



HEADQUARTERS, 13th AAF, SOUTHWEST PACIFIC.—Lieutenant Clemet B. Baldwin, 1920 Calumet Drive, Houston, Texas, and crew, members of a B-24 Liberator unit in the 13th AAF's "Long Rangers", planted their bombs squarely in the middle of Balikpapan, the vital Japanese oil refinery in Southeastern Borneo, and were shot down ten minutes after leaving the target.

The airmen parachuted to an enemy-held island where they spent one hectic day and night, awaiting rescue.

Lieutenant Baldwin landed just off shore, and after discarding his parachute, swam to the beach.

Lieutenant Robert E. Connell, 408 South Liberty, Elgin, Illinois, the co-pilot, wasn't so fortunate. He landed a mile inland in the jungle and his parachute caught in the top of the trees. By swinging, he caught finally the trunk of the tree and hacked his way out of the dense jungle growth. Carrying his compass and pistol he started toward the shore. Suddenly, he saw a crocodile, blocking his path. Neither moved. Then the reptile, with a grunt, oozed out of sight into the murky swamp waters. After two hours of wandering, stumbling and wading, Lieutenant Connell reached the beach and joined Lieutenant Baldwin, who, by this time, had swam ashore.

Sergeant Warren W. Smith, 535 East Carlisle Street, Spokane, Washington, the ball-turret gunner, who during the air battle had shot down one of the attackers, also had landed just off shore and quickly joined Lieutenant Baldwin.

add jungle journey

Sergeant John S. Morrison, 16 Cossuth Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, nose gunner, landed in the jungle, a mile inland. He too, hung up in a tree and had to swing to the trunk and climb down.

Staff Sergeant Barney Rodriguez, Lamesa, Texas, waist gunner, also landed in the jungle too, and used the same method of getting to the ground as the others. While making his way out of the jungle, he ran upon two wild pigs.

In the mean time, Lieutenant Harley L. Drollinger, Route Seven, Spokane, Washington, the bombardier, also had landed in the trees and found himself suspended about 50 feet in the air, swaying in the breeze. By swinging to the trunk and removing his tangled parachute, he was able to slide down to the ground and start toward the beach. He had gotten his bearings when parachuting and had started for the opposite side of the peninsula which was the bail out point, being only 300 yards from the beach. Clambering through vines and wading swamp, he finally reached the beach.

There he was met by Staff Sergeant Robert C. Van Gorder, Lower Maple Avenue, Elmira, New York, the engineer, who had landed in the water and had swum for 200 yards against the tide to reach the shore and by Sergeant Robert M. Blake, 610 Blanton Street, Paris, Tennessee, the other waist gunner, who also had dropped in the water near him, only about a quarter of a mile off shore. A few minutes later they were joined by sergeant Robert L. Wingert, 674 Franklin Avenue, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, the tail gunner, who had severely damaged one of the attackers, and had parachuted 300 yards off shore. He found that his shoes were weighing him down, removed them and then lost them in the water.

Staff Sergeant Rodney C. Avenius, 174 Nassau Boulevard, Garden City, New York, aerial photographer, later joined the party. He had landed in the jungle.

MORE

SECOND add jungle journey

All crew members reached safety except the navigator, whose parachute was seen to open, but after hitting the water, was not seen again.

Lieutenant Baldwin's party discovered a clump of coral rocks, jutting out into the water, and here they spent the remainder of the day and that night. They previously had been dropped a life raft and some emergency provisions by a friendly plane, so at least they had food. After eating GI chocolate bars and drying out their clothes, they settled themselves for the night. While one man kept watch, the rest, using a couple of parachutes for covers, tried to get what sleep the small comfort that coral rocks would provide.

Lieutenant Prollinger's party, on the opposite side of the peninsula, was more fortunate. When parachuting down, some of his men had spotted a coconut grove and an abandoned native hut, and the party set out to reach these.

The going was rough on the beach's sharp coral rocks, Sergeant Wiagert, walking in stocking-feet, used two empty gun holsters and manufactured a pair of sandals which sufficed for the two-mile walk.

After crossing a river, swimming and holding their guns and clothes above their heads, they reached the hut and prepared to spend the night.

Their only food was coconuts and GI chocolate bars. For water, they found an abandoned native dug-out canoe containing rainwater and numerous wriggling creatures, which were strained out. The water tasted terrible but quenched their thirst. By nightfall, they were tired enough to sleep anywhere, or so they thought.

But sleep wouldn't come to them that night; ants, land crabs and mosquitoes, the "king-sized" variety that made passes in formation, kept them awake. They were a tired bunch by the time the sun rose next morning.

The morning they spent climbing trees for coconuts and one of the men tried his luck fishing, but the results were nil.

MORE

THIRD add jungle journey



suddenly, one of the men spotted what, from a distance, looked like a cruiser or destroyer, but, when it approached, was identified as a submarine. For some unknown reason, the sub had a rusty spot on the conning tower and to the men on the beach, this was a "Rising Sun" and that meant Japs. One of the men became so excited that he ran into the jungle, became lost. After a lot of shouting he was coaxed back. A fire was made to signal the sub, but apparently it wasn't seen, although the men were shouting and waving. Green branches then were thrown on the fire to make more smoke, and the submarine crew, seeing this, turned around and came back.

Once on board, a hot meal of ham, eggs, coffee, fruit juices and cigars were served the men and they settled down for the voyage back. Then the sub went around to the other side of the peninsula and picked up Lieutenant Baldwin's party who were still out on the rocks.

Twenty-four hours had elapsed since the Japs had first started their attacks, but the men had had enough excitement for 24 years, so they said.

After a journey of more than a week, during which time it was bombed by a plane, the sub reached an allied base where the airmen spent a few days recuperating and then were flown back to their old outfit.

Now they're back bombing the Japs again!

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