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Nick Schuld of Richardton: Germany, World War II

Nick Schuld

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PRISONER OF WAR

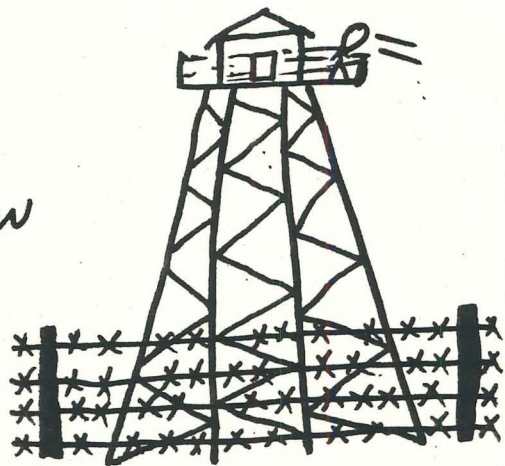
A TRUE STORY

BY: NICK K. SCHULD

RICHARDTON, N. DAK.

AMERICAN PRISONER IN EUROPEAN
THEATER OF WAR
GERMAN PRISON CAMPS
WORLD WAR II 1941-1945

BOOKLET PREPARED IN
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EX-PRISONER OF WAR QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name: Nick K. Schuld

Current Address: Box 129 S. Main St.
Richardton, ND 58652

Address at time you went into service: 2095 West 104 St.
Cleveland, Ohio

Birthday: August 28, 1914

2. Family: (spouse and children) Carolyn (Kelsch) Schuld;
Raymond H. Schuld,
Margaret M. (Schuld) Barnhart
Kathleen G. (Schuld) Meyer

3. Work and educational experience prior to going into service?
I worked at Cowles Tool Co. finishing tools of all sorts, and
also for defense plants in the grinding department. *at Cleveland*

4. Dates and place of entry into service? I was inducted into the
service March 4, 1943.

5. Summary of events from time of entry into service and until just
prior to capture or entering status as a POW? I was sent to
Camp Wheeler, Georgia for my basic training. After 13 weeks of
training all men were granted a short furlough. After retur-
ning to camp, all men were mustered out with clothing and other
items needed for going over seas. We were shipped by troop train
to Camp Shanango, Pennsylvania where we spent a few more weeks
of training and physical preparedness. On a Saturday afternoon
we were sent by troop train to Camp Shanks, New York for embark-
ation. I went on the boat, Susan B. Anthony in the afternoon.
We started sailing around sunset. We sailed in a convoy of 18
ships. Our journey was very pleasant until we were overcome by
enemy aircraft. All the guns on the entire convoy went into (see P. 1)

6. Unit, Country, time, area, weather, etc., at time event occurred
which resulted in POW status? At early morning on November 10,
1943 the enemy made a surprise attack on us from our rear and
captured the machine gun squad to which I was assigned. This
took place in the hills prior to the winter drive towards Casino.
The weather was misty.

*AFTER 11
days on water*

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writer or "N. Dak. EX-POW'S Inc."

7. Describe military or other events that resulted in your POW status?
The enemy managed to get behind our lines and sneak up from the rear and took us by surprise.
8. Following your capture, describe what happened. How many men were involved? Where did you go? How did you go? What type of personnel (military or civilian) took control of you?
After we were captured we were forced to crawl out of the line of rifle fire on our bellies. There were about 8 men in that group. We moved behind the enemy line on foot. We were forced to carry a wounded enemy soldier who was not able to walk. German military took control of us. We were taken to a German field kitchen where we were locked into a windowless building overnight.
9. Were you able to hide or escape? If so, tell what happened. Where did you hide? Food? Clothing? Water? Weather? Sleep? etc.
Hiding or escaping was impossible in a small group. The enemy guards were watching constantly.
10. How did your escape end? Returned to U.S. control? Discovered by enemy?
Does not apply.
11. Could you describe in sequence the various places you were interrogated and the methods of questioning the enemy used? I was interrogated at Fresononi, the place where we were held in Italy. The Germans were rather considerate. They asked me about my nationality since I spoke German. They asked how my kinfolk got to America. No questions were asked at that time about our military equipment. The second time I was interrogated was in Luckenwald, Germany. There the inquisitor asked about some of our weapons. The only torture we were subjected to was being locked in solitary confinement for several days. We received a bowl of soup once a day.

(continued from Question 5)

action and drove the aircraft off. We landed in Algiers, Africa about noon time. We got off the boat and marched to an airfield about 2 miles out of town. There we pitched tent and stayed for 2 days. Then we went on stock train to where we Bizerte entered a boat to sail for Italy. We landed at Salerno in the mid-forenoon. There we dug in and waited for further orders. We were assigned to various outfits wherever reinforcements were needed. I was assigned to a machine gun squad in Company M. We then moved northward pushing back the enemy. We made our moves mainly at night. November 8 we were cut off by enemy artillery fire from our communication and supply line. We were without food or water for a day and a night.

3rd Division

12. Did you have a weapon on yourself when you were captured? Did it effect your treatment? I had my rifle beside me at the time I was captured. I was lying in a prone shelter sleeping. (Our group had to take turns watching and sleeping). When I awoke a German was standing over me with his machine gun pointing directly at me. He ordered me to get out with my hands up. There was no time for defense. Having a rifle with me did not effect my treatment.
13. Were you at any time considered a civilian or an enemy spy or a wrong nationality? If so, how did this effect your treatment?
No.
14. When captured or escaping, what clothing or equipment were you wearing? What changes did the enemy make in your clothing? I was wearing a G.I. uniform when I was captured. We wore our uniforms at all times.
15. What was your first food you received after your capture and what was your food from that date on? Our first food after being captured was bits of beef from a carcass which we had to carve off and roast over an open fire. After that we received soup cooked from dehydrated vegetables one day and a small amount of potatoes in their jackets, the next day. A loaf of military bread was served every other day---one loaf for every three men.
16. Did your nationality, religion, or race have a bearing on your treatment from the enemy? I feel my nationality had very little bearing on my treatment from the enemy.
17. What was your impression of your captors? Were they arrogant, considerate, professional, troubled, confused, anxious, etc.? My impression was that my captors were somewhat arrogant, but also considerate. Let's say they were just doing their job.

18. Were you alone or with others? How many? Same unit? Other units? Other services? Other nationalities, etc.? I was with others at the time of being captured. About 10 men from the same unit were captured--all Americans.
19. At time of your capture, did you have higher or lower ranking persons with you? Did the difference in rank effect you? I had the lowest rank in the service. There were some higher ranking men with me. I feel our rank did not effect us.
20. Following your capture, how did you feel about your family at home, and at what point or time did you feel they probably knew about your POW status? I was living by myself away from home for several years so my feelings about my family had little bearing on me. I knew they were more worried than I was. I never felt they knew about my being captured until I received a letter from home.
21. When did you receive your first letter, package or information that your family knew of your capture? My parents received my first letter in April of 1944 and I received an answer in June, 1944. At that time I was informed that they had received a telegram from the War Department in November that I was missing in action.
22. In regards to your interrogation or questioning--was this conducted formally at a special camp or location? Did you have special or skilled interrogators? What did they want to know? How long were you there? Then where did you go? The interrogation was conducted informally at a special camp in Luckenwalde, Germany. Only one person conducted the interrogation and he was skilled. He wanted to know about our Bazooka; its effect and range. He also asked if I had seen any tanks at the front lines. I was there from December 22, 1943 to June 2, 1944. From there we went to our permanent camp---Stalag 2B, located at the Polish border east of Berlin.

23. How did you feel the war was going when you were captured?

I felt that the war was pretty rough going at the time of my capture although we (the Allies) were steadily advancing.

24. Did you think you would eventually get home?

I trusted in the Lord, that he would protect us and get us home someday.

25. Did you have an opportunity to observe the enemy in combat, training, camp, or moving from one place to another?

No.

26. Did you suffer any injury at the time of your capture? What was done about your injury or illness following your capture?

I had no injury at the time of my capture.

27. At your permanent camp or camps, would you describe your conditions. Food? Living area? Beds? Food ration? Health? Water? Weather? Number of men? Guards? Size and location of camps? Organization in camp by enemy and by U.S. forces? I got to my permanent camp in fair condition. The food was heavily rationed. We received one loaf of bread for three men for two days. We got either a bowl of soup or some potatoes (3 or 4) once a day. In the morning and evening we received hot water to make coffee. Our living quarters were barracks. There were five barracks in the American compound. A high fence surrounded the barracks. Each barracks had two units: A and B. A washroom was in the center used by both units. The floor was made from brick. The water was good (we had to get it from the washroom). The weather was moderate with the temperature never dipping below 30 degrees during the winter. I never knew how many men were in camp because they came one day and the next others were sent out on commandos. At one time there were about 500 men in and out of camp. Along with the Americans in Stalag 2B were French and also Serbs. They were kept separate from the Americans. We were allowed to use the same chapel at different times. Our services were conducted by French priests who also were war prisoners. There were numerous guards posted in 4 towers and also around the barracks on foot. Our entertainment was all from the States. We had several musical instruments shipped in from YMCA's and a complete band was formed. They gave a concert about once a month during the summer. The Germans enjoyed listening to our music as much as we did. They often gathered on the other side of the compound to take it in. We also had 2 other orchestras in camp. One was the Nix Clickers. They played harmonicas and guitars. The other was Colonel Land and his orchestra with accordion and strings.

28. While in your permanent camp, did you know what was going on in the war? What did guards say about the ending of the war?

We were informed very little about the war from the Germans. We received more of our information from captives as they came in.

29. If you worked in camp or lived in work camps, please describe your daily transportation, work, food, punishment, etc.?

My job was interpreter for the camp so I was never sent out to join the work parties. There was a barracks in Stalag 2B which was called the Clink. That was solitary confinement where rations were bread and water for a period of time depending on the "crime" committed.

30. Was your camp or camps ever bombed or damaged by the enemy or friendly military action?

Our camp was never attacked while we were there.

31. Could you describe your roll call or counting procedure in camp?

Every morning every man had to get out of the barracks and line up to be counted. Whenever there were some short, a search was immediately begun, going through all the buildings.

32. What type of guards did you have? Age? Rank? Weapons? Number? Service, etc.?

The guards were roughly in their 40's. Their ranks ranged from under officers to captain. They carried rifles. The guards in the towers had machine guns.

33. Could you describe your camp? Size? Fences? Guard towers? Latrine? Ration distribution? Hours? Lock-up? Heat? Recreation, etc.? Stalag 2B was about the size of 4 city blocks. The fence was high strong wire. Our latrine was one building with stalls like an outhouse. The building had a full concrete basement for the gathering of waste. Whenever it got full it had to be pumped out and hauled away into the fields. Every Monday morning we were issued an American Red Cross food parcel. It contained 1 pound of powder milk, 1 pound of margarine, 1 pound of sugar, 1 pack of crackers, 1 small can of instant coffee, one can of corned beef or Spam or Prem, 1 can of tuna, 3 packs of cigarettes, one solid chocolate bar, and a box of prunes or raisins. At 7:00 o'clock every evening, everyone had to be in their barracks unless accompanied by a guard. Our source of heat was a pot belly stove in the middle of each unit. The building was always uncomfortable during the winter months. The men always had cold feet. Our recreation was mostly playing cards. Some played poker for cigarettes or food items. There were reading, and singing going on occasionally. Some of the very talented lay on their bunks playing harmonicas or picolos. Others tried to make home brew out of prunes, raisins, and sugar.

34. Could you describe the men close to you or the men you knew best? How did you get along with them?

We got along real well with everyone in the compound. Of course each one had some special friend. There were no feuds or incidents of violence toward each other.

35. Could you tell about epidemics or sickness in camp? What were the medical facilities? How were you medically treated in camp?

I do not recall any epidemics while I was in camp. If someone got sick, he had to go and ask to see the doctor. If he needed treatment he was taken to a different Barracks away from our compound where he stayed until he recovered. Some were sent to a hospital.

36. Were any prisoners killed in camp or taken from camp and disappeared?
To my knowledge no one was ever killed or disappeared from camp

37. Could you describe the ration or food distribution system? How much? Fresh, canned, stale, dried, etc.? Local foods, Red Cross parcels, parcels from home, trade with guards or civilians?

The soup or boiled potatoes were carried by two men who were American prisoners. The meal was in half barrels with a pole running through each side of the barrel. We had hand-made mess kits to eat with. The food was dished out by the men who brought it in. There was no food sent from loved ones that I was aware of. The only parcels from home contained cigarettes and other items that were not to be had in prison camp.

38. Describe the type of work or responsibilities you were assigned within the camp from friendly or USA prisoners?

I had to translate the German to the Americans and the English to the Germans.

39. What were some of the things that kept you going while in camp? Your health? Age? Faith in U.S. Armed Forces? Religion? Family? Aid from other prisoners?

The things that kept me going were mainly my health and faith in the Lord and each other, the numerous entertainments we were allowed by the Germans and the news from the most recent arrivals.

40. Did any prisoners become mentally sick or irrational in camp and were they removed?

To my knowledge no one ever became mentally ill and had to be removed.

41. Did you have any secret radios, newspapers or outside news sources in camp from which you received information? What information did the enemy give you?

We were not allowed to have any radio in our possession. The news we received came from German newspapers and a loud speaker mounted at a high pole outside of the barracks, attached to a German radio somewhere in Stalag 2B.

42. Did you have any serious illness in camp?

I was never seriously ill while in camp.

43. Did you have any riots in camp?

We never had a riot while in camp.

44. How did you first know that war was coming to an end?

We could tell by the way the Germans acted towards the prisoners. They were a lot more considerate than they had been earlier. Then came the big move from Stalag 2B to the western front. On January 29, 1945 every prisoner of war had to leave Stalag 2B on foot along with armed guards and march towards the western front because the Germans would not surrender any American prisoners to the Russians. So we were on foot till the 19th of March. We stayed in large stables during the night. One night we stayed in an open field. We built (see p.2)

45. What were some of the tricks you played on guards?

46. What about escape procedures and methods used by you or others that you have knowledge of or direct information about?

I have no knowledge of any escape procedures.

47. Were you ever bombed by friendly or enemy aircraft?

We were struck several times at our barracks at Hagnau. One time a bomb was dropped outside of the compound but it did not blow up. The Germans checked it out and removed it.

48. Describe any special train or ship trip you took while a prisoner?

A seargent and I were sent off to Luckenwalde to an Interrogation camp on a German passenger train. The train was so crowded with German troops going home for Christmas that there was only straight-standing room for us in a corner. An armed guard was our escort. While in Luckenwalde we witnessed the bombing of Berlin which was about 18 miles to the north. This was done December 24, 1943. It looked like a severe lightening storm. We left on the passenger train. January 2, we went through Berlin which looked like a severe earth quake had occurred. We went from there to Stalag 2B and arrived there the afternoon of January 3rd.

(continued from question 44)

bonfires to keep from freezing. We did not receive any Red Cross aid while on the move, therefore, the going was rough because our rations were so limited. Finally at the 19th day of March, about 200 men were sent to Hagenau, Germany to a German Air Base. There we stayed until we were liberated by the Americans.

We were assigned to various details going out into the woods and make firewood and stock it up. Others dug ditches for camp grounds for air raid protection.

At one time a couple of men managed to get out of camp to a potato storage mound and brought in to camp about 200 lbs of potatoes. The following morning the German Guard said if you have any potatoes on you in camp hide them, bury them a few here and a few there. So the searchers will not find them so we did. They did not find them.

49. When were you close to death or felt all was not worth living and you probably would die or be killed?

At the moment of capture I felt great depression and was sure I would not make it.

50. Could you tell about any special religious observances by the enemy or special occurrence when they relaxed or tightened security rules?

We always had 4 armed guards at our religious services and there was never any disturbance by the enemy.

51. Would you describe in detail any particular holiday, if observed, by enemy or prisoners, such as, New Years or Christmas.

At Christmas season about one week before Christmas in 1943 the enemy would not let us use our chapel building any longer because they said they needed the building for other purposes. The French prisoners had a building for movies and other entertainments so the Americans asked the French which was more important to them: a show hall or a chapel. They agreed to convert it to a chapel. The Americans and the French built a beautiful altar out of rough lumber which we got from the Germans. It took some bribing to get the materials. Several cartons of cigarettes was the price. We had a Midnight Mass that all the prisoners will remember for the rest of their lives. A French priest held the services, and his gratifying sermon translated.

52. How did you feel about food in camp? How did enemy food agree with you? What was food? What were utensils? What did you make to eat with? Pots, pans, cups, plates?

Considering our position as prisoners of war, I felt that the food was fair, mostly thanks to the American Red Cross parcels without which it would have been very skimpy. The food was either vegetable soup or boiled potatoes. Once in a great while we got a piece of sausage. At the camp in Hagenau we got soup out of dehydrated turnips. It was horrible. We were issued some mess gear from the Germans. The cups we made out of tin cans.

53. Were you aware of any other American or Allied POW camps in your area? Civilian camps?

There was a Russian prison camp about 2 miles away from the American camp. We had to go there for a chest x-ray one time. They had it rough. They did not receive any parcels from their country. There was also a German garrison camp right next to the American camp at Stalag 2B. --A board fence, some coiled barbed wire and (see p.3)

54. In reference to your mind or yourself, how do you feel you held up in camp? Did you suffer periods of depression, crying, hysteria, headaches, loss of memory, etc.? How about the other men in camp? How do you feel you and others were able to live without nervous breakdowns?

There were some men who were depressed, not so much about the camp life but rather from not hearing from home, or hearing sad news from home. I was seldom depressed after my capture. I always managed to find something to do to keep my mind occupied.

55. How do you feel other American POW's behaved or acted while in enemy hands? Please do not name an individual by name if you feel their behavior was not correct or up to the standards you set for yourself. I feel others behaved rather well while in camp. They kept themselves busy doing something, such as playing cards, brewing liquor out of raisins and prunes, or playing on small musical instruments, reading, making something out of tin, playing softball or just walking around the compound.

(continued from Question 53)

another wire fence protected it and a sentry walking back and forth separated the two camps.

I would say they were about 35 feet apart.

There at times we would stand at the washroom window to see if we could make a trade with ~~the~~ German soldier for some bread. American cigarettes was our means of trading. It usually worked after the guard was past the windows with his back towards us.

(continued from Question 61)

to become civilians. From there we went on passenger train to Le Havre, France. We just about starved on that trip. We were served a breakfast at a station stop, then traveled another day until we got to a camp called Camp Lucky Strike. That camp was all tents. After 2 days there we went out on boat.

We sailed to England to load the ship with water,

because in France the water plants had been destroyed

The Journey home was a Rough one The Ocean was wild

which made that ship act like a bucking horse in a rodeo

we sailed 5 days coming back to the states.

We landed at New York the same area where we left from going overseas. From there every one was send to their nearest army camp to home.

I hope this will help your request I answered the Questions
To the best of my knowlegn -

Thank you Kindly

Nick Schulz

56. Towards the end of the war, what were first signs that the war was coming to an end in our favor?

The long march to the western front was our first sign that the war was coming to an end in our favor.

57. How did the enemy guards or administrative personnel treat you towards the end of the war or when it was apparent the enemy would lose the war? The enemy guards and administrators were very considerate to the prisoners. They were mostly concerned about what would happen to them.

58. Could you describe how your POW status ended?

On May 2nd, 1945 the American troops came in early in the morning riding on tanks. They destroyed all the war equipment that the enemy had around there---mostly their aircraft. There was no resistance from the enemy. They just threw in the towel.

59. When or where did enemy guards leave? Did guards say or do anything at the end of the war? The enemy guards left us at our camp as soon as they saw the first American troops come in. They said, "We will now trade. You are now free and we are the prisoners."

60. What did the American staff at the camp do at the end of the war?

The American staff had their hands full with the German military and civilians coming in to surrender. The Germans all had to abandon their means of transportation and go on foot behind the line. They were seen in fields in groups like cattle in the pastures. It was a pitiful sight.

61. At the end of the war, where did you move? What was your food? Your health? Your morale?

We were hauled on troop trucks to Hildesheim, south from Hagenau where we received medical care and were properly fed. We were deloused and received fresh clothing. Our food was light to prevent us from becoming ill. We were served a lot of chicken; stewed. The morale was great because we knew we were on our way home. From Hildesheim we were flown out of Germany in C-47's and landed in Nancy, France for a royal reception. We spent enough time there to enjoy a good meal and music. Then off we went on freight cars to a town, Epernay, France where we were further processed for shipment to the States. We spent 2 days in Epernay learning how
(see p. 4)

62. Could you describe some of the confusion that took place when you were liberated at the end of the war? Time, place, friendly or enemy forces involved, food, health, morale, POW discipline in camp, contact with U.S. military forces, etc.?

At the evening before we were liberated we were told that the Germans would blow up their Ammunition Dumps in the morning and the guards were instructed to take the prisoners out of the compound 2 miles away. The Americans beat them to it by one hour and did the job for them. We dashed out of camp like scared rabbits. The confusion was immense due to all the people coming through to surrender.

63. After liberation or the war ending, what happened? Did you move as an individual or group, go by foot, train, bus? Where did you go, to another U.S. camp? Refer to Question 61.

64. What happened at your camp prior to returning to the States? Did U.S. military officials interrogate you, examine you physically, give you food, clothing, etc.? I was not interrogated by U.S. officials. They fed us well and clothed us.

65. How, when and where did you arrive back in the United States? Did you stay at some camp? Did you go home by train? We got back to the States sometime in late May (in the harbor by the Statue of Liberty). From there we went to a camp in New Jersey for one night and then off to Fort Snelling for final checkout before going home. I continued home by train.
66. What things today remind you of prison life in your day to day living? When I see people wasting food it makes me think how thankful we would have been if we had that food during our imprisonment.
67. Do you have any complaints about how you have been treated since your POW days? I have no complaints about treatment after my POW days.
68. Do you have a picture of yourself prior to being a POW, preferably a picture in uniform? Do you have a picture of yourself following the war? Do you have a picture of yourself and your family recently taken, or taken within recent years? Any or all of these pictures would be appreciated. They will be returned to you after we have made copies of them.
69. Do you have any copies of telegrams from the War Department or the U.S. Government regarding your becoming a POW? Or your release, or war time status as a POW? These or copies of these would be appreciated. If you wish them returned, they will be sent back to you. I did not keep any letters I received while being a Prisoner of War. I only received 2 letters from home while I was in P.O.W. camp. I did not bring any souvenirs home with me.

70. Do you have any letters or copies of letters you sent home or received from home during war or during period you were a POW? These or copies of these would be appreciated. They also will be returned if you so indicate in your reply.

71. A few POW's were able to return to the U.S. or home with a few articles they may have made, been given or in some way secured in POW camp. Some of these could be: paper notes, camp regulations, clothing, cigarette lighter, insignia, hand made pans or pots, special cans used in camp, small tools, etc. If you have any of these, we would appreciate a picture of them. If you desire they could be sent with this report and we will take a picture of them and return them to you if you so desire.

72. The above questions or suggestions are limited and you may write or explain many items not included; therefore, feel free to express yourself in any manner you desire.

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