

3 June 1945

ESCAPE STATEMENT

1. Burkhardt, Edwin A., Cpl., 33614932, 764 B. Sq., 461st B. Gp.

Born 14 April 1923

Enlisted - 13 December 1943

Home Address - Rd. No. 1, Box 682, Runlock Creek, Pa.

Peacetime Profession - Clerk

MIS - 17 December 1944 RTD - 13 May 1945 Missions - 1 Sorties - 1

2. On 17 December 1944 source was on a mission to bomb synthetic oil refineries in North Germany. The A/C, a "B-24" was piloted by Lt. Kenneth Smith.

The A/C fell behind the formation at 27,000 feet, and was immediately "jumped" by a "FW-190" which put the interphone out and did other damage to the ship.

Roughly ten minutes later, after the A/C had been headed South, the pilot gave bail out orders. Altitude had dropped to 12,000 feet and no. 2 engine was on fire.

Source saw seven chutes as well as his own over the TRENCIN area (4855N-1803E) and after the seventh chute had opened the A/C went into a dive, and blew up on hitting the ground 20 miles Southwest of TRENCIN.

3. Never in enemy hands.

4. Source landed in some trees on a mountain, with his feet just off the ground, and was able to pull his chute down. Area (4855N-1803E).

He saw guards searching a valley on the North of the mountain, so headed South down the slopes. Source slept at night in the woods, and remained in hiding for three days, travelling South in the daytime but avoiding contact with anyone. (He was under the impression that he was in Germany).

On 21 December he accidentally ran into an old man, and ascertained that he was in Slovakia. This man showed great fear when source said he was American, but gave him directions South into the woods. Later that afternoon source ran into three men armed with machine guns. These men turned out to be three Russian soldiers who had escaped from a German POW camp, and were members of the Russian Partisan Group in Slovakia.

Up to this time source had had no food for four days, except the single candy bar from his escape kit.

The three Russians took source to a civilian house in the area where he was given bread and coffee, then remained with his companions in this house until 26 Dec 44. (The town was XAVADA and the house in which source lived was outside this town). On 20 Dec source travelled to XAVADA where he became a member of the Russian partisans. This band numbered about 150 Russians, Slovaks and Hungarians, and was engaged in railway and road sabotage against the German Army. They spent a great deal of time running from the Germans, never remaining in one place for more than a few days. Source was well treated by this group and ate the same food as the Partisans. He was not allowed to go on any of their missions as he could not speak the language.

On 13 Jan. 45 source was transferred to another band 90 kms distant at KLAK where there were two Canadian RAF evaders (Capt Stuart May and Lt. Jack Ritch). Source lived with these men in the other Group which was the Partisans Hq. They were in radio contact with KIEV, but were all Russians (many ex-POWs) and they were difficult to get along with. When this group moved, as they frequently did, source and the Canadians carried the radio equipment.

In Feb. 45 source and the Canadians joined another Group, this time all Slovaks, in the area of VALASKA SELLA (4855N-1828E). This group was marching towards the Russian lines, so source travelled with them, eventually reaching Russian lines on 19 Mar 45 at BYSTRA & DAUENG (4850N-1935E).

Source and the Canadians were put in a Russian billet where they ate with field grade officers, for two days, then were sent to TURA, HUNGARY Refugee Camp. Here Capt. May was put into hospital with pneumonia (under Russian care).

At TURA source met another 3 Americans (Lt. Abbott, Lt. Faulk and Lt. McCoy USA/SKP/831). From here a Russian Sgt accompanied the Americans and Lt. Ritch, and all hitch hiked on train to ODESSA (having called at DEBRECAN on the way). ODESSA was reached on 6 April 45. From ODESSA source travelled with the 3 American Lts and 13 American ex-POW on an American boat "US Gerry" to ORAN, N. AFRICA.

At ORAN source came under command of the "American Western Training Command" (25 April 1945) and waited 16 days for an air passage to ITALY. Source reached ITALY with the 3 Lts on 13 May 1945 (19 Replacement Ba).

J. G. K. KENNEDY,
Captain, AIS,
Interrogator.

5 INCLS:

1. Ltr 383.6
2. Appendix B
3. " C
4. " D
5. " F

HQ. 15 AF, escape statement, 3 June 45, Ref:USA/SKP/833.

APPENDIX B

Dec. 44
FRAN FEIGLE
(Slovak Partisan)

Assisted source as interpreter with
Partisan Group

Feb 45 - 19 Mar 45
Capt STANKO
(Slovak Partisan leader)

Took source to Russian hands at
BREZNO (4850N-1935E).

HQ. 15 AF, escape statement, 3 June 45, Ref:USA/SKP/833.

APPENDIX C

Source found maps and compass useful.

The one candy bar and Bernadine pills kept source going 4 days without food.

Source retained flying boots as well as G.I. shoes. The flying boots were excellent for walking in snow.

HQ. 15 AF, escape statement, 3 June 45, Ref:USA/SKP/833.

APPENDIX D

Source ascertained from his Russian and Slovak Partisans that all were very communistic and regarded American Democracy, rather as a Capitalistic system.

All men who had been educated in Russia were very communistic.

HQ. 15 AF, escape statement, 3 June 45, Ref:USA/SKP/833.

APPENDIX F

Two of the sources crew members were reported in Feb 45 (by some Frenchmen) to have been in TRENCIN German hospital, sometime in Feb 45.

From photos source was able to identify them as Cpl. Chas. FOSS and Lt. Rudel (instructor pilot). Neither seriously injured.

The same Frenchmen and some civilians reported that another 5 or sources crew were captured by Germans and that 2 bodies were found in the A/C.

British personal

Capt STUART MAY (RCAF) left in Russians hospital at HATVAN, HUNGARY, 23-24 March 45.

Lt. JACK RITCH (RCAF) left in British hands at ODESSA (6 April 45).