

“Courage Englisher”

Roland Carlson

A funny thing happened to me on the way to Bremen in the summer of 1942. Our Hampden light bomber was hit by ground fire and crippled. We were finished off by a Messerschmidt 110 night fighter. The port engine was afire and our navigator dead, when our pilot ordered us to abandon the aircraft. We knew we were over Northern Holland, and the time was about midnight on September 12, 1942.

The rear gunner made his exit, and for me to get out, I had to crawl through a narrow opening into his position and use his exit door. In crawling through, my parachute "D" ring caught on an ammunition hook and the parachute spilled into the gunner's compartment.

I gathered the silk and stuffed it into my flying suit. Grasping the spring-loaded pilot chute in my hands, I looked out the hatch opening and saw trees and houses about six hundred feet below. I was trying to decide whether to sit back and brace myself, or jump, when the slip-stream tore the pilot chute from my hands. The silk of the main canopy followed and I was pulled from the doorway.

I swung like a pendulum several times before I smashed into an embankment and was rendered unconscious. I awoke some time later and found I had broken my wrist, and my nose seemed to be all over my face. I rested for awhile and then buried my flying suit and flight boots in a culvert.

My escape kit contained a map, compass, and some high vitamin candies. I decided that my best chance of escaping the immediate area was to head east and then turn south. I walked eastward toward Germany, keeping to the woods and ditches the rest of the night. Before dawn I crawled into a dense bush and slept till nightfall. For two nights I moved south, sleeping hidden during the day. On the third morning, when I crawled into a hedge, I found I was within twenty yards of a main highway and German armoured vehicles by the dozens. I started to crawl backwards when I heard someone say, "Englander Kommen mit uns." I am not sure if I felt relief or not, my wrist was like a balloon on fire and my face was so badly swollen I could hardly see.

Apparently they had followed me for three nights, waiting for me to make contact with the Dutch



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