

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.
11 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. 1st Lt. Clarence P. Marshall, 0-709225
- b. 2nd Lt. Robert N. Hendrickson, 0-2072734
- c. 2nd Lt. Dewey E. McMillen, 0-829524
- d. T/Sgt. George (nmi) Christie, 20644361
- e. S/Sgt. James R. Hazel, 36335341
- f. Sgt. Albert G. Hill, 34829901

2. Above listed officers and men were six of a ten 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 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 1 – 1st Lt. Clarence P. Marshall, 0-709225

A check of landing showed that no one on the crew was injured. Plane was met on the strip at Kecskemet by Russian soldiers who directed the plane to a hard stand for parking. Pilot and crew were taken to the commanding officer of the field for interrogation. In the office of the commanding officer was a Russian captain who later told Lt. Marshall that he was a citizen of the United States who had been drafted by the Russian Army because he was in Russia at the time of the outbreak of the war. This captain did everything possible for the crew. The crew was quartered in permanent buildings with fair accommodations and food.

On the emergency field there was another B-24 from the Fifteenth Air Force which was, on the whole, in good shape. Lt. Marshall talked to the pilot of this other B-24. It was agreed that Lt. Marshall and his crew would take such parts as were needed from their airplane to fix the other B-24 and that when it was fixed Lt. Marshall would fly it back to the Fifteenth Air Force. The crews interchanged parts, fixed and serviced the B-24 that was the least damaged. Following this, Lt. Marshall was given permission to test hop the airplane. While test hopping the plane, he attempted to contact the Fifteenth Air Force by radio but was unsuccessful.

Russians were very reluctant to clear the airplane to return to Bari. After several conferences and some straightforward talking, a Lieutenant General of the Fifth Russian Army Air Force finally gave Lt. Marshall permission to fly the airplane to Bari. Between the time the permission was granted and take-off time, a liaison officer at Bucharest cleared the airplane for take-off.

The plane took off for Bari on 9 March 1945 with fourteen (14) officers and men aboard as follows: the six officers and men above listed, another member of the crew, Sgt. Kenneth R. Martin, 39215673, who is now in the 26th General Hospital; an escaped prisoner of war, certain members of the crew who were at the emergency field when Lt. Marshall and his crew landed, and certain members of another crew who landed there after Lt. Marshall. The plane landed safely at Bari. Lt. Marshall was told that the three (3) other members of the crew, Sgt. Louis W. Nagy, 32236349; Sgt. Frank C. Solecki, 17031178; and Sgt. Philip R. Veilleux, 42093929, would be returned to the Fifteenth Air Force by way of Bucharest, Roumania. Above listed officers and men returned to this Group and reported to the Group COMBAT Intelligence Officer at 1600 hours, 10 March 1945.

4. None of the six (6) above listed officers and men was in enemy hands. The field at which the crew was stationed, however, was bombed twice by the enemy during the time the crew remained there.

5. On previous missions Lt. Marshall and Sgt. Hill have bailed out and been returned to the Group. On a previous mission S/Sgt. Hazel was on a plane which was compelled to ditch. Lt. Marshall and S/Sgt. Hazel have completed thirty-two (32) sorties and Sergeant Hill has completed twenty (20) sorties.

6. Above listed crew members make the following suggestions:

- a. That a liaison officer be stationed by the Air Force at recommended emergency strips.
- b. That United States arm-band flags are most important.
- c. That crewmembers be taught several expressions in Russian.

LEIGH M. LOTT
Major, Air Corps
Combat Intelligence Officer