



1982

Lester Holmgren of West Fargo: Germany

Lester Holmgren

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PRISONER OF WAR

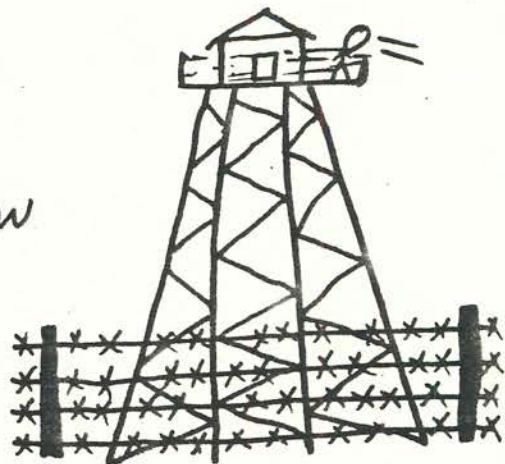
A TRUE STORY

BY: LESTER E. HOLMGREN

WEST FARGO, 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: LESTER F. HOLMBREN
Current Address: 101 - 5TH. ST. E.
WEST FARGO, N. D. 58078
Address at time you went into service: 815 - FRONT ST. VALLEY, IOWA
Birthday: SEPT 15, 1916
2. Family: (spouse and children) JANET HOLMBREN
DENNIS HOLMBREN, SHEILA SNARE,
KEITH HOLMBREN, NEIL HOLMBREN
3. Work and educational experience prior to going into service?
I worked in a flour mill
in Astoria, Ore. I only went
through 8th grade.
4. Dates and place of entry into service?
1-1-44 FT. SNELLING, MINN
11-6-45
5. Summary of events from time of entry into service and until just
prior to capture or entering status as a POW?
I was on ~~at~~ my seventh mission
and our airplane was hit.
6. Unit, Country, time, area, weather, etc., at time event occurred
which resulted in POW status?
It was in the morning and
near Berlin, Germany

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

I do not remember

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?

10 men were involved. I went to a prison camp near Berlin. Military personnel took control of us.

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

I hid in a grove of trees. I only got hard bread & water. The weather was fairly nice. I got plenty of sleep.

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

When the war was over they released us & returned to U.S.

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

The enemy asked us many questions.

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

I had a pistol on me. No it did not affect 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 my uniform for the air corps. I wore my uniforms while I was in prison camp.

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

All I got to eat was dark bread + water. That's all I got to eat.

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

No my nationality didn't have a bearing on my treatment.

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

My captors were mean to me as I recall.

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

I was with about ten other guys from our unit.

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

There were lower rank persons in our capture.

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 worried about my wife & baby son if they found out about my capture. I was held prisoner for 5 months.

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

any letters. I didn't get after the war was over.

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?

yes they questioned us and then they put us in prison camp.

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

I didn't know what was going on as they didn't tell us anything.

24. Did you think you would eventually get home?

I thought I would eventually get home.

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

Yes I saw the enemy in training.

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

No I didn't get hurt 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 was only given dark bread & water. We had to sleep on army cots. There were 10 men and no guards.

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?

No I didn't know what was going on in the war situation.

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

I was put in prison camp and not allowed to go anywhere.

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?

Yes they counted us each day.

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

I did not have any guards in prison camp.

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

It was a large camp,
It had wire fences, no
we did not get a ration
distribution, It was cold
in our camp,

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

good with my prisoner
friends, I got along

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

No there was no sickness in my camp

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

No no prisoners were killed in 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?

No we did not get any ration. No we did not get any Red Cross parcels

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

We did not do any work in camp.

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 played cards in camp,
My health was fair. I
was about 29 years old.
I had a wife & son in
Valley City, N.D.

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

No, no prisoners got
sick in camp.

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 we did not have secret
radios. The enemy did not
give us any information.

42. Did you have any serious illness in camp?

No I did
not have a serious illness in
camp.

43. Did you have any riots in camp?

No I did not
have any riots in camp.

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

I don't remember.

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

I did not play any tricks on the guards.

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

I don't remember.

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

I was bombed by enemy aircraft.

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

I did not take any trip while I was prisoner.

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

My plane caught on fire from being shot by flak. I was the last one to bail out of the plane.

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

There were none.

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

They didn't observe the holidays.

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?

The food was terrible. All I got to eat was dark bread & water.

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

No I was not aware of any other 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?

I lived from day to day & was thankful I was alive. No I did not suffer loss of memory

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 do not remember as I have had several strokes in the last few years.

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

I don't remember.

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 enemies treated us awful.

58. Could you describe how your POW status ended?

We were sent to U. S.

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

No.

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

I don't remember.

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

They flew us back to U. S.

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.?

The prisoners were so happy they hollered and sung to get out of camp.

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?

I went by train to London, England.

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.?

yes they examined us to see that we were okay.

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?

They brought me to Ft. Snelling by plane.

66. What things today remind you of prison life in your day to day living?

I feel like I'm in prison as I'm confined to a nursing home & can't move around much.

67. Do you have any complaints about how you have been treated since your POW days?

No I do not have any complaints.

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.
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.

From: S/SGT. LESTER E. HOLM GREN 37504231
815 FRONT ST.
VALLEY CITY N. DAK. U.S.A.

Free
See
Instruction
No. 5

V...-MAIL

To: MRS LESTER E. HOLM GREN
815 FRONT ST.
VALLEY CITY, N. DAK. U.S.A.

*M.C. Dwyer
Capt. U.S.A.*

FOLD

HERE

FOLD

HERE

V-Mail service provides a most rapid means of communication. If addressed to a place where photographing service is not available the original letter will be dispatched by the most expeditious means:

INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) Write the entire message plainly on the other side within marginal lines.
- (2) PRINT the name and address in the two spaces provided. Addresses of members of the Armed Forces should show full name, complete military or naval address, including grade or rank, serial number, unit to which assigned or attached, and Army post office in care of the appropriate postmaster or appropriate fleet post office.
- (3) Fold, seal, and deposit in any post office letter drop or street letter box.
- (4) Inclosures must not be placed in this envelope.
- (5) V-Mail letters may be sent free of postage by members of the Armed Forces. When sent by others, postage must be prepaid at domestic rates (3c ordinary mail, 6c if domestic air-mail service required when mailed in the U.S.)

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To: MRS LESTER E. HOLMGREN
815 FRONT ST.
VALLEY CITY, NORTH DAKOTA.
U. S. A.

See Instruction No. 2

From: ASN. 37584231

S/SGT LESTER E. HOLMGREN
815 FRONT ST.
VALLEY CITY, N. DAK.

(Sender's complete address above)

Dearest Jack & Dennie:

FRANCE
May 19 - 1945.

A few lines this morning to let you know everything is fine here with me. Still waiting to get on the way for home, which I hope is soon. We aren't doing anything here, just taking it easy. Yesterday I was up to the Red Cross and sent you a telegram to let you know that I have been liberated. So hope you get it alright. How are you honey, I'm sure anxious to get home and be with you. How is everyone else at home, tell them all hello. Dad knows how much longer we will be here or how long to get home but sure hope I will make it for our anniversary. Last nite I went and seen a U.S.O. show it was pretty good, but best of all is to be free to even walk around camp, well honey this will be all for now so bye honey with all my love and millions of kisses for you both. Love, Lester.

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY
V...-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

WESTERN UNION (16)

A. N. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

1201

SYMBOLS
DL=Day Letter
NL=Night Letter
LC=Deferred Cable
NLT=Cable Night Letter
Ship Radiogram

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

FJ6 34 GOVT=WASHINGTON DC JAN 23 1056P

1945 JAN 24 AM 9 18

MRS JANET D HOLMGREN=
815 FRONT ST

REPORT JUST RECEIVED THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS STATES THAT YOUR HUSBAND STAFF SERGEANT LESTER E HOLMGREN IS A PRISONER OF WAR OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT LETTER OF INFORMATION FOLLOWS FROM PROVOST MARSHAL GENERAL=

J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

7

Kriegsgefangenenpost

Postkarte

An

GERMANY



MRS LESTER E. HOLMGREN

Empfangsort: 815 FRONT ST.
town

Land: VALLEY CITY, NORTH DAKOTA
country

Landesteil: U. S. A.
(Provinz usw.)
county

Gebührenfrei!

11032

U.S. CENSUS

Kriegsgefangenenpost

Postkarte

An

MRS LESTER E. HOLMGREN

Gebührenfrei!

Absender

Vor- und Zuname: ~~245841231~~

LESTER E. HOLMGREN

Gefangenschaftsnummer: 37594231

Lager-Bezeichnung: Stalag-Luft 3

Deutschland (Germany)

Empfangsort: 815 FRONT ST.

Straße: VALLEY CITY, N. DAK.

Land: U. S. A.
(Landesteil, Provinz usw.)

Dulag-Luft Germany

Communication
** Revised By
P.O.W. INFO. OFF.

Date 12/14/44

(No. of Camp only; as may be directed by the Commandant
of the Camp.)

I have been taken prisoner of war in Germany. I am in good health — ~~slightly wounded~~ (cancel accordingly).

We will be transported from here to another Camp within the next few days. Please don't write until I give new address.

Kindest regards

Christian Name and Surname: HOLMGREN, LESTER E.

Rank: S/Sgt. ASN. 37584231

Detachment: U.S. A. A. F.

(No further details. — Clear legible writing.)

Kriegsgefangenenlager

Datum: 12/19/44

DEAREST JANET DENNIEY ALL, SUPPOSE BY NOW YOU HAVE FOUND OUT I AM MISSING. I AM A PRISONER IN GERMANY. I AM FINE. WE HAD A RUCK TIME WHEN WE WENT DOWN. BUT NO ONE WAS HURT. WRITE MOTHER TELL HER I AM FINE. THANKS TO RED CROSS FOR FOOD AND CLOTHING. WE ARE BEING TREATED GOOD. DONT WORRY HONEY I WILL BE HOME WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER. TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF AND MEN. MERRY CHRISTMAS AND ALL MY LOVE. DONT WRITE UNTIL I HAVE PERM. ^{PLEASE} LOVEINGLY, LESTER

CLASS OF SERVICE

This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

WESTERN UNION (25)

A. N. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

SYMBOLS

- DL = Day Letter
- NL = Night Letter
- LC = Deferred Cable
- NLT = Cable Night Letter
- Ship Radiogram

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

FJ1 41 GOVT=WUX WASHINGTON DC JUN 21 1054P

22 AM 9 30

MRS JANET HOLMGREN=
815 FRONT ST VALLEY OTS. MO. E

THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY DIRECTS ME TO INFORM YOU YOUR HUSBAND T/SGT HOLMGREN LESTER E IS BEING RETURNED TO THE UNITED STATES IN THE NEAR FUTURE HE WILL BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU UPON ARRIVAL=
J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

This telegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

UNION (26)

A. N. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

- LC = Deferred Cable
- NLT = Cable Night Letter
- Ship Radiogram

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

FJ10 FT16=CD NEWYORK NY JUN 22 EFM

23 AM 9 28

MRS JANET D HOLMGREN=
815 FRONT ST VALLEY OTS. MO. E

ARRIVED SAFELY EXPECT TO SEE YOU SOON. DONT ATTEMPT TO CONTACT ME OR WRITE ME LOVE=
LESTER E HOLMGREN.

WESTERN UNION

A. N. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT

1201

(001)

SYMBOLS	
DL	= Day Letter
NL	= Night Letter
LC	= Deferred Cable
NLT	= Cable Night Letter
Ship Radiogram	

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

1945

May 6 07

FJ30 21/20=WASHINGTON DC 28 553P

HOME SERVICE, AMERICAN RED CROSS=

4021/2 MAIN ST VALLEYCITY NDAK=

MAY 26 1945 STAFF SGT LESTER E HOLMGREN 37584231 REQUESTS
JANET B HOLMGREN 815 FRONT STREET BE NOTIFIED HIS
LIBERATION=

MARGARET SHOTTON NATL HS.

26 1945 37584231 B 815

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

Awarded D. F. C. . .



Holmgren

Mrs. Lester Holmgren received the word Monday from her husband, T'Sgt. Lester, that he is now stationed at the Army Air Base at Sioux City, Iowa, and hopes to receive his discharge in about 15 days. Shortly after his arrival there, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, which he earned while on duty in the European Theater of War.



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