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Gordon Tjomsland of Menoken: Germany, World War II

Gordon Tjomsland

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PRISONER OF WAR

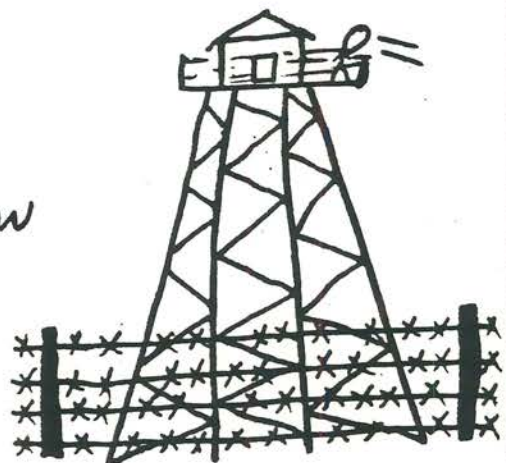
A TRUE STORY

BY: GORDON J. TJOMSLAND

MENOKEN, N. DAK

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

BOOKLET PREPARED IN
COOPERATION WITH:
N. DAK EX-POW ORGANIZATION
AND
CHESTER FRITZ LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF N. DAK.



Dear Ex-Prisoner of War:

It has been recommended and officially encouraged by our North Dakota Ex-Prisoner of War Organization and the Chester Fritz Library at the University of North Dakota, to gather information concerning the part North Dakota Ex-POW's played in past wars.

It was determined the most logical way to secure the information would be to prepare a questionnaire to which each POW could respond in writing.

This questionnaire is rather lengthy, however, when you read it, you will note your answers tend to write a story. Your story, be it based on service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or as a civilian, is equally important and interesting to others.

The story or the answers to your questions are important to your family and friends. Your story is a part of a special or unique part of warfare in the 20th Century.

Your story, in addition to its family values, is of value to University students. Consequently, the University will take an active part in aiding the project.

It would be logical to put these various stories together in a book or manuscript form. Your section and writing would remain intact, rather than attempting to incorporate the stories together into one large story.

One story in itself may have minor value but all the stories together will form a valuable panorama of past wars.

You may answer the questions as written or asked, or you may change the questions. They may be answered by typing or in hand writing in pencil or pen. If you wish, you may not want to use the questions, and may want to write your own story concerning your POW experience--this would be equally valuable.

Whatever you may do will be appreciated by all concerned.

Sincerely,


Elmer Lian

P.S. Please return your questionnaire to:

Elmer T. Lian
2520 Chestnut Street
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58201

Nov 26, 1982
Menoken, No Dak

Dear Elmer,

To the Best of my knowlegde
I've tried to answer the questions
I hope its O.K. By you I know
its a bit Late. But guess Later is
Better then none. I've been out of
service so Long I've forgot a Lot.

Sincerely
Gordon J Jamslund
Box 102
Menoken, No. Dak
58558

EX-PRISONER OF WAR QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name: GORDON J. TJUMSLAND

Current Address:

BOX 102 MENOKEN, NO. DAK.

Address at time you went into service: 22 July 1940

704 1/2 JOY AVE RAPID CITY S.O. DAK.
109 Engrs (C.) Hq + Service (combat)

Birthday:

MARCH 9, 1917

2. Family: (spouse and children)

MOTHER & FATHER & SON

3. Work and educational experience prior to going into service?

TRUCK DRIVER & JANITOR.

4. Dates and place of entry into service?

22nd July 1940
Rapid City, So. Dak
109 Engrs (C.) Hq. & Service (combat)

5. Summary of events from time of entry into service and until just prior to capture or entering status as a POW? - P.O.W. 43

MONTHS.

6. Unit, Country, time, area, weather, etc., at time event occurred which resulted in POW status?

I was captured near a town called City-Bu. Sid on the Sahara Desert North Africa

7. Describe military or other events that resulted in your POW status?

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?

I would guess about 700 men captured, walked to Tunisia North Africa then the Germans flew us to Naples Italy then by truck to Capua Italy 2 months then on to Hammerstein Ger. to Stalag 2-B - then went to work on farm.

9. Were you able to hide or escape? If so, tell what happened. Where did you hide? Food? Clothing? Water? Weather? Sleep? etc.

no. no place to hide out on the Sahara Desert. Had to give up cause we were summoned by Germans Desert Rat Rommel & Herman Horing - AIR FORCE GENERAL

10. How did your escape end? Returned to U.S. control? Discovered by enemy?

I did not escape

11. Could you describe in sequence the various places you were interrogated and the methods of questioning the enemy used?

I never was questioned. Herman Horing knew what Div. we were in & company we were in. he spoke very good English & talked to us

12. Did you have a weapon on yourself when you were captured? Did it effect your treatment?

We had to give them up, so I beat mine up so they couldn't use them.

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?

None what so ever

14. When captured or escaping, what clothing or equipment were you wearing? What changes did the enemy make in your clothing?

Summer clothing. Germans never gave us more.

15. What was your first food you received after your capture and what was your food from that date on?

*Italian Spaggetti
once a day in a camp near the town of Capoue near Naples Italy*

16. Did your nationality, religion, or race have a bearing on your treatment from the enemy?

no,

17. What was your impression of your captors? Were they arrogant, considerate, professional, troubled, confused, anxious, etc.?

considerate & confused

18. Were you alone or with others? How many? Same unit? Other units? Other services? Other nationalities, etc.?

no there were several units 164 - inf. 107 - Engrs 185 - field artillery & more from the 34th Division captured

19. At time of your capture, did you have higher or lower ranking persons with you? Did the difference in rank effect you?

no.

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?

In Capua Italy the Pope from Rome gave us a paper for us to sign & send home saying we were O.K. so my folks new I was a P.O.W.

21. When did you receive your first letter, package or information that your family knew of your capture?

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?

23. How did you feel the war was going when you were captured?
I felt eventually America would win

24. Did you think you would eventually get home? yes

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? no

Stomach trouble Later when I was a P.O.W. as yet I still have stomach trouble

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?

food was very poor, no food rations water was fair food was terrible rotten.

we were given guts from the inside of wild pigs to survive on for 6 weeks till we got International Red Cross Boxes.

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?

the guards told us once they were losing the war & soon it would be over

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

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

no

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

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

*some were good some Bad
age I guess about 35-40 Private &
Sergents. 9 M1 Garand rifles*

33. Could you describe your camp? Size? Fences? Guard towers?
Latrine? Ration distribution? Hours? Lock-up? Heat?
Recreation, etc.?

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 ok,

*amongst us. we works out on a farm
near a town called Stranes*

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

36. Were any prisoners killed in camp or taken from camp and disappeared?

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?

1- Parcel a week from the American Red Cross. got smoking tobacco from home. traded cigarettes for Black bread from the civilians also chocolate.

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

worked on a farm doing everything

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?

We would get a box from home once a month. Cookies & cigarettes & tobacco when they would come thru. we also received Red Cross Boxes of food once a week

40. Did any prisoners become mentally sick or irrational in camp and were they removed? *yes. removed to Stalag 2. B*
close to Hammerstein.

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? *no. the Enemy always told us they were winning the war. But we knew better. they were losing the war.*

42. Did you have any serious illness in camp?

43. Did you have any riots in camp? *no, cause I wasn't in camp long enough to know of I worked on a farm*

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

The Guard told us they were losing the war & soon would be over.

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?

too far for escape to the American or Russian front to escape

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

We were strafed by Russian fighter Plane once

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

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

I think the Germans kind of respected the americans

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

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

Germans gave us a day off for Christmas

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?

food didn't agree

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

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

The German Guards told us they were losing the war.

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 Guards started to treat us better

58. Could you describe how your POW status ended? Ended up with

a Gun shot in wound in my left hip

20% Disability

59. When or where did enemy guards leave? Did guards say or do anything at the end of the war?

The guards told us the American front was 6 miles up the road & we were free to go.

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

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

we walked up the road to a Evacuation
Hosp. near Hamburg Germany

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.?
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?
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.?

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?
66. What things today remind you of prison life in your day to day living?
67. Do you have any complaints about how you have been treated since your 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.

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. *no*
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.