

Sequence of events as recalled:

27 March 1945 – Late afternoon we headed for the woods, late in the evening (23:00 hrs) heard voices and thought it might be US follow-on forces so we approached cautiously and ran into a parked tank that turned out to be a German tank, we moved away very quickly. Estimate that the tank bivouac area was in the vicinity of Gemünden.

Early morning hours, before dawn, we came across a farm house and decided to go into the barn and its hayloft to spend the day in hiding.

Late afternoon we heard a low moaning sound which turned out to be a funeral procession with a few people behind a horse and buggy carrying a coffin as they headed for the local cemetery. We assume that because of possible US aircraft roaming the area they were less exposed to an attack if funerals were held at dusk.

Also during our stay in the barn, Emil Paquin started sneezing because of an allergy aggravated by dust/hay. We would bury his head deeper in the hay to subdue the noise he caused. As soon as it got dark we left the barn with out incident and continued in a westerly direction.

28 March – During the night we came to a river (Main) and proceeded to look for a crossing which we found in the form of a Lock. (presume this to be the Lock near the town of Steinbach). The control tower appeared to be unoccupied so we climbed under the structure and worked our way across without incident.

We continued westward and at the break of dawn we moved to the high ground and slept for most of the day.

29 March As soon as it got dark we continued our movement to the west. We next came to another river (probably the Main) and moved along its river bank when we approached what appeared to be a large village (probably Lohr am Main), we noticed a bridge that had one or two Volksturm soldiers at each end. We decided to take a chance and attempt crossing the bridge. Since both French officers could speak some German we decided to approach the bridge with a French officer with me and a French officer with Paquin, about a couple of yards behind. The French officers started talking German to each other in a very low voice, hardly audible. As we came to the first guard, we said in our best German possible, Gute Morgen! It worked and we passed each guard without incident again. However, as soon as we were out of sight of the guards we moved as quickly as possible out of the village and on to the high ground

and woods. At that point we came across a fenced-in area that had a bunch of sheep inside. Both French officers jumped in the fenced in area and grab a lamb and killed it (French officer had a knife). We buried the hide best we could , cut up the lamb in four parts and each of us , with a leg, continued across the field and into the woods. As soon as daybreak came we headed for the highest ground in the area and prepared to spend the day there. We waited until late morning before we started a fire. Less smoke in mid morning than if we started a fire at daybreak. We proceeded to set up grilling operation and enjoyed a very tasty meal .

30 March – As soon as it got dark we headed in a westerly direction. During the night we went past an enemy artillery battery doing some firing and also heard vehicle traffic on a nearby road. We stayed clear of the battery and the road as well and continued by following the brightest star that had been our guiding light from the time we left Hammelburg.

31 March – Another day of sleeping and resting during daylight hours on the high ground without incident. As soon as dusk arrived we were on our way. During the night we decided to take the first dirt road we came to and follow it in to, hopefully , a village where we might be able to scrub up some food. We came across a small house on the outskirts and we all headed for the door to try our luck. Before we could do anything we heard a noise behind us and there stood a German soldier with his rifle on his shoulder. The soldier could not have been more than 15 years old. He never attempted to unshoulder his rifle. He knew we were POWs and more or less apologized for not having any food to give us. He said he was fed up with the war. He indicated that if we headed in that direction (he pointed which way we should go) we would eventually meet the Americans. We moved away very quickly and decided that we were lucky to have gotten away.

1 APRIL - We found a place on the high ground to spend the day of sleep and rest until dusk. We moved out in our westerly direction. We could hear artillery firing in the distance and knew that we were getting close. After several hours of walking down dirt roads and heavily wooded areas we decided to try our luck at getting some food. We found a dirt road that we followed to the outskirts of a village. The first house we came to we decided to give it a try. We knocked on the door and then saw a lady with a lantern come down the stairs. When she opened the door knew that we were not German soldiers but hungry Americans! She beckoned us to followed her up the stairs and into her kitchen. She said something in German and immediately 2 or 3 young girls came out and also a young boy about 8/9 years old. They prepared what little food they had such as apples, bread butter, erzarts coffee, and maybe a meat of some kind.

The 2 or 3 girls actually came from Aschaffenburg but because of the war and the heavy fighting going on in Aschaffenburg they were sent to the village of Sailauf for their safety. The boy was the son of the lady. During our short stay at this house the lady sent the boy down stairs and outside to watch for any German soldiers that might be coming. Just before we left the house Emil Paquin prepare a note to give to the lady in case she could use it if and when the Americans came. She took the note and placed it in a suger bowl. At about that time the boy came back upstairs and said that there were some german soldiers coming down the road. We thanked the lady as best we could and left. We moved out very quickly after the note writing and headed westward. The sound of battle could be heard and we knew we were getting close to the front lines.

As soon as daybreak came we found a suitable hiding place and rested for the day knowing that we were in close proximity of both the enemy and our own forces. From our hiding place we were over-looking the city of Achaffenburg and could actually see our tanks on the western side of the city with color panels (for aircraft identification) on top of the tanks.

2 April – During the night, knowing that we were close to meeting friend and foe we moved very cautiously and slowly . We found a place under heavy brush to hide . In the early morning hours we could observe german soldiers starting to retreat to the rear. From our hiding positions we could observe their movement and then we saw the first of American soldiers coming by. We did not make our presence known to the first wave of troops. (Shoot first and ask questions later!) However when the first element had passed we came out with our hands up and was able to convince the soldiers we were legitimate allied officers.

We soon were eating a great breakfast, showered, clean clothes and eventually I was taken to Paris for intelligence debriefing,etc. The 2 French officers were turned over to their authority. When Paquin was captured he was a member of the 45th Infantry Division. This was the same division that was fighting in the Aschaffenburg area when we were returned to US control. As far as I know, Paquin was processed thru his own division.

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