

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO 520 U. S. Army

30 September 1944

ESCAPE STATEMENT

1. Durning, Leon R., Sgt., 31292843, 765 Sq., 461 Gp.

Born - 28 July 1924 Enlisted - 14 April 1943

Home Address - Central Falls, R.I.

Peacetime Profession - Riker (glass)

MIA - 3 August 1944 RTD 29 September 1944 Missions - 6

1. Haag, William Charles, S/Sgt., 20151202, 765 Sq., 461 Gp.

Born - 28 July 1918 Enlisted - 26 Oct 1942

Home Address - Townal, Vermont

Peacetime Profession - Tourist Camp Owner

MIA - 3 August 1944 RTD 29 September 1944 Missions - 6

1. Frye, Morris J., Sgt., 34773084, 765 Sq., 461 Gp.

Born - 22 January 1924 Enlisted - 19 April 1943

Home Address - Avondale, N.C.

Peacetime Profession - Textile

MIA - 3 August 1944 RTD 29 September 1944 Missions - 6

1. Furfare, Rocco J., Cpl., 32548498, 765 Sq., 461 Gp.

Born - 15 March 1922 Enlisted - 26 Oct 1942

Home Address - East Rochester, New York

Peacetime Profession - Student

MIA - 3 August 1944 RTD 29 September 1944 Missions - 6

2. On 3 August 1944, sources were flying in a B-24, piloted by 2nd Lt. R. E. Schweisberger on a bombing mission to Friedrichshafen, Germany.

Almost on the target over N. Italy, at 20000 ft., no. 1 engine started throwing oil. The pilot turned back, and engines 3 & 4 caught fire by throwing oil. The fires were put out and the engines feathered.

Engines Nos 1 & 2 were running - No 1 smoking - and the ship was losing altitude. Bombs were salvaged on the coast of N. Italy and all surplus kit thrown overboard.

Returning after Venice they ran into 20 mm A/A fire near Cervia, the trim tail on the left rudder was shot away, and direct hits scored on flight deck and bomb bay. The pilot gave the crew the choice of bailing or crash landing. The plane was about 1 ½ miles off shore at 2-3000 ft. All were in favor of crash landing.

A good landing was made around the area Cervia-Usseatico, with waters up to the waist window.

All left the plane safely. The pilot removed all important documents (S01 etc). The form "1A" was left in the plane as far as is known as it was in the radio room which was flooded. The bombsight was completely demolished in the crash.

3. Never in enemy hands.

4. Crew separated and headed SW. Source saw two MEs straffing their plane soon after they had left. Later heard rifle shot and cry, but don't know who was hit. Sgt. Durning with Sgt. Tidd (armorers) walked SW until they joined Partisans. Six days later at the Mt. Pietra area (S. San Marino).

During their travels Durning & Tidd lived on their emergency rations from escape kits, supplemented with any fruit they could find. They only once contacted Italian civilians and they gave them directions to the Partisans. S/Sgt W. C. Haag, Sgt. Morris J. Frye and Cpl. N. J. Furfare, remained in a swamp near their crashed plane during daylight, then walked SW in darkness (using US pocket compasses & escape compasses). On the third day Cpl. Furfare contacted Italian peasants in the area of San Giorgio, who gave them food and kept them for four days (until 10 Aug.). Up to this time sources had been living on escape rations, carrots and anything they could find in the fields. Sources were introduced to an ex-Italian officer working with the Republican Partisans. He took them to other houses in the area where they spent 20 days in all, being well looked after by peasants. During this time they were left in hiding more of the daylight hours, owing to large numbers of German soldiers in the area. All men given civilian clothes.

On 30 August 1944 an Italian guide was provided and took sources to the area of Mt. Pietra where they joined the Partisans, spent one night and moved on 31 Aug to the "southern zone" of Partisans San Piere Ria Salzo (Cebnio). Here they joined Sgt. Durning & Sgt. Tidd and other Americans. (All now returned to American hands.)

J. G. Kennedy,
Captain, A.I.S.,
Interrogator.

3 Incls.

Incl 1 - Ltr. 383.6 (4)

Incl 2 - App. B.

Incl 3 - App. C.

APPENDIX "C"

Escape kits should include a magnifying glass, strong enough to start a fire. Iodine also needed - or something for cuts. Small peakknife. Strong twine thread for a celaces. Water bag is useless as it leaks.