the tree. I didn't trust to go down at first, but Blackey Lyons who is now in the hospital, his pay-roll number is 197, but he was with me in the tree and he told me that the ground was down there, and said lets go down and rest ourselves, but it was still raining but finally I took a chance and found the ground with my toes. I was tired and cold and hungry. My shirt was torn off by the wind and the back of my ears were sore from the waves. When I felt the ground, I called them down to rest up and we found the railroad was washed out and picked up and thrown over the highway and part of it was on the highway and part almost in the sea. I told Blackey, "lets go down towards Camp 3" thinking probably there was a dredge or a ferry boat there. Probably we would help ourselves to something to eat or at least a drink of water. We started out walking on the road and getting a little warmer, so we did, the three of us from that tree. We met two more guys and then four more coming out of different bushes, until we had nine of us, altogether. We met the woman coming from Camp No. 3 to

to Camp No. 1. She was in the water between Camps No. 3 and 5 during the hurricane. We told her about Camp No. 1 has the highway and railroad washed away, that we would drown if we did go. The water was from here to the river there (about 200 yards) between there and Camp No 1, so we started out to Camp No. 3. We told her this and she turned around and headed with us toward Camp No. 3, but the water had washed the road away.

Q Did you meet any people in Camp No. 3?

A We did not get to Camp No. 3. The road was washed away so that we could not get to Camp No. 3, so we went to Camp No. 5 again and we found some little protection back of a machine. We stayed there until about 10:30, until some civilians came from Camp No. 3 to go to Camp No. 1 to send a message for help. We told them how deep the water was the civilian could swim. It was still raining and the wind was blowing some. We asked them to tell us if we could get through to Camp No. 3 and he said there was water up to our waists some places, but that was nothing, so the nine of us and that woman started out to Camp No. 3, about 5 miles. The woman was wet and without shoes, walking through the rocks. We wrapped her feet with clothes in order to keep them from being cut off before we got to Camp No. 3. When we got to Camp No. 3 the tents were tipped over, but not torn up so bad. The rain and wind were not bad. We took her into a place with a bunch of canned goods. We tried to get ourselves a drink of water or something. We found some soda water and canned goods. We put her in a tent, after we ate that, so she could rest and the balance of us stayed around there all night. On Wednesday, when I got up, I was feeling as stiff as a plank. I

did not know what to do to get out of that place. I couldn't go to Camp No. 1 because of the water and we couldn't go from Camp 3 any-place. Trains, trucks or boats could not go there. We didn't see anyone. Some of the boys went out and picked up bodies. Finally we saw a private plane come down from someplace. We had a little American flag and waved it, but the plane could not land for it was a sea-plane and he could not come down. He landed on the sea and we made an little boat and sent a message to the National Guards. In a short while the National Guards came over. We already had about 37 bodies picked out of the water. Some of them were bunged up pretty bad. Finally when the National Guards boys came in they had a boat and they had us all go to the hospital for medical examination. We left that place and left some civilians there. When we left Camp No. 3 we went on the boat. The docks and first medical examination was at Snake Creek. We got off the boat there and they bandaged us up, then we went by truck to Homestead to the F.R.R.A. Hospital.

Q Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

A I guess that is all, except that the next night we were changed to Camp Foster.

Miss Sabiston: Thank you very much, Mr. Linawik.

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.