

Byrd Fliers Tell Story Of Polar Crash In Which 3 Died

Saved From Icy Slopes After Battling Eternal Cold, Fog in Antarctic

'God Was With Us,'
Survivors Agree

By H. D. QUIGG
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ABOARD U. S. S. MT. OLYMPUS WITH THE BYRD ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION, Jan. 13.—The skill of their Boston pilot—plus plenty of luck and courage—was credited today for the survival of six navy airmen. Their plane exploded over the desolate Antarctic wastes two weeks ago.

The six, only one of them seriously injured, were plucked from the icy Polar slopes yesterday and flown back to their ship—the seaplane tender Pine Island. But left behind in frozen graves were the bodies of three crew-members who died in the crash.

Aboard the Pine Island, the six survivors told a dramatic story of how they battled the eternal wind and cold and fog of the Antarctic to come through alive.

"God was with us," said Lt. (j.g.) William H. Kearns Jr., the pilot of the ill-fated plane. His five fellow survivors agreed.

Tired, Hungry Survivors

The death of their three comrades dimmed the joy of the Pine Island crew at the rescue. Still, the sailors pressed forward eagerly to grip the tired, hungry but grimly surviving survivors by the hand.

In memory of those left behind, all aboard the Pine Island stood bareheaded to the sound of taps—the navy's call to rest for the three young men who perished on icy slopes near the bottom tip of the world.

From their bunks on the plane tender, the survivors told the grim story of the burial of their three buddies—the first Americans ever killed on the Antarctic continent.

Final Prayer for Dead

They told how crude graves were fashioned under one wing of the damaged plane. The survivors, their heads bowed, stood in a semi-circle while Capt. Henry H. Caldwell, Norfolk, Va., spoke a final prayer for the dead.

An American flag was raised over the ice pack to mark this lonely burial place of three who died far from home.

It has not yet been determined whether the navy will attempt to fly their bodies home or let them rest in their frozen graves.

The dead are Ensign Maxwell Lopez, Newport, R. I., the ill-fated plane's navigator and second pilot; Aviation Machinists Mate 1-c. Frederick Warren Williams, Huntington, Tenn., the crew chief, and Aviation Radioman 2-c. Wendell K. Hendren, Portsmouth, Va., the radioman.

Perished Immediately

All perished immediately either in the explosion of the plane or the subsequent drop to the frozen hardness of the Antarctic snow.

Besides Lt. Kearns, other survivors were Capt. Henry H. Caldwell, Norfolk, Va., the skipper of the Pine Island who went on the unfortunate flight just for the ride; Lt. Ralph P. Leblanc, St. Martinsville, La.; Aviation Radioman 2-c. James H. Robbins, San Diego, Cal.; Aviation Machinists Mate 2-c. William F. H. Warr, Reading, Pa., and Chief Photographer's Mate Owen McCarthy, Sonoma, Cal.

Lt. Leblanc was the only one of the survivors who was seriously injured. He rode in a sled when his comrades trekked across the Antarctic glaciers for the rendezvous with the rescue plane.

Helpless to Move

Chief McCarthy said Lt. Leblanc was strapped to his seat when the plane crashed. He was helpless to move when it began to burn.

Kearns, Robbins and Warr, according to Chief McCarthy, fought their way through the flames and ripped Lt. Leblanc out. He was badly burned. But he went without medical treatment for several days because the survivors were unable to locate their first-aid equipment.

Chief McCarthy said he was "partially knocked out" but was unable to drag himself from the burning wreckage.

Aboard the Pine Island last night—where the survivors were offered turkey, ice cream and all the other things they dreamed about during their two weeks' nightmare—naval authorities pieced together the story of the twin-engine mariner patrol bomber that disappeared in polar mists Dec. 30.

Exploratory Flight

The plane, a unit of the eastern group of the Byrd expedition, had taken off for an exploratory flight. Pilot Kearns headed the plane due south toward the unexplored Thurston Peninsula, in the vast reaches of James Ellsworth Land.

For a time all went well. Shortly before the disaster, the crew radioed the Pine Island that they had a ceiling of 600 to 1000 feet and visibility of less than two miles.

Even as the message crackled out over the airways, the plane neared the icy desolation of Cape Dart at the tip of the Thurston Peninsula. The cape was just off the port bow, and Lt. Kearns swung his plane slightly and climbed to 1000 feet.

Plays Strange Tricks

Suddenly, a huge icy mountain loomed dead ahead.

There was no time to complete a full swing. A head-on crash—and certain death—seemed almost inevitable for the plane and all nine crewmen.

In the split fraction of a second left, Lt. Kearns jolted the plane away from the mountain and into a shallow left turn.

But again the polar glare played



SCENE OF CRASH—[X] on the map marks the approximate position of Thurston Peninsula where the naval scout plane of the Byrd expedition crashed in the frozen wastes of the Antarctic.

strange tricks. The horizon—the all-important point where sky begins and ice ends—was indistinguishable.

The crewmen heard the sneering screech of ice scraping along the bottom of the ship.

Again Lt. Kearns' skill showed up.

He drove all the power possible into the stricken plane and kept it in control. The craft lurched and bumped, but under Lt. Kearns' handling nosed around toward the Pine Island.

Friction Starts Explosion

Then the friction of the plane's hull on the snow set sparks of electricity dancing through the ship.

The forward gasoline tank exploded and the plane—a mass of burning metal—literally fell to pieces in the air.

The crew was blown clear. In the glare of the 24-hour polar daylight the six survivors watched their forward gasoline fuel tank burn brightly. For 100 yards the wreckage of their plane and precious equipment was strewn across an isolated patch of an unknown continent.

In chill silence, they saw that three comrades were dead. They did what they could—salvaged the unburned gasoline in the rear tank for cooking purposes—and prepared to battle the elements for survival.

Food Is Rationed

For the first few days after the crash, the six survivors huddled in the lee of the broken hull of their plane.

The food was rationed as the survivors prepared for a long siege. For the first day and a half, however, no one ate. The six were in a daze and either slept fitfully or merely stared at the unbroken whiteness surrounding them.

It was a long hard haul.

But Saturday morning, searchers spotted them and dropped food and provisions. Then a rescue plane took off from the Pine Island, dropped instructions to the stricken men and landed in an icy pool about eight miles from them.

Journey Takes Hours

With Lt. Leblanc riding in a sled, the six began their trek over the treacherous slopes and bottomless crevasses of the Antarctic wastes. Occasionally, they huddled together for warmth, or to assure one another they were going in the right direction.

The journey took hours. But their way was set by their rescuers. They reached the fog-bound rescue plane early yesterday morning and, within a short time stepped on deck of the Pine Island.

To the cheers of the crew, they scribbled messages that all was well to their worried families. Then those who were able sat down to that turkey dinner—the one that fate prevented them from eating on New Year's day.

36 Crash Survivors Taken to Manila

MANILA, Jan. 13 (U. P.)—The army transport Gen. E. T. Collins docked here today with 36 survivors of an emergency landing in the China sea made by a four-engine plane bound from Shanghai to the Philippines.

Officials of the Far Eastern Air Transport, Inc., owners of the C-45, said that six passengers—all Chinese—were missing and presumed lost.

The plane crashed in the water 80 miles off the coast of northern Luzon Saturday afternoon. After spending the night in rubber life rafts the survivors were sighted by another plane.

Community Service Institute Is Set

An institute designed to promote interest in community service will be held at the Cropsy auditorium of the Indianapolis public library starting Jan. 29, it was announced today.

The institute program will be given in six sessions. It is sponsored by the Indianapolis council of social agencies.

How Swindlers Gyp Veterans

Phony Housing Deals Take Their Cash

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is undertaking to construct inexpensive dwellings virtually without profit and out of the goodness of his heart.

"He's Trying to Help"

"Too old to enlist," he says. "Tried to, but they wouldn't take me. So I'm trying to help the boy who did go. That's the least I can do. I always say."

And that's what he always says.

Now, all it takes is \$50, \$100 or \$1000 down—on the lot. Fix it all up with a G. I. loan or an FHA loan. It's easy.

Seeing his first ray of hope, the tired G. I. willingly pays off. As a rule, he pays in cash. And that's the last of it. He's hooked.

I isn't the gullibility which leads the veteran to the bait. It's desperation. It makes him willing to take a chance on a stranger with a fast line.

Ways to Get a House

In Indianapolis, you can rent a house or an apartment if you can guarantee delivery of a 1946 automobile at what is called "ceiling" price.

Putting up a little cash on the side is another way to get under a roof if you get in touch with the right person.

The veteran, struggling to get on

his feet, can't compete in that kind of market. He cannot make the heavy down payments required by the tightening up of mortgage loans.

And so by a process of elimination, he is forced out of the legitimate market and into the field of the marginal operators. And there he invariably takes a beating.

By and large the community which has failed to house 9000 veterans' families now in urgent need also has failed to protect its veterans against swindlers until it was

Convicted of Larceny

It was too late in the case of John Wilson Welch and Forrest L. Hackley. The state eventually caught up with them, but not until veterans and others lost \$30,000.

Welch and Hackley, who operated

the Co-operative Homes Co. in the Lemcke building during 1945 are serving one to ten-year sentences in the Indiana state prison at Michigan City.

They were convicted last June in the Marion county criminal court of grand larceny, after a whirlwind operation in Indianapolis which resulted in losses to veterans ranging from \$50 to \$750 each.

The scheme was exposed by the Indianapolis Better Business Bureau and eventually nailed down by former Deputy Prosecutor Saul Rabb.

But only after more than 100 veterans had been nicked. The scheme was crude, but the housing shortage was desperate. The victims have never been repaid and probably never will be.

Tomorrow: Welch & Hackley: The Case of the Farmed Promoter.

'Broken Homes' Cause Child Delinquency, Survey Shows

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spouses. The father was ordered to pay \$15 a week to the mother for support of the children.

THE FATHER earned only \$32 a week and with his new financial obligations incident to his second marriage, he fell behind in his payments and the mother, married to another man, had to go to work.

This left the children "on their own" in the streets to follow their social impulses without parental direction.

It was less than six months after the divorce that the 12-year-old daughter fainted from a heavy dose of narcotics.

(NEXT: Juvenile victims of the eternal love triangle.)

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