

## THE 1926 MADRID-MANILA FLIGHT — A HEROIC FEAT

by Linda Stanfield

On Monday of April 5, 1926, three enterprising Spanish aviators left Madrid, Spain to begin a most daring and at that time, unheard of, flying adventure. These three aviators were: Don Rafael Martinez Estevez, Captain of the Infantry and Aviation; Captain Joaquin Loriga, Artillery Commander and Captain of Aviation; and Don Eduardo Gonzalez Gallarza, Captain of the Infantry and Aviation.

Using 3 planes — the Elcano under Estevez, the Legazpi under Gallarza, and the Magallanes under Loriga — they left at 8:10 in the morning from "Aerodomo de Cuatro Vientos" — an airport in Madrid.

Flying at 115 kms. per hour, they arrived in Algiers (Algeria), at 1:20 in the afternoon of the same day. On Tuesday, April 6, Gallarza and Loriga left at 8:55 a.m. for Tripoli. However, since the official itinerary called for them to pass through Tunis (Tunisia), Estevez proceeded there at 9:00 a.m. By 2 in the afternoon, he had a flat tire — already some hours after the other two have arrived in Tripoli.

On Wednesday of April 7 at 1:30 p.m. Gallarza landed at Benghazi after leaving Tripoli at 5:30 a.m. Estevez was not able to leave Tunis until 11:50 a.m. of April 7, arriving at Tripoli at 4:00 p.m. of the same day, and in Benghazi at 3:30 p.m. of Thursday, April 8.

Gallarza and Loriga left Benghazi at 6:00 a.m. of April 6, Thursday, arriving in Cairo at 3:20 p.m. after traveling for 6 hours and 50 minutes, covering a distance of 495 miles.

On the other hand, Estevez suffered another flat tire and was forced to repair his plane. He left Benghazi April 9, Friday and arrived in Cairo at 5 in the afternoon.

In the morning of Sunday April 11, the three aviators left Cairo at 7:00 a.m. Because of differences of opinions, Estevez directed to Damascus, while Gallarza and Loriga proceeded to Bagdad. Gallarza arrived at 3 p.m. in Bagdad. Loriga, unfortunately, suffered a slight breakdown forcing him to land in a desert to do some minor repairs. He did not arrive until 7 in the evening in Bagdad.

Meanwhile, Estevez encountered a hurricane and lost the route. After spending several hours trying to return to Damascus, he was forced to land at 140 miles of Amman due to lack of petrol. He discovered that his tank had some holes which caused the leakage.

Estevez and his mechanic Calvo stayed in plane all night of Sunday, April 11. The following day they tried to contact the nearest town. They had no provisions left except 3 sandwiches and 3 quarts of water which they shared between the two of them. Estevez was already exhausted by Friday, April 16. He was left behind while Calvo continued to look for help. After hearing of the incident, the British aviators of the Real Service Aviation of Cairo proceeded to help Estevez and his mechanic. In the afternoon of Saturday, April 17, English Captain Coghill found Estevez and later Calvo, saving both from a horrible experience and near death.

Estevez still wanted to continue with the flight and asked the Spanish government for permit to do so. However, the Minister of War ordered them on Tuesday, April 20, to rest and regain their health first.

While Estevez was stranded in the desert, Gallarza and Loriga continued the flight, arriving at Bushire, Iran (Persia) at



9:20 a.m., Tuesday, April 13 and at Bender Abbas, Iran at 1:33 p.m. of the same day. Both left Abbas at the same hour on Wednesday, April 14, and undertook a friendly race up to Karachi. Due to a hurricane, Loriga did not arrive until 5 in the afternoon and Gallarza half hour later (5:30) of the same day.

In Karachi, Gallarza and Loriga stayed until Friday, April 16, waiting for further news about their comrade Estevez. They left same day for Agra, India arriving at 4:15 in the afternoon. In Agra, they were delayed because of some tears on the tire of Loriga's plane. By this time, they received some news in the recovery of Estevez and his mechanic. Gallarza and Loriga arrived at Calcutta Monday afternoon, April 19, and at this point, felt tired by their continuous flight. They left for Rangoon, Burma on Wednesday, April 21.

Gallarza arrived at Rangoon at 2:17 p.m. that same day, while Loriga landed 30 minutes later. On Thursday, April 22, at 6 in the morning, they left for Bangkok arriving at 12:15 p.m. The following morning, they left at 7:30 for Saigon.

Meanwhile, Estevez and his mechanic tried to continue with their flight again seeking the help of His Majesty King Alfonso III. Unfortunately, the King denied the petition in view of the delicate state of welfare which the two have encountered.

At midday Saturday, April 24, Gallarza and Loriga arrived in Saigon after passing through a thick fog which gave them difficulties. They intended to go to Hanoi by Sunday but the Plane of Loriga — the Magallanes, was not in perfect condition, causing them to postpone the trip. On Monday, April 26, at 6:40 a.m. they finally left for Hanoi. They travelled in extreme danger due to the bad weather condition. Loriga was forced to land in Hue because of the irregularities in his motor. Gallarza fought heroically against the stormy south

eastern wind and arrived in Hanoi at 5:40 p.m. after 11 hours of flying. The emergency landing of Loriga gave him time and opportunity to cable to the Philippines and explain the delay in their arrival. After repairing his motor, he joined Gallarza at 2:30 p.m. of Wednesday, April 26, in Hanoi.

At 7 in the morning of May 1, they finally left for Macao. Again, due to the bad weather, their arrival was delayed. Gallarza landed in the Camp of Macao at 5:35. The waiting crowd advanced enthusiastically to meet the plane without thinking of the possible danger they might encounter. To avoid the catastrophe, Gallarza directed his plane against the trees. He suffered a wound on his right hand fingers, and a head concussion. His mechanic, Arozamena, escaped, unharmed.

The residents of Macao waited for Loriga until late in the evening to no avail. The following day, Gallarza started the repair of his plane — Legazpi. For five days he waited for Loriga, not knowing his comrade's whereabouts. Gallarza lost hope that they two will ever meet again.

Loriga and his mechanic were found by the Portuguese Cannon ship — Patria on Wednesday, May 5. Unfortunately, the ship's motor broke down and forced them to land in Tinpak, a small rocky island. The mischievous Chinese of Tinpak destroyed the airplane making impossible to resume the flight. The aviators waited words from Spain and upon receipt of the order, Gallarza and Loriga left in the Legazpi plane, enroute directly to Aparri at 7:25 a.m. Tuesday of May 10. Arozamena took the President Wilson ship to Manila while Perez remained in Tinpak to repair Loriga's plane, and waited for further instructions from Madrid.

The plane Legazpi finally landed at 2:20 p.m. of May 11. Upon the instant of the people of Aparri, Gallarza and Loriga

*(Continued on page 24)*



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1926 — MADRID-MANILA FLIGHT

On the 5th of April, 1926 three intrepid Spanish aviators, accompanied by their mechanics, took off from Madrid to begin their adventurous flight towards Manila, a feat unheard of at that time. Only two flyers, Captains Loriga and Gallarza, arrived in a battered single-engine plane on the morning of May 14, 1926, amid tumultuous cheers from the public. Numerous commemorative stamps were issued by several nations to honor these valiant flyers, the Philippines among them. This year marks the 49th anniversary of said memorable flight. Below are reproduced a map showing the route taken by the adventurous flyers and the message from the then Mayor of Manila, Hon. Miguel Romualdez, welcoming them to Manila.

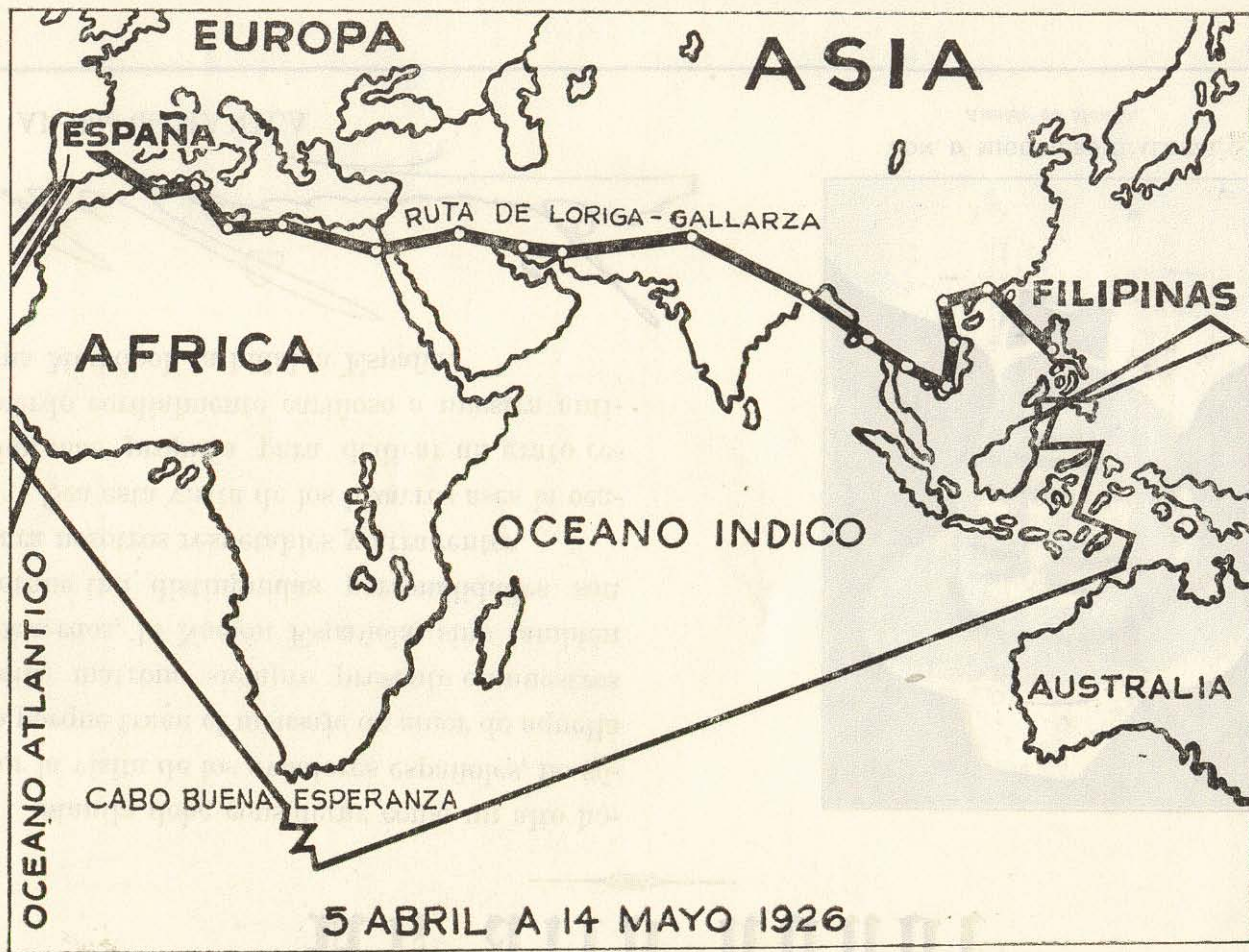




*The three aviators who left Madrid on April 5, 1926 for the Madrid-Manila flight were:*

- 1) Don Rafael Martinez Estevez — with the aircraft "Elcano"*
- 2) Don Joaquin Loriga — with the aircraft "Magallanes"*
- 3) Don Eduardo Gonzalez Gallarza— with the aircraft "Legazpi"*







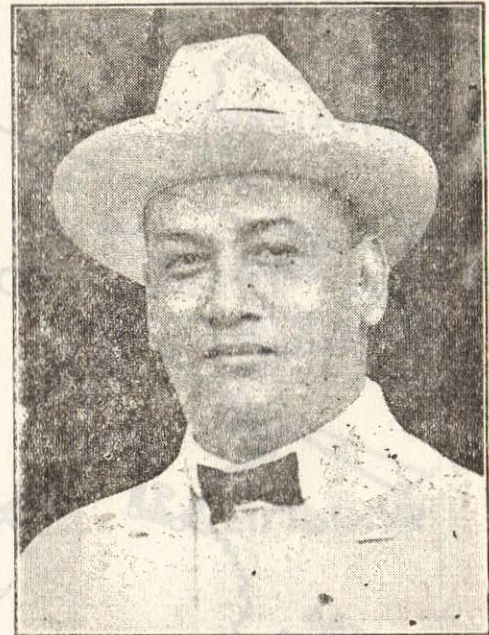
# Un alto honor

Manila debe considerar como un alto honor la visita de los aviadores españoles, no sólo porque traen el mensaje de amor de aquella noble matrona siempre presente en nuestros recuerdos, la Nación Española, sino también porque tan distinguidas personalidades son para nosotros respetables y atractivos.

Sea esta visita de los bizarros ases la ocasión mas propicia para dedicar un grato recuerdo cordialmente cariñoso a nuestra antigua Metrópoli la hidalga España.



Alcalde de MANILA



HON. D. MIGUEL ROMUALDEZ  
*Alcalde de Manila.*