

HEADQUARTERS
461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ARMY AIR FORCES
Office of the Combat Intelligence Officer

221/704

APO 520, c/o Postmaster
New York, N.Y.
24 March 1945

SUBJECT: Escape Statement.

TO: Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force, APO 520, c/o PM, NY, NY
Attention: AC of S, A-2.

THROUGH: Commanding General, 49th Bombardment Wing (H), APO 520, c/o PM,
NY, NY

1. Forms for escape statements have been filled out by and are included for forwarding as follows:

- a. Sgt. Louis W. Nagy, 32236349
- b. Sgt. Frank C. Solecki, 17031178
- c. Sgt. Philip R. Veilleux, 42093929

2. Above listed enlisted men were three (3) of a ten (10) man crew flying a type B-24 airplane in a formation of this Group on a combat mission to Vienna, Austria, on 21 February 1945. On the bomb run the first flak to hit the plane shot out the rudder control cable. Another burst of flak knocked out No. 1 engine so that it had to be feathered. Other bursts of flak caused gasoline leaks. Bombs were salvoed from the plane which continued over the target with the formation. The damaged plane was losing both air speed and altitude and fell behind the formation at the rally point. At the request of the pilot of the plane, the navigator gave him a heading to take him to the emergency landing strip at Kecskemet, Hungary (46°55' N – 19°41' E). Airplane was damaged so that bomb bay doors could not be closed. Plane flew over strip at Kecskemet (46°55' N – 19°41' E) with bomb bay doors opened and circled at 14,000 feet. While the plane was circling and letting down, the landing gear was cranked down by hand. Landing was without incident on the long concrete strip.

3. Source No. 1 – Sgt. Louis W. Nagy, 32236349

Plane was met on the strip at Kecskemet by a Russian soldier who directed the plane to a hard stand for parking. A check on the physical condition of the crewmembers revealed that no one had been hurt. In addition to the three (3) above listed individuals, the other seven (7) members of the crew who landed at Kecskemet were: 1st Lt. Clarence P. Marshall, 0-709225; 2nd Lt. Robert W. Hendrickson, 0-2072734; 2nd Lt. Dewey E. McMillen, 0-829524; T/Sgt. George Christie, 20644361; S/Sgt. James R. Hazel, 36335341; Sgt. Albert G. Hill, 34829901; and Sgt. Kenneth R. Martin, 39215673.

All members of the crew were taken to the Commanding Officer of the airdrome for interrogation. After interrogation the crewmembers were quartered in permanent buildings with fair accommodations. On the emergency field there was another B-24

airplane from the Fifteenth Air Force which was not very badly damaged. Source's pilot, Lt. Marshall, made arrangements with the pilot of the other B-24 on the airdrome that his crew would take such parts as were needed from their airplane to repair the other B-24 and that when this was done Lt. Marshall would fly the repaired airplane back to the Fifteenth Air Force. The crewmembers interchanged parts, fixed, and serviced the B-24 that was the least damaged.

Source No. 1 was told by Lt. Marshall that he had had a great deal of difficulty in getting a clearance to fly the repaired airplane to Bari, Italy. Plane took off for Bari on 9 March 1945 with seven (7) members of the crew listed in paragraph 1 of statement of Source 1. Lt. Marshall told Source 1 before leaving that he had arranged for Sergeants Nagy, Solecki, and Veilleux to be sent to Bucharest, Roumania, for evacuation by air.

On the same day the seven (7) members of the crew took off for Bari, 9 March 1945, a Colonel Townsend and several other officers landed at Leckemet in a C-47. Colonel Townsend told Source No. 1 that the three (3) Sergeants would not be sent to Bucharest, but that a C-47 would come for them.

Two (2) days later, 11 March 1945, the three (3) Sergeants were placed on a C-47 which took them to Debreczen, Hungary (47°31' N - 21°38' E). The C-47 was met by a jeep which took them to the Augusztan Sanitarium – the Headquarters of the Allied Control Commission. The Sergeants were quartered there and received wonderful treatment. The following day, 12 March 1945, Lt. General Ira C. Eaker, Lt. General Carl A. Spaatz, and three (3) other Generals arrived at the Augusztan Sanitarium. With the Generals was 2nd Lt. Mike Thomas, a member of the Canadian Army, who had escaped from prison camp.

Source No. 1 states emphatically that Lt. General Eaker personally told the three (3) Sergeants they would be sent directly home. On 17 March the three (3) Sergeants were flown in a C-47 to Casertqa, Italy, on the VCOG of Lt. General Eaker. On 18 March the three (3) Sergeants were flown by C-47 to Bari where they reported to Headquarters of the Fifteenth Air Force. On 20 March 1945, they were returned to their organization, the 765th Bombardment Squadron of the 461st Bombardment Group.

4. None of the three (3) above listed Sergeants was in enemy hands. The field at which the crew was stationed, however, was bombed twice by the enemy during the time the crew were stationed there.

5. This statement is late in being reported because of the failure of the 765th Squadron to notify the Group S-2 of the arrival of the above listed Sergeants.

6. Six (6) of the other members of the crew as listed in paragraph 1 of the statement of Source No. 1 were returned to the 461st Bombardment Group on 10 March 1945. A report of the interrogation of the six (6) officers and men was forwarded through channels on 11 March 1945. The tenth member of the crew, Sgt. KENNETH R. Martin, 39215673, is still in the 26th General Hospital.

LEIGH M. LOTT
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