

Miller, Lewis M

Two Johnson men drowned in Red Water Lake, near Gordon Chapel Friday afternoon when a small boat from which they were fishing apparently overturned.

There were no witnesses and how the accident happened is not known but the bodies of Lewis M. Miller (1920-1958), 38, and Alfred W. Heists (1906-1958), 52, were found yesterday by the Putnam County Sheriff's department in about 15 feet of water some 250 to 300 yards off the shore of the lake which is some mile and a half long and a mile wide.

Heists operated Wards Grocery at Johnson Crossroads and Miller was a logger from Johnson.

The store is located at the intersection of the Gainesville Highway and Orange Springs road.

As nearly as the story can be pieced together by the Sheriff's department, the men went fishing Friday about 9 a.m.

They were seen at noon when they came ashore for lunch and it was not known what time they returned to the lake but a black woman said she heard someone yelling and as soon as a man came home he went to look and could see the bow of the boat and nothing else.

He got a message to the Sheriff's department and immediately Sheriff E. W. Pellicer and several deputies went to the lake and started an investigation, getting ready to drag for the missing men.

Cold and fog halted operations at dark.

Deputies Claude Mincey and Floyd Johnson remained all night at the site and started dragging again yesterday morning, finding the body of Miller at 8:15 a.m. However, it was about one o'clock before they found Heists' body, some 23 feet from where they found Miller.

This marked four tragic deaths, all within the family, of operators of Ward's Grocery.

A year ago last June Ward himself was drowned in Gin House Lake in the same area. Three months later his wife and a niece, who were operating the store, were killed in a pickup truck accident in South Florida.

Funeral services for Miller will be held Monday at 3 o'clock at the Johnson Presbyterian Church with Rev. James Neale, Jr., pastor, officiating.

Burial will be in the Johnson Cemetery with the Johnson-Davis Funeral Home in charge.

Survivors include his mother, Mrs. Lulu Miller of Johnson and a brother, Edward Miller of Jacksonville.

Miller was a lifelong resident of Johnson, a veteran of World War II and a member of the Presbyterian Church.

Heists, a brother-in-law of Ward had been a resident of Johnson about three years, coming there from Tampa. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Clyde Heists, his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Heists, Johnson; a step-son, Donald C. Davis, U.S. Navy, stationed at Pensacola, and a brother, Fred W. Heists, Tampa.

His body will be forwarded to Tampa where the F. T. Blount Funeral Home will be in charge, Edgar Johnson of the Johnson-Davis Funeral Home said.

Palatka Daily News Obituary Sunday, Dec 14 1958.