

# A White Veil and A Spar



Written and Illustrated by  
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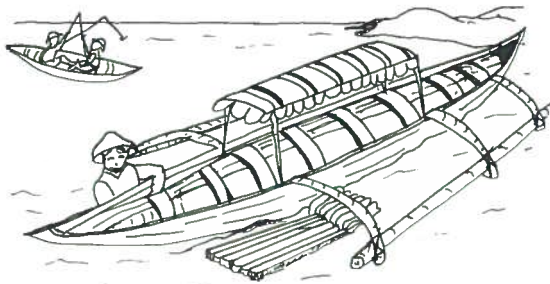
It was a sunny Thursday that August 2, 1973, when twelve Maryknoll Sisters and five men set out from various parts of Mindanao, Philippines, on their way by pump boat to a remote Maryknoll Mission in the town of Cateel. As we set off from the fishing village of Lingig, the sky was cloudless, the sea was calm.

We all knew we were in shark-infested waters, but had no idea what awaited us.

The dangerous Mindanao Deep Trench (36,000 feet) was one of the deepest waters in the world. Every year, at least one person had drowned. Yet, no one thought to wear life jackets. At this time of year, travel by sea was the only means of transportation available to reach Cateel. Sisters Virgeen and Edna had often travelled for an entire week from this mission to join us. Now, it was our turn to make the trip for a Maryknoll Sisters' weekend of "retreat and relaxation"

All but three Sisters from the area were in the pump boat on that unforgettably dangerous journey.

The boat was twelve feet long with sturdy bamboo outriggers attached by metal on either side for balance. Overhead, a canvas cover shaded us from the tropical sun.

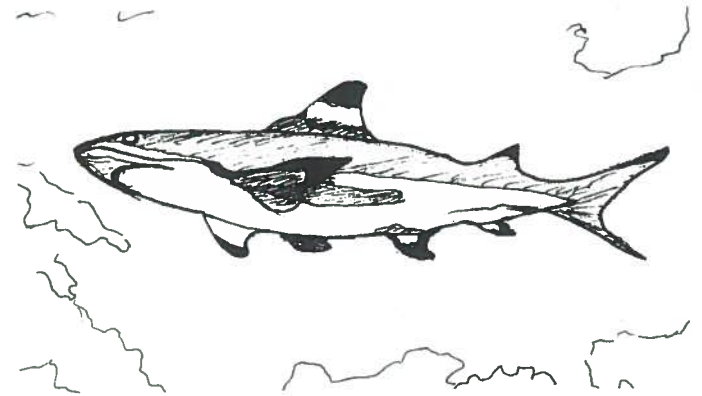


Accompanying us on this trip were George Paglinawan and Julio Baluran, who had recently graduated from the local Jesuit Agriculture College, and Rodolfo Lumbré. The three men were Sister Mary's coworkers at the Tagum Social Action Center. They had plans to hold a meeting with the Cateel farmers and fishermen. Their tools for instruction included a huge movie projector, a sound box and three movies. They placed these under the seats at either end of the boat. They also brought two three-foot-high citrus trees for Sister Edna to try growing in Cateel. The captain of the pump boat was Doming who had his brother, Mariano, come along to help.

One hour later, in the boat, we were eating a delicious lunch of sandwiches prepared by the Bislig sisters, chatting, laughing, catching up on news. We had left the Lingig shore and easily rounded a narrow piece of land which jutted out separating two bays. Now we were headed for the Cateel landing, only a short distance away. Some sisters sat facing the back of the boat. I sat on the cover of the inboard motor in

the front of the boat when I asked Doming how much longer before we would land.

"There's the shore just ahead you can see it. We'll be there in another half hour." At that moment we paralleled a wave. The boat listed left then right. I screamed with all my might. The boat flipped into the air. I was thrown into the warm water as the boat capsized. I heard a huge splash and saw our pump boat underwater with the outriggers keeping it afloat. All seventeen of us were plunged into the shark infested water.



Stunned! Dazed! Shocked! The waves hit us as we gasped for breath. Five of us couldn't swim. Those of us who knew how to swim, helped the others climb onto the overturned pump boat.

Sister Marge had bad knees and couldn't swim. She sank. Sister Joan saw her going down, swam over to where she was drowning, dove under and pulled her back up.

“What happened?” Sister Marge called out in astonishment. One minute she found herself enjoying the beautiful scenery sitting on a wooden bench inside the pump boat, and the next in the water splashing, desperately trying to keep from drowning.

“I’ll help you onto the boat,” Sister Joan said as water splashed in her face. She pulling Sister Marge toward the overturned pump boat. By now, others were sitting like ducks on the bottom of the boat with nothing to hold on to except one another. The waves rocked the boat up and down. Some fell off. Climbing back on, they held themselves in place by hugging the boat with their knees. It was like riding a bucking horse.

As people took their places on the overturned pump boat, Sisters Maria del Rey and Therese settled on one of the outriggers extending seven feet from the boat. They held onto the top bamboo pole.

Sister Therese, who was taller than Sister Marie del Rey, could stand on the bottom bamboo outrigger. Sister Maria del Rey couldn’t reach it so she wrapped her foot around the metal attached to the boat holding the outrigger. She was careful not to cut herself on the rough metal and bleed. All of us were aware that there were sharks in these waters. We didn’t want to attract their attention. We wondered how far away they were.

On the opposite side of the pump boat, Sisters Joan and Rosemary positioned themselves on the other outrigger, swimming back and forth like

weights trying to keep the boat level as the waves continued to rock us up and down.

I was the last to climb on top of the pump boat. There was a narrow piece of wood on the side of the boat where I balanced myself while I held on. As time passed and I realized we were going to be here for a long time, I knew I needed to move. I didn’t tell the others, but I feared that my weight would sink the boat. Encouraged by the sisters, but with trepidation, I got up on top of the pump boat. I sighed with relief as I realized we were still afloat.

Once settled, we took roll call. All were accounted for. Thank God. We repeated roll call all through the coming hours.



Julio took the responsibility of piloting the pump boat. He sat at the very front where the bottom of the boat narrowed. Yet he managed to hold on, continuing to row keeping us headed toward land. He called out directions, “Left, right, straight ahead,” to George, who was at the back of the pump boat steering the rudder.

Through it all, Julio remained calm and in a very alert voice he instructed us, “Hold onto the food,

we'll need it. Don't let go of the wooden rack and the spar. It's very important we have them." The long straight spar that ran from the front of the pump boat to the rudder at the back came loose and was floating on the waves. "Keep your white veil handy, Sister Patricia Marie."

Another wave hit and, Rodolfo shouted, "It's only a big wave, no crying." Sister Delia did cry. "We're all going to die in these waters," she sobbed. Sister Rosalie perched next to Sister Delia kept talking to quiet her. Sister Delia was afraid of the water to begin with and she knew the dangers we were facing.

Immediately George swam from the back of the pump boat to offer comfort saying gently, "Sister, don't cry. We'll be all right." When Sister Delia was able to control her sobs, George returned to his post. In the far distance, we could see lights flickering along the shore. Would we be able to get back before dark?

Sister Amelia sat in front of me. She was shaking. "Are you cold? Move closer and our bodies will keep us warm," I said.

"I'm not cold. I'm scared, said Sister Amelia"

"Do you know how to swim?" I asked.

"No," said Sister Amelia.

"Then, if anything happens, hold on to me, I'll help you," I said.

We saved the raw carrots, bananas, and other fruit. The sandwiches were too soggy to keep. Sister

Patricia Marie clutched her white veil. All of us had been careful not to cut ourselves, knowing blood attracts sharks.

Sister Marge held a rope attached to the wooden rack that bobbed up and down. With each wave, it was hitting against her ankle. Horrified, I thought her leg might bleed if it got cut. As calmly as I could, I said, "Sister, it's my turn to hold on to the rack." Carefully she turned around and passed me the rope. Relieved, I twisted backward to grab hold of it. We were sitting back to back, leaning against each other to give ourselves support. It did help.

We had another hour of daylight. "Let's all paddle together," said a few Sisters.

"No, keep still, or you might fall off the boat," cautioned Doming.

We then began to call, "Tabang! Help!"

"Don't call out," said Doming

"But why?" I asked.

"It's known in these waters that pirates will call out for help, and when the fishing boats get close, the pirates attack and rob them," explained Doming.

No one spoke. All around us we heard waves breaking.

Several times we saw small boats coming toward us, only to turn away.

The sun set at 6:30 p.m. Darkness fell.

We watched as the tiny lights of the fishermen's boats came closer, only to disappear again into the distance.

"Is everyone here? Let's take roll call; Sisters Amelia, Mary, Marge, Delia, Rosalie, Ancilla Marie, Dolores, Therese, Maria del Rey, Rosemary and Joan, Rodolfo, Julio, Mariano, Doming, George.

Good, all here." We thanked God each time that no one had fallen asleep and slipped off into the depths of the sea.

My flashlight was still working. Each time we took roll call in the dark, I held my breath until I could see the heads of Sisters Therese and Maria del Rey bobbing above the water. It was eerie.

The night sky burst forth in a splendor of stars, planets and the moon. Besides praying, singing, telling stories and jokes, we now searched the heavens for the constellations. Sister Joan was a great resource. "There's Orion, and Taurus, and Pegasus. Can you see them?

"I can see Cassiopeia."

Julio too, looked up to the sky as he rowed all night. The stars guided him toward land.

"Who knows the Morse code for SOS?" I held my flashlight as high as I could so the signal would travel above the waves. A flash of light struck the water a distance from the pump boat. *Will anyone see us?* I wondered.

In spite of Julio's continuous paddling and George's steering, we had been drawn into the strong

current which was pulling us into larger and larger circles.

Hours had passed. We prayed the rosary over and over again. We kept asking our parents in heaven, our angels, the saints, our sisters who had died and our foundress, Mother Mary Joseph, to help us. Our prayers to the Sacred Heart, hymns to the Virgin Mary that we knew from our childhood and our favorite songs, rose above the sounds of the endless ocean. We kept trying our best to think of ways to stay alert: guessing games, stories, news, anything to keep awake and help the hours pass.

By now we had drifted farther out to sea. Instead of following a straight path, our pump boat was pulled back toward the land between the two bays. We continued to move in a large circle which took us farther from the shore. If we went out to the open Pacific we would be caught in the strong currents which swiftly swept along the coast of Mindanao. Finding us then would be almost impossible. Many vessels larger than ours had been lost in these currents. One was carried as far as Australia.

Some watches never stopped. We counted the hours to the turn of the tide. When the tide did turn, it would bring us closer to the shore. Currently it was taking us out to sea.

While we were keeping occupied, the men were discussing our situation.

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In the far distance, we saw lights. "We must be near land, I can smell the earth."

"Does anyone have a sweater and some food?" asked George. "Doming and I are swimming for help." Doming was silent. He was sitting on the two foot by three foot protective cover of the engine, floating. Shock silenced him as he bobbed on the water. By now it was very dark. I could not believe they would be able to swim such a distance in the high waves and the fast currents.

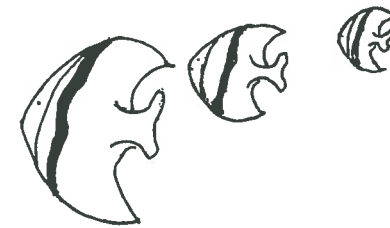
No one mentioned the sharks.

Someone handed George a raw carrot. "I've never eaten a raw carrot in my life," he said, but he took it. There wasn't much else edible. Sister Amelia handed him her warm sweater. It had stripes across the chest in three colors: maroon, gray and blue. After he put it on, George grabbed the piece of insulation where Doming sat, numbed. "Wish us luck," called George as he waved to us. We prayed as we watched the two men disappear into the watery darkness. It was eleven o'clock.

At midnight, clouds began to cover the moon and stars. The night turned black and it began to rain. We put on the sweaters people had thrown to us earlier. Mariano told us to cover our heads. Cover our heads? We were soaked by now! We knew that the early morning air changes in the tropics and people are very careful not to get a chill.

The water we had been sitting in was warm, but now the rain was cold. We huddled together the best we could. The four Sisters on the outriggers could not see us, nor we them. We were in complete darkness.

We were beginning to lose our strength. Sisters Marge and Maria del Rey were very pale, Sister Patricia Marie's white hair hung over her face as her head lowered. Keeping awake became our focus. Rodolfo's "No sleeping. It's only a big wave. No crying," punctuated the darkness. I told him it helped to hear his voice. Though, I could hear in its tightness, his own fright. I also knew Rodolfo couldn't swim. As the waves grew higher, he became increasingly concerned, calling out, "Here comes a big wave. Hold on." The boat pitched up, then down, as we leaned back feeling salt water cover us up to our necks.



"Something's biting me. I think it's a fish," Sister Therese said softly, but we all heard it. No one spoke. I held my breath. You could feel the tension grow as we waited. Biting us were a multitude of tiny

phosphorescent creatures. They nipped like red ants under our clothing, on our legs, arms and feet. We learned much later that the presence of these creatures meant that there were sharks in the area. Finally, we heard, "It's only some seaweed." We all sighed in relief and again gave thanks to God.

We counted the hours left before the turn of the tide. Sister Therese checked her watch. "It's almost time for the 2 a.m. tide change." We all waited. Suddenly, the strong current pushed our boat toward land. I will never forget how it felt. Now I had experienced the turning of the tide! It was going in, not out. What a relief!

The lights from land were long gone, although some of the Sisters told of how they began to imagine seeing things. Sister Maria del Rey saw a person, or an angel, standing next to Sister Therese. She pointed to trees and bushes in the distance only to be told by her companion on the outrigger, "Those are clouds."

To keep awake, we continued to play games, pray, sing and tell stories. A few of us began talking softly among ourselves. "What will we do if a boat arrives that's too small to rescue all of us?" We offered to wait until another boat came. The older Sisters should go first then those who are weaker. We began naming the Sisters to go on the first trip.

Surprised, we heard a declamation in the strong voice of Sister Marge, one of the eldest among us. "If a rescue boat comes and we all can't get on it,

the older Sisters will wait, because the younger ones have more years to serve on the missions."

Did Sister Marge really think this would be acceptable to those who heard it? Others gave animated suggestions.

"Lord, please, send a boat big enough for all of us," I prayed. "All the time we have been together on this journey, there have been no disagreements. If a small vessel arrives, surely there will be differences of opinions. Maybe no one will get on the boat. So I beg you, Lord, please send a large boat."

Rodolfo called out, "It's only a big wave. No crying." The force of the wave lifted Sister Amelia and me up and over the side of the boat, pushing us underwater.

We were holding hands. I could feel us going down. I jerked Sister Amelia's arm as hard as I could. I kicked with all my might and pointed my free arm straight upward. We slowly rose up above the surface gasping for breath. Waves splashed all around us. I swam toward the boat, holding Sister Amelia's hand tightly. The Sisters and Rodolfo stretched out their hands, ready to pull us back up onto our vacated places at the front of the pump boat.

"Are you all right?" asked Rodolfo.

"Thank God you're safe," said Sister Maria del Rey.

Sister Marge patted our shoulders.

"Hold tight with your knees," called Sister Delia from the back of the boat.

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“That was frightening,” I said, hugging Sister Amelia. She hugged back and didn’t cry.

The next two times Sister Amelia and I were lifted from the boat, we didn’t go underwater. As quickly as we could, we climbed back on.

Clearly, the hours spent moving to the waves in the water had taken its toll, not only on Sister Amelia and me, but on all of us. Julio had paddled nine hours without stopping. How could he keep it up even with Mariano continuing to steer the boat?

“How are George and Doming making out?” asked Sister Ancilla Marie.

“I sure hope they’ve made it to land by now,” replied Sister Dolores. We prayed they were safe.

As dawn rose we anticipated feeling the scorching tropical sun. I prayed for our protection. So far we had not experienced its strong rays beating down on us. I worried, *What will happen to Sister Rosemary with her fair skin? She burns so easily.* All night we had been soaking in cool salt water. Now we used our sweaters, or whatever was handy, to cover ourselves from the blistering heat.

It was good to see the faces of one another after the dark night, but all around us we could see only water and sky. We were now very far from shore. How much longer would our strength last? Sister Amelia’s eyes began to close. She had to shake herself to wake up. Sister Marge kept bending forward. We kept talking, but less than earlier.

What happened next, I had never seen. In the distance, a narrow, vertical cloud arose up from the horizon. It blocked the rising sun until 8:30 a.m. shading us as it rose directly behind the welcomed cloud. This was an answer to our prayers.

I looked over toward Sister Therese whose torn straw hat was dripping with water, and Sister Maria del Rey whose white blouse was buttoned under her chin protecting her drooping head. The rest of us covered ourselves the best we could.

“Help, help me,” called Sister Maria del Rey in a weak voice. Stunned, no one spoke for a second. Suddenly, everyone called out, “Hold on Sister. Don’t let go.” All eyes and attention were on Sister Maria del Rey. I could hardly breathe. We could feel the electricity coming from each of us.

In a flash, Julio left his post and jumped on to the single bamboo pole which held the outrigger. He shouted, “Quick, hand me the wooden rack.” Barefoot, Julio balanced himself as though on a tightrope, gripping the pole with his toes. As the waves rocked the boat, he walked seven feet out over the water. He told Sister Maria del Rey to hold onto the rack and he would pull her. As he and Rodolfo helped her onto the boat, I thought the boat would sink, so I slipped off giving her my space. From her seat on top of the boat, Sister Maria del Rey kept falling off into the water. Finally, someone called, “Ride it like a horse.”

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“Why didn’t someone tell me?” she said annoyed. Sister Maria del Rey had ridden horses in the missions. She held tight after that. At last! The worst thing that could happen was for someone to drown or be eaten by the sharks.

I clung to the wooden rack tied by a rope which Rodolfo and I both held desperately. The movement of the waves yanked it and I could see the rope pulling against Rodolfo’s wrist and arm. I knew we couldn’t continue this for much longer. The thought came to me, *now I know the real meaning of a life line*. With the encouragement of the others, again, in trepidation, I climbed onto the boat. It didn’t sink.

We continued to take roll call.

We were much farther out from the land and the waves were higher. The sun beat down, reflected by the salt water all around us. How much longer could we last?

Julio’s voice now, calmly directed, “Sister Patricia Marie, it’s time to tie your white veil to the top of the spar. Hold it up as high as you can.” We took turns holding up the long spar while waving it back and forth. Sister Patricia Marie’s white veil moved slowly at its very top. We kept hoping George would see us.

“Look,” someone shouted, pointing to two heads floating in the distance. “It’s George and Doming.”

“Over this way, George and Doming! We’re here. Swim this way,” we all shouted at once. We hoped they could hear us. Then, someone began to laugh. “We’re shouting at two coconuts bouncing on the waves.” We all joined in the laughter, but with mixed feelings.

What had happened to George and Doming? Were they alive, still in the water? We hoped and prayed they were safe.

“Lord, please send us a boat soon. I can’t hold on much longer. I’m so tired. It would be so easy to slip into the water and into your arms,” I prayed, knowing how terrible it would be for the others if even one person drowned.

I tried to concentrate on the rhythm of the waves and relax my body. I realized that if we were to be saved, it depended on the goodness of people who might not know us. I felt humbled. They would be risking their lives to save ours.

Thoughts flashed quickly through my mind. I knew how unimportant all the work was that I had

done in the missions. Only relationships were important, those I had with people I loved and who loved me. *Who would miss me if I died? Who would I miss?*

Life never looked the same after that flash. I saw things differently. I wasn't afraid to die. All of us knew we might not be rescued, especially now, that we were so far offshore and every wave was threatening us. As I felt my strength waning I continued to pray for help.

Someone screamed, "Look! I see a boat, and it's a big one." In the distance, we watched as a boat kept coming toward us. Forgetting an earlier directive, we all shouted, "We're over here."

Suddenly, as we watched, we were shocked. The boat turned toward the shore. They hadn't seen us.

"Tabang, tabang, help, help!" we shouted even more desperately using all our strength. It was our last chance to be saved. They HAD to hear us, to see our white veil, to find us. We watched as the boat again turned toward us. Then, a shout of joy rose to the heavens.

They DID see us!

"It's George, he's wearing my sweater," shouted Sister Amelia. Sure enough, George was standing at the top of a deep sea fishing boat with both arms held high. We all called, "George!" We were again energized, eager to talk to him. He was alive! Where was Doming? We thanked God for

these brave men who had come to rescue us, and prayed for Doming.



The boat pulled up beside us. We saw thirty-five men lined up along the side of their boat about nine feet above us. They weren't smiling. They wore tiny goggles. No one spoke. Each held a thick rope. Suddenly, they all jumped into the water. They dove under our boat. They got out of the water immediately, and climbed back onto the deck, tying our boat securely to theirs.

They shouted to the Sisters at the back of our boat to jump into the water. The men then caught each Sister by her hands and flung her like a huge fish up onto the deck of the rescue boat.

When Sister Ancilla Marie jumped into the water, she was sucked underneath our overturned boat. A strong swimmer, she pushed against the side of our boat and saved herself from drowning. By the time I raised up my arms, our boat had risen and I didn't need to jump into the water. A fisherman reached down and when the wave heaved, he caught my hands and flipped me onto the deck.

We took the final roll call. We were all alive. No one had drowned. No one had been eaten by the

sharks and we were all safe. We prayed, sang hymns of thanksgiving and thanked the men for saving us. Several of us cried for the first time. They were tears of joy amid a surge of relief.

Sister Maria del Ray collapsed on the hot deck, her head held in Sister Rosalie's lap. We feared she would get sun stroke. She was so faint and dehydrated. We all felt the tropical blaze even more now that we were out of the water.

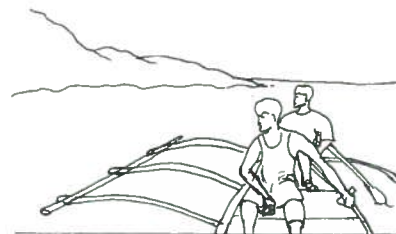
Suddenly, we heard, "Plop. Plop." Our water logged bags and purses landed next to us. Earlier, when we had become too tired to hold on to anything, we let go of whatever we had clung to. Bobbing on top of the waves, we watched purses, bags, suitcases, as they disappeared, never to be seen again.

Unknown to us, George and Mariano had swum, caught our things in the water and tied them to the boat. Now they were tossing them up onto the deck. In no time, we found our water-soaked passports and official papers eager to spread them on the hot deck to dry. We would have spent months replacing these precious documents.

Quickly, I unzipped one of my bags and found my umbrella which I held over Sisters Maria del Rey and Rosalie. Anything to protect them from the burning sun.

Everyone wanted to hear what had happened to George and Doming. We gathered around as George began their story. "We swam in the water from

11 p.m. until dawn when a fisherman picked us up. He brought us in his boat to Boston, the closest fishing village. The people didn't have enough fuel or large enough boats to rescue you, so we returned to Lingig where we started out."



"When we arrived, we found a deep sea fishing boat on the beach because it needed repairs. Otherwise it would not have landed in such a small harbor. The captain of the boat knew one of the Maryknoll Sisters. When we told him our plight he asked for thirty-five volunteers to help look for you. Luckily, the boat was big enough to rescue all of you."

"The fishermen wanted Doming and me to rest, but I insisted I would go back with them. Doming was worried about his wife and family, so he went home and will come back later to find out how we made out," continued George.

"We couldn't find you. We'd searched for more than thirty minutes, and it was only when we saw Sister Patricia Marie's white veil and Sister Ancilla Marie's blue habit that our hopes lifted. The waves were getting rougher, the sun hotter. You were still sitting on the pump boat as we left you, waist

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deep in water. You had drifted seven miles from shore. When I saw the white veil, I knew it was you,” smiled George.

Our jubilation and our gratitude was irrepressible. Again and again, we thanked all who helped save us.

Headed back to Lingig, we saw another pump boat with ten men holding long rifles pointed toward the sky. “It’s OK, we have them here on the boat,” called the captain, waving. They waved back and turned their boat around.

“Who are they?” we asked

“The Coast Guard.”

“Why so many rifles?”

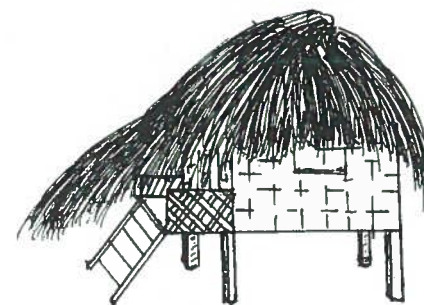
“Those are for the sharks.”

We gulped. My heart jumped a beat. I suddenly remembered how quickly the fishermen had jumped out of the water after they dove under our pump boat.

As we landed on the shore, the people of Lingig were lined up along the beach. They seemed to think we were ghosts with our salt white hair. No one spoke. It was strangely quiet. People stared. My water-logged bags got heavier and heavier with each step. None of us were hysterical or crying. We just climbed from the boat carrying our bags, looking very bedraggled.

Father Jerry Peters had heard the news on the radio and was there to meet us. How good it was to see him! He took us to a nearby *nipa hut* where we had a hot drink of coffee with rum in it and some

delicious, fresh bread called “pan de sal.” After we ate, Father Peters drove some of us in his van, while the others followed in a small black bus back to Bislig, about forty-five minutes over the hill.



When we arrived, the local people were waiting to greet us, feed us, and wash our clothes. They couldn’t have done more for us. Sisters Delia, Amelia and Rosalie, who were from Bislig and had been with us in the water for the last sixteen hours, became the hostesses. They found dry clothing, towels, and prepared beds. The local people left hot food for us to eat whenever we wanted it. There was even a doctor to check us out. No one was ill. She reported that we only had mild shock, insect bites, fatigue, and dehydration. That was after we had spent sixteen hours in the ocean.

“TAP, TAP, TAP.”

“What’s that noise upstairs?”

“It’s Sister Maria del Rey typing her newspaper report of the incident.” As journalist and a

member of the Associated Press, she wanted to be the first to send in her report to the papers.

“Where’s Sister Marge?”

“She’s downtown at the hairdressers, having her hair washed.”

Sister Marge told me later that she knew there was a limited supply of water at the house at Bislig. With so many of us needing showers, she decided to get her hair done. When she came back we teased her. She didn’t care.

“You can’t take the bus to Santa Tomas today, Sister Ancilla Marie, after all you’ve been through. Tomorrow is time enough,” said one of our local friends.

“I have a meeting to attend tonight and I have to get back,” insisted Sister Ancilla Marie. No one could persuade her to wait. She was still wearing the royal blue habit that saved us, with the salt water marks on it. Finally someone persuaded her to take the plane rather than the tedious six hour bus ride.

That’s not the end of the story. When Sister Ancilla Marie reached Santo Tomas, no one had heard about the incident. When she invited the parish priest and his family guests for dinner that evening, they gratefully accepted. Only after she had cooked the meal from scratch, served it and sat down to share it, did Sister Ancilla Marie tell the guests what had happened. They could hardly believe what they heard. They were shocked. To think Sister had prepared their meal after all those hours in the sea.

Their scheduled trip to Cateel on the next day was decidedly cancelled.

Meanwhile, in Bislig, we marveled as we recalled Sister Patricia Marie’s words, “Lord, how many lives do I have?” At the end of World War II, when she, Sister Maria del Rey and Sister Ancilla Marie were prisoners of war in a Japanese concentration camp in the Philippines, they expected to be killed. Instead, they saw the sky covered with American GI paratroopers. All the prisoners were rescued.

Sister Marge suggested, “Let’s call ourselves the New Life Group.” And we did.

In the end, it was a veil that saved us.

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