

We didn't take hardly a thing. I don't know why, but I presume it was a subconscious act knowing we could carry only so much and then the agony of the choices to make. It seemed hardly worth while. Occasionally we saw some soldiers but they paid scant attention to us. It was while on one of our so called forays we met two other fellows not of European descent, I might add. One was a Britisher, the other Australian. A couple of the most ingenious fellows you would ever want to meet. We four made quite a group and decided to travel together. Not one of us, luckily, was apprehended or approached for being in town, let alone being in stores.

By now the weather was beginning to get a little warmer. Summer was almost here and it was a warm sunny day when we approached a typical German village. It had a strange feeling about it. Not many people about, it looked as if they had just left...leaving what few were behind for what reason I don't know. Well the few that were there were people like us, displaced persons looking for food and a night's lodging. The original inhabitants has just upped and left. Apparently the Russians hadn't given the Germans much warning so the townspeople fled in panic, leaving everything behind. The apartment we chose was completely furnished, with place settings on lace tablecloths, clothing, pictures on the wall, and cupboard and dresser drawers filled with personal items. Needless to say we made ourselves right at home and so did numerous others. It was almost as if the village had come back to life. Sundays were an idyllic interlude from the daily routine. With the exception of Frank, myself, and the Britisher, and the Australian, the rest were Europeans and had to have their Sunday afternoon soccer game. It was almost as if there was no war and we were in suspended animation, living in a small world all our own. So it was, Sundays we went to the park for the soccer game and afterwards sat around and talked in English with our ardent admirers.

It was on one such day we were just sitting around listening to the radio. Yes, our apartment had a radio! What a spot to ride out the war, in a fully equipped apartment, Sunday soccer games, teaching English to fair damsels and other things, and even a radio. Well, everyone it seemed let out a yell almost simultaneously, for over the radio word came that the war in Europe had ended. "Gee Frank, you know what this means, don't you?" "Yea, I guess the party is over and we might as well head back west. The hell with going to Odessa." Frank replied.

So the next day the four of us packed what few belongings we had and headed back west. We weren't so much fired up for dallying and sightseeing now, so instead of picking our way along the back roads, we went in search of the autobahn, (the forerunner of modern freeways in America). Much to our surprise they were practically deserted and we made no progress as far as getting some transport. The Aussie, who had been captured by the Germans in North Africa and had been a prisoner of war for three years, more or less, spoke fluent German and he decided to acquire some bicycles. We didn't get them all at once, but as some poor innocent farmer rode by on his prized possession, he was suddenly confronted by four scroungy looking civilians who wanted to abscond with his bike. I can't vouch for the exact exchange, but we ended up with the bike.

We topped a hill late one afternoon and saw off to our left in a secluded valley a small village that had all the trappings of good

meals and warm night's lodgings plus. We peddled on down and much to our surprise found it relatively untouched by the war. Obviously, the Russians had used the autobahn and in their haste had overlooked this small village. Obviously the Russians had much bigger prey in mind and by then were on their way to Berlin. Anyway, we were standing on a corner wondering what to do next when we were approached by a middle aged man who spoke perfect English and introduced himself as Wally Lange, all of a sudden we had our lodging for the night. The meal was an experience all of its own, but first about Wally Lange. He had migrated to Australia a number of years before and decided to return to Germany for a visit with his mother. He couldn't have picked a worse time, for during his visit war broke out and Wally Lange was virtually a prisoner in his own country. Anyway he invited us to his home where we met his mother and they offered to put us up for a few days. His mother began to prepare a meager meal. It was quite apparent they hardly had enough for themselves let alone enough for four starving road runners. The ingenious Australian who had been travelling with us remarked, " Let's go see what we can scrounge" and telling Wally and his mother to wait a while we took off. It was time for a lesson in the German language and POW diplomacy, meaning we took anything we wanted. We didn't have to go far before we came upon a farmhouse with a number of chickens running around in the front yard. The Aussie speaking in fluent German, asked politely if we poor old POW's could have a couple of chickens. The response was obvious, not only in tone of voice but by the menacing gestures. "Come on lads, grab a chicken and haul ass."the Aussie shouted. We managed to get three chickens before the lady of the house screaming and with raised pitch fork rushed from the house. Back at Wally Lange's house I asked ole Aussie what the lady had said. "She just swore using every known German invective". We had a simple but ample meal that night and the next morning.

Our original plans were to stay a few days resting and seeing the sights. That morning we were wandering about the village and had an almost simultaneous meeting with two of the most diverse people that we could imagine. Which by the way would have a most profound effect upon our immediate plans. First, as we stood on a corner, a Jeep appeared, almost it seemed out of nowhere... an American Jeep. It had a small American flag flying from the radio antenna and was being driven by a solitary figure dressed in civilian clothes. At that same moment, a gorgeous blond female was sighted at closer range. So it was a most confusing spectacle for any observers. I was yelling for the Jeep to stop, I can't describe how excited I was to see an American flag. Frank was yelling stop to the blond. Each of us, of course, had a quite different motive in mind. The Jeep and girl stopped, and there we were. The driver of the Jeep was an American Red Cross official on a short holiday. He was looking for his parents who he hadn't seen or heard from for years. The blond was a local village girl and seemed to be quite intrigued with Frank so we had two lively conversations going on at once and as is turned out, a whole new ball game.

Up to this point, Frank and I had been together approximately five months, but would now separate. The Red Cross official was in a hurry and said he would take us to the American forces in Leipzig, but we would have to leave in a few hours. He was on his