

Chapter 22

The French Underground

Sunday, December 26, 1943

Once Jaques had gone, Ménard offered me some potato soup and another small glass of wine. The two of us sat at the kitchen table, complete strangers other than the fact that we both had the same goal and that was getting me out of France and back to England. He too, said that food was very scarce in France right now but he was one of the fortunate ones that lived on a farm close to town and could grow some of his own food as well as sell it to make money.

"When the Germans first came in June of 1940 James, most Frenchmen rushed to the south of France or to Vichy France to escape being in occupied France. Abbeville was heavily bombed with many homes and buildings destroyed. There was no food, no shops, no cars.....not much of anything was left. Since that time, many have come back, especially this year we are seeing more and more old faces as the tides of war seem to be changing. We have some common things like potatoes, onions, and cheese.....things we can grow on the farm but even now in Abbeville, many things can only be obtained through the black market. Things like coffee and cigarettes come at a very high price. Most Frenchmen right now cannot afford cigarettes so they have been rolling their own made from the dried leaves of fruit trees, corn silk,

peppermint leaves, almost anything they can get their hands on."

"Things are bad in England too Jean-Louis, everything is rationed. The military fares the best I think, providing us with three meals a day. I don't smoke so never gave any thought to what it might be like without cigarettes. Many of the men in my squadron do smoke though and cigarettes on the base seem to be plentiful enough. In letters I have received from back home in America, there is also rationing but nothing so severe as you have described to me here in France."

We talked for several hours about the War. He told me I would find many Frenchmen who would be anxious to help me but there would be others who are collaborating with the Germans. It was his feeling that the ones who were collaborating were merely trying to exist in a very hostile environment. He said they were very bitter towards the Germans, first for invading their country and second for causing so much hardship with regard to obtaining food, gasoline, and other things necessary for normal living.

He wanted to know about the American Air Force. He felt certain that it would be air power that would drive the Germans out of his country forever. I told him about the massive build up since early in the year, with more and more planes coming from the United States every day.

into bed, she was fast asleep. There was only the one pillow so I moved closer to her, my arm draping over her much the same as I used to do with Evelyn. I lay there for the longest time thinking about Struthers and whether or not I would ever get back home again. Tomorrow it would be a new year, January 1944 and I wanted desperately to get back to England.

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thinking of her Mother and Father and brother. I took her into my arms and hugged her close.

"God Bless you Hélène Renaud".

"Come now James, we have to get some rest. We can sleep in my bedroom".

She turned off the light and took me by the hand and led me into another room. The room was filled with darkness but my eyes soon adjusted to the dim light. It was just big enough for the small bed and dresser that was in there. I looked around to see if there was a cot or something.

"There is only one bed in here Hélène?"

"It's the only bed I have so we will just have to make do."

The French must have been much more liberal in this regard for she was quick to undress and crawl under the covers. I sat on the edge of the bed and took my shoes off, then my pants and shirt and I slid in beside her.

"James, it's so cold in here. I forgot to put a log on the fire. Can you go and do it for me?"

The wood stove was still very warm and I put another log in and it caught fire within a few minutes. It seemed so strange to me for this woman to not only welcome me into her home at high risk but to share her bed with me. When I got back

"I think you are right Jean-Louis. There has been such a change just in the last 6 months with the number of bombers and fighters that leave on missions deep into Germany. The new P51 fighters can cover the bombers the entire way now and as a result, we are not losing as many planes as we did early on in the war. The Allies have taken Sicily and have also landed in Italy. I think by summer of 1944, the US 8th Air Force along with the RAF will have achieved air superiority throughout Europe and we will see the liberation of France."

"I sure hope you are right. I live for the day France will once again belong to the French. For now though James, we have to get busy and create some French identification documents for you. Tell me about yourself, your age, height, weight, eyes, hair. I have to match you with someone similar in France"

"I am 19 years old Jean, 6 foot two, 160 pounds, blue eyes, black hair."

"You appear to be much older but nevertheless, I will have to make you some conscription deferment papers as well as some job papers. "

With just that small bit of information, he motioned me to follow him. We climbed up a ladder to a loft that was above the main room. This loft appeared to be where he slept. It had a slanted ceiling but I soon found out that this ceiling opened up into a smaller room concealed behind it. It was

in here that he had all of his papers, books, documents and the like. He began searching through his vast collection of information to see if he could match me up with some other person in France. As he was searching, I noticed that he had photographic equipment here as well and the means to develop pictures. Developing pictures had been a hobby of my father's so I was a bit familiar with the darkroom process.

"Aha, here we are James. I have found someone just like you. Your new name is going to be Gerald Baudet, 400 Rue Gambon - 18101 Vierzon, France "

Once he had found a likeness, he had me pose for a photograph. A few clicks of the shutter and he was ready to develop the film. It was amazing to watch him work so quickly and with so little effort. He had another little cubby hole set up for a dark room. It was only big enough for one person. He was not in there very long before he came out with a nice looking picture of me. He then sat down at a small desk where he had a fairly large collection of blank ID's and other official looking documents that had some sort of official stamp pressed into the paper.

"The process now James is to place the name Gerald Baudet, 400 Rue Gambon - 18101 Vierzon, France and add your age, height, weight, eyes, and hair onto this new identification".

For this, he used a small hand set printer to set up exactly the same kind of letters and numbers to match those already

material and after I got into the back, I was to just cover myself over and lay quiet until we got to the Le Queen dance hall. She would then get out of the vehicle and go with the officer into the club and after a period of time, I was to sneak out of the vehicle making sure to take the cover with me tucked under my right arm and go past the entrance to the Le Queen and on to the next corner where I would see a dress shop. I was to wait there for a man named Pierre Quentin. He would take me to a contact in Châteauroux which was just a short distance south of Vierzon.

"This is New Years Eve tonight James so we will have one more glass of wine and then we will have to get some rest."

"I have lost all track of time and dates Hélène. When this week started, we were to have the USO perform for us at the base and now, here I am deep inside France trying to avoid the Germans and make it back to England."

She brought the wine and handed a glass to me.

"A toast James, to your safe journey to England and for us here in France, the Liberation."

"Also to you Hélène. I know how you are risking everything to help me."

We were standing directly in front of each other and I watched her eye well up with tears and I knew she was

"Anything will be good to me H  l  ne."

Once again, I found myself in the company of someone who was willing to risk their life to get me back to England and I knew that one day I would have to come back to France to thank each and every one of them. H  l  ne took me into a very small kitchen just big enough for a table and two chairs. Here she poured us another glass of wine and she wanted me to tell her more about the war while she prepared the potatoes.

"The war is going in our favor more each day. This last mission I was on, the 8th Air Force had 675 bombers in the air over France and almost as many fighter planes. The RAF flies by night doing carpet bombing and the 8th Air Force flies by day doing precision bombing so the Germans are under constant attack. Most of the missions have been deep into Germany with major attacks on railroads, munitions factories, and ball bearing factories. On the way here earlier today, I came under fire from my own Air Force just north of the railway station in Paris so now I know the feeling of being on the ground and having the bombs dropped on me as well as being up there in a plane being shot at."

After finishing our meal, we went back into the sitting room and talked for several more hours. H  l  ne told me that her German Officer would be here tomorrow night about 1900 hours. She described the vehicle he would be driving and I got the impression that it was some sort of small canvas covered army jeep vehicle. She had a piece of tent like

on the blank ID papers. He was very meticulous with this part of the process and he made quite a few test prints on blank paper before he was satisfied with the results. With the name finished, he then added my photograph and my main ID was finished. Next came the job papers and the conscription deferment. When he was all done, everything looked very official looking to me and I was now Gerald Baudet. The whole thing took less than two hours.

"Did I tell you that before the war I wanted to be a printer James? I worked for 3 years at the local newspaper in Abbeville. It was totally demolished during the bombing."

Once we were done, he closed the ceiling back up and even on close inspection, I was unable to detect that anything was on the other side of it. This small secret room must have been enclosed in a gable on the roof towards the back of the house that was not noticeable to anyone approaching the house from the front. We went back down the ladder and both of us sat down at the kitchen table again.

"We are both much safer now that you have papers to show who you are. From this point on, I will call you Gerald so that you will begin to get used to the sound of it. What we will do next is layout a plan to get you from Abbeville to Vierzon. Vierzon is about 398km from here. You will go by train the entire way. You will have to change trains in Paris and later tonight we can go over the layout of the train station so that you know where you are going. It is important for you to always look like you know what you

are doing and where you are going and not confused wondering what to do next. In Vierzon, you will meet up with a woman named H el ene Renaud. She runs a small shop not far from the train station. You will be north of the Loire River when you arrive in Vierzon and this is a very sensitive area for you to get by the German check points."

"What if someone speaks to me Jean-Louis?"

"We have thought of that Gerald. Before you leave here, we will wrap a bandage around your neck that will give the appearance of a person who has had recent throat surgery. It will have a breathing tube protruding and some blood so all you will have to do is inhale through your throat and make sounds as though you are trying to speak. If they are German soldiers, you can pull your shirt open so they can see your problem."

"Where does the money come from to do this Mr. M enard?"

"Please, just call me Jean. I have no idea about the money Gerald. I have heard rumors that much of it comes from England but my job is to forge papers and I leave the money up to others. Every so often, my contact in Abbeville meets me and provides money. It's best not to know these things but I feel certain that there are also many wealthy people in France who hate the Germans for invading our country. There is not sufficient money to buy your train ticket to Vierzon right now and that is all I know."

not letting anyone move south since they began the conscription.

"The le Cher River runs into the Loire River to the west of Veirzon James and it is a dividing point between Vichy France and Occupied France. Right now, the Germans are not allowing anyone to move south across the river."

I was not sure what she meant about the conscription and she told me that all young men in France were being forced to go to Germany to work in the war plants and many were trying to avoid this by going into the forests in southern France to join the resistance. She told me of the plan to get me across the river.

"I have this German officer who thinks I am in love with him. He comes here every Saturday night and we go dancing in a place called Le Queen. Little does he know that it is in his vehicle that we will get you to the other side of the river. It is a very dangerous move for both of us but there is no other way to get you across as every bridge is heavily guarded. She laid out every detail of the plan from the moment the German officer would arrive, where they would park, and who I was to meet on the other side after I left the vehicle.

"There is not much to offer you for supper James but I can fry up some potatoes and I have some corn bread left over from last night."

As for me, I was born in a small town in Ohio called Struthers. The main industry there is the making of steel. I have two sisters and along with my parents, they all live in California now. I am single and got drafted into the service in November of 1942. I was sent to several different camps for basic training and in early 1943, I was assigned to the Army Air Force. It was not long before I found myself in a bomber group in England. I flew on 3 missions and then we got shot up very badly and we crash landed in Scotland. I spent almost two months in the hospital there before being sent back to my bomber group. We had 24 successful missions over Germany in the ensuing months and then on December 24th of this year, we were shot down over Hesdin. The plane broke up and exploded. I was the only one who was able to get out and parachute to safety. I came down in a farming area and some very friendly people helped me get to the home of Jean-Louise. I left Jean at the railway station early this morning. It was hard having to leave him there but I know he will go on helping others just as he helped me."

"Did he look well ? Was he in good spirits?"

"Yes, he looked very well but I think the only thing that will really make him feel whole again is when the Germans are finally driven out of France."

Hélène got us both a glass of wine and we talked for several hours about the war. She told me it would be dangerous getting me over the le Cher River because the Germans were

I could see right away that I was going to have to learn ways to deceive the Germans if I was ever to get out of France. Jean and I talked well into the night discussing various aspects of my journey. He told me that many attempts had been made along the west coast of France to return downed airmen but German patrols in that area were much too heavy. He said that although the route through Spain was the longest, it was also the safest and the one they have had the most luck with. He told me that south of Vierzon, I would have to cross over into unoccupied Vichy France and that this portion of my journey might be on foot and at night to avoid Germans.

"On Wednesday, we will go into Abbeville together. I have some supplies to pick up and it will give you a chance to look around and get used to the feeling of being close to some of the German soldiers. We can also pass by the train station and I can point out some things to you to watch out for. I will also be able to see my contact and find out if there is money to buy you a ticket to Vierzon."

"OK Jean, I know that I will feel very conspicuous but dressed in these clothes, I should not look any different than other young Frenchmen, eh?"

"That's right. You have to give the appearance of belonging here and don't be afraid to look straight at the German soldiers if the occasion arises."

The next two days Jean spent hours with me teaching me short French phrases so that I would feel more comfortable around others along the route to Spain. Until now, I hadn't realized how important the little German, French and Italian phrase books were that had been passed out to us when I first got to Molesworth.

Good Morning.....Bonjour

Good night.....Bonne nuit

How are you.....Comment allez vous

Thank you.....Merci

yes sir.....oui monsieur

no sir..... aucun monsieur

The train is early.....le train est tôt

The train is late.....le train est en retard

Do you have the correct time.....Vous avez le temps correct

How many francs is that?.....Combien de francs est celui ?

The list went on and on but slowly I was becoming more and more used to the pronunciation. He said that others

"So Jean-Louis sent you. What is your name?"

"My real name or the one Jean has given to me?"

"Your real name", she said with a slight laugh.

"My real name is James MacGregor Mrs. Renaud."

"Please call me Hélène.....and I am Miss. I only wear the rings to keep the Germans from getting too friendly. This whole perfume shop is a front for the Underground Resistance. I came here at the very beginning of the war in 1940. I needed to do something to pay the Germans back for killing my Mother and my Father and my younger brother in an air raid on Abbeville. That's where I met Jean-Louis and together we set out to join the resistance and free our country from the Nazis. Tell me about yourself, James."

I had seen the ring on her left finger and assumed that she was a married woman and felt it only right that I should call her Mrs. She was very good looking and I guessed her to be about 35 years old. She reminded me a lot of Evelyn with her dark hair and deep blue eyes.

"I am so sorry to hear about your parents and your brother Hélène. So many bad things are happening in this war. Just north of here in Orleans, the Germans dragged a screaming helpless old lady off the train and who knows what they will do with her.

standing in front of her door. I was worried that she might be closed but later found out that she lived in the back of the perfume shop. I put my hand on the latch and eased the door open to the sound of a tinkling bell.

As soon as I was inside, a woman pushed a curtain aside and said, "peux je vous aide jeune homme". (can I help you young man)

"Je recherche Hélène Renaud" (I am looking for Hélène Renaud)

"Je suis Hélène Renaud" (I am Hélène Renaud)

"Jean-Louis Ménard m'a donné votre nom et adresse. Je suis un aviateur américain abattu par les Allemands" (Jean-Louis Ménard gave me your name and address. I am an American airman shot down by the Germans.)

As soon as she heard the name Jean-Louis, she quickly took me by the arm and led me to the back thru the curtain. We passed through what appeared to be a dressing room of sorts with two full length mirrors in booths and on into a sitting room with two overstuffed chairs and some book cases, . Then in perfect English, she told me that this was her living quarters and for me to sit down and wait back here until she finished in the shop for the night. It was totally dark outside when she returned and she closed the blind and the curtains before turning on the light.

who help me along the way might be more comfortable with me speaking than wearing the fake throat bandage. The lessons went on all during the time that I helped Jean with his chores, Jean asking the questions and me answering him in french.

Wednesday, December 29, 1943

On Wednesday we set out for Abbeville. It was an overcast day but no rain. Jean said that it was less than an hours walk and we would be there. When we were about halfway to town we left the dirt road for one that was paved. There were more houses now and as we continued on our way, we began to see leaflets on the ground. Jean told me not to pick them up as it was forbidden for the French to look at them. Even though the rain had soaked many of the leaflets, we could see the Face of Adolph Hitler on them. He was standing in a field of dead German Soldiers. Jean said the American bombers sometimes go over and drop these in an attempt to discourage the German soldiers. He said the message was always the same, German Soldiers, you will die here in France for Der Fuhrer.

I was unaware of any missions from our base who's purpose was to drop leaflets but the 8th Air Force had bases located all over England, even as far north as Outlan. It was entirely possible that certain non combat forces that flew photo reconnaissance missions could also drop leaflets.

As we approached the center of town, there were no cars. Bicycles seemed to be the main mode of transportation. Jean said that we would first go to the train station so that he could point out where the train would arrive. He told me that he would be with me that day and that he would buy the ticket and then we would sit and wait for the train to arrive. We were on a road called Rue Saint-Vulfran and we walked across a bridge over the Somme River and the train station was dead ahead. I could see that much of the old building still lay in ruins. There were two German soldiers on the other side of the bridge. They had on long grey winter coats and both were leaning with their forearms on the bridge and talking. The one was smoking a cigarette and looked up at us for just a moment as we passed by. This was my first test at having to confront German soldiers but they seemed more concerned with whatever it was they were talking about than us. Jean commented as soon as we had passed them by.

"You see , they do not know you from a Frenchman and he patted me on the back."

We went into the train station and it looked much like the Baltimore and Ohio in Youngstown. Jean pointed out the ticket booths and further along there were doors leading out onto the platform where the trains would arrive.

"This is going to be a long ride for you.. The Germans are using the railroad mostly to haul needed supplies for their soldiers to the north and west of us. The schedules are not

myself off as Gerald Baudet and once again I was on the train, this time headed south out of Paris.

The trip from Paris to Vierzon was about 200 Kilometers and with any luck at all, we would be there in about 2-1/2 to 3 hours. Sitting next to me was a woman who appeared to be in her sixties. She was wearing all dark clothing with a black scarf wrapped around her head. She made no attempt to talk to me so as soon as I was settled in my seat, I took my book out of the bag Jean had given me and began to read. I must have been very tired because I did not remember dozing off. It was 1630 hours when I awoke to the sound of the conductor announcing Orleans. When we pulled into the station there, two German soldiers boarded the train. They were looking for someone and as they approached, I was horrified to see them drag the old lady sitting next to me out of her seat and off the train. She was screaming loudly at them and saying something in a language other than French. There was a lot of chatter going on after she was gone with everyone wondering what that was all about. I thought to myself that she might have been jewish but no matter who she was, it was awful to see the way the soldiers had just forcefully grabbed her and dragged her off the train.

As the train lurched forward, my thoughts were still of this old woman and I wondered what on earth they could possibly do with her that would serve them any benefit. We reached Vierzon at 1750 hours and I headed straight for the La Galerie de Parfum Shop run by H el ene Renaud. It was closer than I had thought and in about ten minutes, I was

quite a few German soldiers as I made my way through the station but just as Jean had said, they seemed to just mill about with no real intent to question anyone. It was a huge building with very high ceilings and down towards the center, the big board with Departures. It was not long until I came upon the sign I was looking for, Metro. Here I had to buy a ticket that would take me to Gare d'Austerlitz. I had to wait in line for about ten minutes and when I got up to the window, I said, "Un billet au d'Austerlitz de Gare". He said, "dix francs" and I handed him 10 francs. There were many others heading for the same place so I just followed along. The pace of things seemed much quicker here in Paris and in a few minutes, I was on the metro headed for Gare d'Austerlitz where I would board my train for Vierzon. This proved to be a very short ride and once outside the train, I walked up the stairway to the terminal. Jean had told me to turn left at the top of the stairs and I would see the train area at the far end and I was very happy to see the sign that said Orleans-Vierzon-Limoges.

It was 1320 hours when I looked at the departure schedule. If the train was on time, it would be 1400 hours and I would be on my way. I sat down in the waiting room and began to read more of the book Jean had given to me, one eye on the book and the other on my watch. The train was a bit late and we didn't board until 1440 hours. The procedure was much the same as in Abbeville with the conductor punching the tickets and the German soldiers checking the papers. I was really amazed at the ease with which I was able to pass

like they used to be so you cannot rely on times too much. Once you get on the train Gerald, it will take you first to Aimens and then to Paris. You will most likely be asked for your papers at Amiens and again at Paris. They will only look to see if the picture matches you so just hand them the papers and look right at them when they do this. When you get to Paris, you will have to change trains to go south to Vierzon. The train stations in Paris are close together but not all in one place and they will be much larger than this one. We can go over the layout of the Paris stations again when we get back to my home. You will take a short ride from one station to the other on the Metro train. It's important that you are perfectly clear on where you have to go there to board the train to Vierzon."

After we left the train station, we went back over the bridge to the main part of town. The German soldiers were nowhere to be seen as we made our way back. We turned right onto a narrow street and Jean stopped in what appeared to be a drug store. He talked for a moment to the man there and then disappeared into a back room. I had a feeling that he was talking to his contact about the train fare for me to get to Vierzon. I walked down the aisle and looked around while Jean was gone and I could see that there were a few things on the shelves such as soap, tooth powder, toilet paper, mostly necessary things.....nothing like the well stocked shelves of the People's Drug Store back home in Youngstown. When I saw the tooth powder, it reminded me that I had not brushed my teeth in almost 5 days now and

they felt grimy when I ran my tongue over them. In a few minutes Jean was back and we were on our way.

"Well Gerald, you are in luck. The money for the train fare will be here on Friday. I will be sorry to see you go as we are just getting to know one another."

"I had a feeling that was what you were doing in the back room. I will never be able to repay you for all the assistance you are giving me. Just as I told Jaques and his sister Brigitte, maybe one day I can come back after the war is over."

His reply was the same as Jaques. "You were probably only about 16 at the time but I was here in Abbeville on June 10th, the day the German planes all but destroyed the city. I have worked my farm ever since giving most of my harvest to the Germans, knowing in my heart that the day will arrive when we drive them out of our country. Get back to England and finish the job, Gerald. That is all the repayment I need. "

Our next stop was a shoe shop where Jean had dropped off some shoes to have soles put on. He told me that shoes were also very scarce in France and the pair he was wearing had been repaired 3 times now. He told me that new shoes were made out of some sort of hard cardboard or even wood and he was happy to know his friend Marcellin Véron who ran the shoe shop and had a good supply of leather soles. After picking up the shoes, we stopped at another shop where Jean bought a bottle of wine and then we headed back

because there were so many more people there.....too many for the Germans to check out everyone thoroughly. The train seemed to be traveling much faster now so we must have been on a more straight route. I settled back once again staring into the book.

About an hour had passed and we appeared to be on the outskirts of Paris when all of a sudden there was the familiar drone of bombers overhead followed by the ear shattering noise of anti-aircraft guns going off. About a half mile off to the right there were billowing clouds of smoke as bombs began exploding one after the other moving in the same direction as we were going. I knew right off that it was our planes bombing the railroad yards and little did I know that I would one day be on the ground and feel the bombs coming down on me. I could see buildings very close by on fire and still the deafening noise of anti-aircraft guns. It was total chaos and even the ground under us was shaking from the violent explosions of the bombs. The train continued on in the same direction undeterred by the earth shattering noise of the enormous explosions so close to us. I looked at my watch and it was 1209 hours and everyone on the train was as terrified as I was. At 1211 hours, the bombs appeared to be moving to the right and away from us and I breathed a little sigh of relief. It was 1227 hours as the train pulled into the station at Paris and everyone, including myself, was very anxious to get off.

Once inside the station, Gare du Nord, I began to form a mental image of the layout Jean had showed me. I noticed

picture. Then, without incident, they handed the papers back to me and I climbed up the steps and made my way into the passenger compartment. I continued on down the aisle until I found a vacant seat next to an old man and as I sat down, he spoke to me.

"jeune homme bonjour" (young man, hello)

Rather than risk speaking back and have him start a conversation which I probably would not understand, I pulled my shirt open so that he could see the bandages around my neck and just moved my lips "Je ne peux pas parler". (I cannot speak)

"C'est aussi bien jeune homme, je tends à dire des choses que je ne devrais pas et pendant un jour les Allemands me puniront" (It is just as well young man, I tend to say things I should not and one day the Germans will punish me)

I recognized enough of what he said to know that our conversation was over and I took out my book and began to look at it again. It was in French and I was only able to pick up parts here and there as to what it was all about. In a few minutes I felt a slight jerking and the train was underway towards Amiens. So far everything seemed to be working out for me but I knew that Spain was a long ways off and decided to take it one day at a time. It was only 48km to Amiens and we arrived there at 1050 hours. It was exactly 1100 hours as the train got underway again, this time headed for Paris. Jean had told me I would be much safer in Paris

to Jean's home. On the way back, Jean had me practice more on my French making sure I had the pronunciation correct.

That night, Jean cooked some more potatoes, this time slicing them up with onions and he mixed in two eggs he had been saving. He told me he had only 3 chickens now and only one of them was laying eggs. It was nice to sit near the woodstove on this cold winter night, the two of us eating, talking and drinking a glass of wine. I had been in France for 5 days and there had been no sun whatsoever. We went over the layout of the train station in Paris at length with Jean pointing out every detail of what I would find there. He spent quite a bit of time telling me about the french currency and that I would have about 100 francs when I got onto the train in Abbeville. He said it would not buy very much but enough for me to get something to eat on the way.

Friday, December 31, 1943

The next two days went by very quickly. Jean and I spent most of our time on the language and by this time, I had become very familiar with many of the phrases that I may have to use in the days and weeks to come. At 0700 hours, we had breakfast and much to my surprise, Jean gave me a tooth brush and some tooth powder. He must have been reading my mind. He also gave me a small canvas traveling bag filled with some old clothes he could no longer fit into then the two of us set out for Abbeville to the train station.

"You will need the traveling bag Gerald so that you look like you are returning to Vierzon from Abbeville. Keep your papers in your jacket inside pocket and not in the bag so that you don't have to go looking for them when they ask."

When we got to town, we went directly to the drug store where Jean picked up the money for the tickets. On our way to the train station he gave me 100 francs and told me that I should go and sit down on one of the bench seats and he would go and buy the tickets. He said after buying the tickets he would come over and sit on the same bench and leave the ticket by my side. When we arrived at the train station, there were four German soldiers. I went and sat down just as Jean had told me to do and watched as he went over to buy the tickets. He was immediately confronted by the German soldiers and I could see that they were questioning him about where he was going. It was a very tense moment for me as they continued to talk for a while and then they asked Jean for his papers. They looked at the papers and then again at Jean and just as quickly as it had started, they gave him back his papers and walked on. In a few minutes he came back and sat down beside me, first looking in one direction and then the other making sure no one was near enough to hear us.

"When I get up and leave Gerald, the tickets will be here on the bench beside you. Just slide your hand out and pick them up. I won't see you again so good luck. I know you will make it."

"Thank you Jean.....thank you for everything !!"

As Jean got up and left, I slid my hand over and took the tickets. I watched as he left the train station and suddenly I felt very alone in a foreign place with the enemy all around me. I sat there for the longest time staring at a book that Jean had given to me. It was 0955 hours before they announced the train arrival. "Le train vers Amiens-Paris arrive maintenant sur la voie deux". Almost word for word just as Jean had told me. I got up and picked up my small bag and headed towards the doors leading to the train area.

As I stood there on the platform, I could see the train heading directly towards me, the smoke puffing out the large stack on the front and the clicking noise of the wheels as it came down the track. The engine and coal car went on by, the steam hissing from the cylinders that drove the black iron wheels. In a few minutes the train came to a complete stop and the conductor stepped off the train. Directly behind him, two armed German soldiers.

The conductor announced for us to board the train....."tous à bord". I had my tickets and my papers in my hand and was directly behind two other Frenchmen who appeared to be traveling together. The conductor punched their tickets, then the soldiers looked at their papers. I was quite nervous as I handed my tickets to the conductor. He punched mine just as he had done the others and I moved towards the soldiers and handed them my papers. I forced myself to look right at them as they looked at the papers and my