

EVACUEE

REPORTS:

MIRULA,

MICHAEL

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1st Ind

D-rc-NG

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373.2

Hq 417th Bomb Group (L), Office of the Intelligence Officer, APO 321,
4 February 1945

TO: Commanding General, V Bomber Command, APO 710
Attn: A-2, Air Sea Rescue Office.

For the Commanding Officer:

WILLIAM B. CLEVES
Major, Air Corps,
Group 8-2

2nd Ind

HEADQUARTERS V BOMBER COMMAND

TO: Commanding General GHQ

ATTENTION: Major Tellesco. G-3 Philippine APO 72

1. For your information.

Michael J. Perricelli
MICHAEL J. PERRICELLI
1st Lt., Air Corps
Asst Rescue Officer

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673RD BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)
417TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
APO 321

In reply refer to:
373.2

2 February 1945.

SUBJECT: Escape on Negros Island.

TO : Commanding General, Far East Air Forces, APO 925.
(Through Channels)

1. Sergeant Michael Mikula a turret gunner with the 673rd Squadron of the 417th Bombardment Group (L), just returned to his organization after bailing out over NEGROS ISLAND on 5 January 1945. The following narrative represents an oral account as related to the squadron Intelligence Officer:

Twelve A-20's of the 673rd Squadron took off at 1230/1 to strike SILAY AIRDROME on NEGROS ISLAND 5 January 1945. The formation proceeded from base in a southeasterly direction in two 6-plane boxes at 200 miles per hour and at 3,000 feet. Thence it flew south of PANAY ISLAND, heading eastwards to NEGROS ISLAND and making landfall south of BACOLOD on the west coast of NEGROS ISLAND. The attack was made in two flights of 6 planes abreast with a 45 seconds interval between flights from S S E to N N W at 300 miles per hour or more and at minimum altitude. Second Lieutenant Robert L. Haley and his gunner, Sergeant Michael Mikula, after completing their bomb run received a burst of flak from enemy shore emplacements, which were believed to be located on NAGA AIRDROME. The gunner looked to the right of his plane and saw the immediate explosion which set fire to the leading edge of the outboard wing and the right engine nacelle. Evidently the right outboard tank was hit first. The pilot called the gunner to put on his parachute and to stand by, and prepare for ditching. The plane continued to maintain proper speed, altitude and direction. Sergeant Mikula stood by the hatch and waited for further instructions, removing the earphone plug from the turret and placing it to the hatch jack-box. Then he tried to contact his pilot by voice but without success. He finally resorted to the cockpit flash-light, and after signalling the pilot a few times a weak voice came over the interphone, urging the gunner to bail out. The gunner, with his head towards the tail of the plane, fell forward as soon as he heard the pilot telling him to jump. The plane was spinning to the left side, but he tried to get out to the right causing half of his body to be caught by the centrifugal force. However he was able to kick himself free. His parachute did not open until he was 350 to 400 feet from the ground because he failed to pull it hard enough on the first attempt.

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Subj Ltr: Escape on Negros Island
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The plane spun in approximately 2 miles south of where he landed. Civilians testified that only one man parachuted from the burning plane. One of our planes circled over the area to see if anyone bailed out and the gunner signalled back that he was uninjured. By this time two Filipino civilians identifying themselves as friends, ran towards him and warned him that Nips were in the vicinity. They told him to take off his shirt and handed him one of their white shirts and a straw hat to avoid detection. They ran for about three kilometers through knee-high mud and waist-high water in the swamp. Another Filipino boy came to meet the party of three and told them that the Japs were in a coconut grove nearby. The civilians later told him that there were nine Japs in the grove who were looking for the survivor. Farther away, beyond the swamps, he could hear the rattle of Jap machine gun fire. A fourth Filipino scout joined the party carrying food, including chicken, sweet potatoes, some rice, 8 raw eggs, and cigarettes. More Filipinos came, four of them, who brought additional food. At dusk one of the Filipinos took them to his house, carrying a pair of trousers to replace the gunner's wet ones. He was again fed and received loyal hospitality. A few of the older men came into the house to give advice on the best possible route of escape. One of them suggested that Sergeant Mikula be sent to PANAY ISLAND by sail boat, because there were fewer Japs there and the guerillas were more active. He also demanded a written statement from the gunner that he was willing to take this risk. This Filipino, however, was perfectly willing to take him to PANAY where the guerillas are located, but left the final decision in the hands of the gunner. Early the next morning the original guides and Sgt. Mikula were on their way to meet the Filipino guerillas on NEGROS ISLAND. Before starting, two Filipinos were sent out to reconnoiter. The party rested and slept for three hours during the night. The following afternoon they met the guerillas, who asked Sergeant Mikula his name, serial number, name of the pilot and where the crash took place. Then they sent out a patrol with the two civilians to bury the pilot, salvage usable parts of aircraft, and to destroy the rest. Next morning, he was sent to the 74th Infantry Headquarters. He was again asked his name, serial number and if he was fit to travel. He was sent to a CP, where he stayed for one day and a half due to raining weather. The following morning he was sent to the 72nd Divisional Headquarters, commanded by Lt. Col. Mata. He reached this Hdqs. after traveling that whole day and one night. There, he met Lieutenant Schmultz of the U. S. Cavalry demolition squad. Three days later they left for the south, Lieutenant Schmultz leading. They arrived at LA COSTELLANA late that night, where two P-38 pilots, Lieutenants Meschino and Mannes,

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were waiting for their departure after they had bailed out and belly landed on Negros. That night Sgt. Mikula and the pilots slept at the Divisional Hdqs., leaving the next day, for the 76th Divisional Hdqs. The next morning the pilots decided to wait another day before leaving as one of them had wrenched his back in bailing out and didn't feel like traveling. Sgt. Mikula left for HINAKAYLAND with a Filipino where they arrived on the same night and stayed for one more day and a night prior to their sailing on a small boat for CP dandy. But due to lack of good sailing wind they went ashore before reaching their destination. They walked one whole day to reach CAUAYAN. There Sgt. Mikula met M/Sgt. Jim Ellis of the U. S. Medical Corps who treated his sore-feet and advised him to wait for the two P-38 pilots whom he left behind. Three days later the pilots arrived by car, and Sgt. Mikula joined them on their journey to reach Lt. Col. Atinga who was stationed about four kilometers south of CAUAYAN.

On their way, four F-4Us made strafing passes at them inspite of their car being identified with a big U.S. Flag. The car stalled and they took cover in a banana grove. The Corsairs could not find them again, but they did destroy a guerilla motor pool of three trucks and one car, killing two civilians and wounding three others. The Colonel was expecting them and provided them with food and quarters for the night. The next morning they were supplied with food provisions and a ten-man sailing boat to take them to TOLONG. This trip lasted two nights and two and a half days. Taking advantage of fair wind they made good time arriving at TOLONG in midday of January 23rd. Upon reaching TOLONG they were unable to get ashore until 1800 due to a strong wind current. When they reached shore, Sgt. Mikula, Lts. Schultz, Meschino and Mannes made contact with the U.S. Signal Corps, who in turn got in communication with LRYTE to send a PBY to pick them up. Three days later a PBY arrived and took the entire party to MINDORO ISLAND. At TOLONG he was given a rough map of the island showing all Nip positions and installations. This was done in view of the fact that our planes were bombing and strafing civilian personnel instead of the Nips.

In conclusion Sgt. Mikula suggests that every crew member carry an extra pair of socks, a toothbrush and above all to wear GI shoes. Luckily he had no need for his medical kit which he left in the plane. He also states that you should put yourself in the hands of civilians and guerillas as their system for escaping airmen is perfect.



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JEROME A. ADAMS,
Captain, Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.