

But as with all of Gertrud's life, the rest of this escape could be made into a movie from finding a train car of rations to making friends with the "white Russians" who were Mongolians or Tartars and ultimately were the ones who informed them that the war was over.

Through a milieu of vodka-filled Russians and a trashed Berlin, Gertrud and her mother made it to a friend's house outside the city.

In this upper story apartment, Gertrud and the friend's daughter were barricaded in a pantry with a large cabinet in front of the door to keep them safe from the marauding Russians who now controlled the city.

It was an unsafe time with pilfering and bartering as well as raping happening all over.

The next feat was to get to the American zone.

Gertrud's French mother, Helen, was able to secure 2 passes to France. On her return she went by their destroyed home and with a chalky stone, wrote on the red brick that they would be Neckargenind, hoping that her brother and father would return there and see the message. This was a small town close to Heidelberg where Gertrud's paternal grandparents lived.

Mother and daughter, walking and with the French flag lapel pins and those two precious passes issued by the Russians, passed Russian checkpoints where they were allowed through since most of the guards could not read!

They passed deserted towns, saw bodies floating in rivers—many of whom were women who had committed suicide afraid of the announced Russian arrival.

Again their journey was something of a movie plot—walking through empty fields, witnessing signs of serious fighting where dead soldiers stay lay, seeing lots of dead animals.

One night the pair came upon five Russian soldiers roasting horse meat over a fire and they were offered food, the first thing other than raw vegetables, mostly potatoes, they had found to eat.

The next day it was off again to the Elbe River and a tent village with French farm workers waiting to go home.

Gertrud and her mother had to go through what she called the "inquisition" when they were questioned about where they were going and why. Helen convinced her interrogators that her husband was waiting for them in Strassburg. Even though Helen had curled Gertrud's hair so she appear more French and Gertrud had acquired some French language skills by working with families in the camp, the men were not convinced. Helen was allowed to pass but not Gertrud. The guards finally let Gertrud go thanks to pleas from the friends they had made outside the fence.

From there it was a German barracks that the Americans had taken possession of. After a dousing with flea powder they were served a supper of pea soup which did not set well with people who had had little real food to eat for so long.

The two along with others escaping, were put on a train that moved through farms and towns heading toward France. As they approached Fulda where, at 14 Gertrud had been sent in the Hitler Youth Program to help out on a farm, Mother and daughter decided to leave the train at the station. Finding an open window and waiting for the G.I guard to leave the platform, they jumped out the window and hid behind the train waiting for it to put out steam and cover they escape. Gertrud said, "I can still remember watching the red lights of the train leaving us behind."

They spent the night hiding in a cornfield across from the station and the next morning made it to the Hellman home, the family with whom Gertrud had worked as a 14-year-old. After a night's respite, the two moved on with food provided by the family.

They got on the train in Frankfurt, a day's trip on foot, and caught the train that were free during this time to Heidelberg where the two spent the night in the corner of the train station.

The next day by river, bicycle path and train tracks they traveled the nine miles to Gertrud's grandparents home.

But back to art, just two houses down from where Gertrud was staying there was a US Army motor pool where she would sit in her upper bedroom window and cartoon the comings and goings of the soldiers.

The Americans released German farmers and truck drivers in order to help get the German economy up and running again. Gertrud's father, Wilhelm, was able to secure his release and, with a shaved head identifying him as a released German, made his way to his family home. A month later, Gertrud's brother walked from the camp in northern Germany to the grandparents'