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Juline Selliken of Grafton: Germany, World War II

Juline Selliken

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PRISONER OF WAR

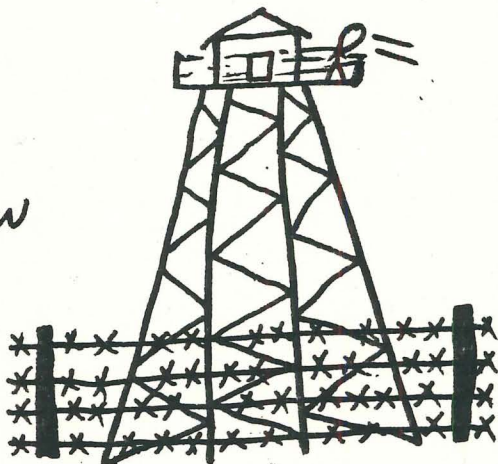
A TRUE STORY

BY: JULINE B. SELLIKEN

GRAFTON, 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: Juline B. Selliken

Current Address: 1438 Griggs Ave.
Grafton, No. Dak. 58237

Address at time you went into service:
231 Kittson Ave.
Grafton, No. Dak. 58237

Birthday: Jan. 17, 1912

2. Family: (spouse ~~and children~~) (Not married when I entered service)
Marjorie L.

3. Work and educational experience prior to going into service?
High School graduate. Railroad employee.

4. Dates and place of entry into service?
Induction date, Nov. 10, 1942. Ft. Snelling, Minn.

5. Summary of events from time of entry into service and until just prior to capture or entering status as a POW?
From Ft. Snelling, sent to N. Camp Polk, La. for basic training. Then to Camp Cockscomb, Calif. for desert maneuvers. Then to Ft. Benning, Ga., where I had six weeks radio and international Morris Code, as part of my training while there. Then to Camp Miles Standish, Mass., and Camp Shanks, New York. June 7, 1944 we sailed on the Queen Mary for Europe. After six days we landed in Scotland and went by train to a camp about 40 miles from London, ~~where I was assigned to the armored car.~~ From London we sailed to France, where I was assigned to the armored car. see attached "5"

6. Unit, Country, time, area, weather, etc., at time event occurred which resulted in POW status?
87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized of the 7th Armored Division. Verdun, France. The time was about the middle of the afternoon. The weather was good.

7. Describe military or other events that resulted in your POW status?
see attached "5"

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?

The Car Commander was sent to a hospital. We didn't see him after that. The rest of us were sent to a temporary camp. After a few days, we were packed into freight cars and shipped to a prisoner of war camp about 40 miles southeast of Berlin, Stalag IIIC.

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

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

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

After being captured, questioned concerning location of troops!

12. Did you have a weapon on yourself when you were captured? Did it effect your treatment?
No weapon. All in the armored car.
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?
14. When captured ~~or escaping~~, what clothing or equipment were you wearing? What changes did the enemy make in your clothing?
Army OD's. No changes made.
15. What was your first food you received after your capture and what was your food from that date on?
Cup of black coffee for breakfast. Canteen cup of thin soup made of sugar beet tops or rutabagas (once in a while a few peas), and one-sixth loaf of bread for dinner. Supper, coffee or tea. This was all we had until the Red Cross parcels arrived. Many times they were withheld.
16. Did ~~your nationality, religion, or race~~ have a bearing on your treatment from the enemy?
17. What was your impression of your captors? Were they arrogant, considerate, professional, troubled, confused, anxious, etc.?
~~The young ones were arrogant. These were replaced by older men who were nicer to us.~~
They were OK.

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

When our Armored Car was captured, there were four of us, the Car Commander, driver, Radio operator, and I was the gunner.

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

The Car Commander was a sargeant. 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? Prisoners were permitted to write home. Notice was received by my family that I was missing in action. This I learned when I got home.

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

Don't recall receiving any mail while a POW

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?

Questioned by a German Army Officer. Wanted to know the location of our troops. Answered that I didn't know. Released and went back to camp.

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

The Chaplain said, "We have Jerry on the run, now".

This was before we were captured. This is the way I felt about it.

24. Did you think you would eventually get home?

Never thought any different, but that I would.

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

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

Schrapnel in the right shoulder. (still embedded). German doctor put a patch on saying it was just a splinter.

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?

on the board
bunks

Ans. Ques.15, food. Living area was barracks, with bunks. No mattress on the bunks. The "mattress" was ~~was~~ strips of burlap with shredded paper-
as good as nothing. Two short pieces of blanket. A Jewish friend managed to get a longer blanket for himself, another buddy and for me. When I had tonsillitis I taken to the dispensary and given medicatio n. No water shortage, there was a pump outside the barracks. Fortunately it was a mild winter. Issued charcoal, the size of a brick, once in awhile. We saved them for cold days.

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?

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

Not forced to work and we didn't

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

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

Regular roll call every morning, conducted by the Sgt. in charge of the barracks. This was a U. S. Sgt.

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

The young ones were arrogant. These were replaced by older men who were nice to us, they were considerate.

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

Each barracks was surrounded by barb wire. Had a compound where we could walk around. Barb wire fence about 10 ft. high. A trench in an inclosure, with a plank to sit on was the latrine.

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 good, in our barracks.

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

No epidemics or sickness in our camp. Had access to a dispensary.
Had medication for tonsillitis.

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?

Ans. in ques. 15. Red Cross parcels, once in awhile. Some cigarettes were traded for bread, in our barracks.

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

No organization in our barracks.

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?

I just knew I would be home again. I was young and in good health, which was to my credit.

Learned after my return home, there were many praying for me. And there was that girlfriend.

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

Not in our barracks.

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?

The grapevine.

42. Did you have any serious illness in camp?

Tonsillitis. Unable to eat the rations, for a few days.

Due to the diet, I had severe body rash.

43. Did you have any riots in camp?

none

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

Liberated before the end of the war.

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

Managed to get into the warehouse and steal rutabagas. A ~~prisoner~~ POW from the kitchen took them away from me. There were a few small ones in my pocket he didn't find. I really "told him off."

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

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

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

See ques. 8.

We spent four days and nights in the cramped quarters of a box car on this trip.

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

Ans. Ques. 15. food.

Issued a canteen cup, for soup, a cup for coffee, knife, fork and spoon.

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

Only Stalag IIIIC

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?

All in our barracks were OK

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?

Had returned home before the end of 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?

58. Could you describe how your POW status ended?
see attached "58"

59. When or where did enemy guards leave? Did guards say or do anything ~~at the end of the war?~~
see attached "58"

We were returned to camp because we were surrounded by the Russians.
We were told by POW's to look in the shower room. There we saw a mass of blood, where the guards had been killed.

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?

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.?
see attached "58" and "59".

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?

somewhere

Directed by Russian soldiers to U. S. Compound near Odessa, Russia.
Taken by Russian freight train to U. S. Compound in Odessa.

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.

At Odessa we were furnished clothing by the U.S. The fellow from Ohio and I bribed the Russian guards with candy bars and went to the market place. We sold old clothes. (Have the rubles as souvenirs). We were caught by Russian guards and taken to Russian military Officials and kept, what seemed like hours before being taken back to the U. S. Compound. Then we were taken by the Russian guards before the Commander of the U.S. Compound. He said there would be disciplinary action against us. But nothing ever happened. The threat was probably to impress the Russian guards.

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?

It was nearly three weeks before we arrived at Odessa. We were there for some-time then shipped on a Scottish boat to Naples, Italy. We were there awhile, then sailed on an American ship to the States. We landed in Boston, April 20, 1945. I was sent home on furlough, then sent to Hot Springs, Ark. for a four-teen^{days} recuperation period. Discharged at Ft. Riley, Kans. Nov. 14, 1945. Rank-T5 Cpl. I did travel from Boston to my home by train.

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

It is in the past. Can't say there are things that tend to upset me, because of the experience.

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

I would have to say "no".

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.

Nothing from camp

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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Walsh County, North Dakota

Apr. 20, 1909, in the Great Northern Railroad section house at Ardoch, N. Dak. Joseph (born 8-17-10), Juline (born 1-17-12), Gladys (born 12-15-13), and Margarete (born 4-16-20) were all born in the Grafton home, now the residence of Gladys Selliken. The family did not enjoy the comforts of today's modern living, such as inside plumbing or running water, and modern heating facilities. Traveling 50 yards at -40 degrees F., to the outhouse was general practice in Grafton through the mid-20's. Sub-zero weather was never an excuse for non-attendance at school, even for first graders.

Of the five Selliken children, Olaf passed away at age 70 on Dec. 18, 1979; Joseph lives at Torrance, Calif.; Juline and Gladys both live in Grafton, and Margarete has lived in Minneapolis since 1939.



Olaf Selliken

Joseph Selliken

Juline Selliken

All three Selliken sons served in WWII and were overseas for many months prior to the end of the war. Olaf was in the Army in New Guinea and later in the Philippines where he was awarded the Bronze Star medal for heroism in action. When his squad was struck by machine gun fire and several men were wounded, he exposed himself to go to their aid, moving them to sheltered positions where he administered first aid.

Joe was executive officer with the 19th Bombardment Group on Guam, being discharged from service in 1946. After earning a Master's Degree at Oregon State University and employment as an engineer at Boeing's in Seattle, in development of the B-52 Bomber, he was recalled to active duty in 1952. He retired from the U. S. Air Force in 1967.

Juline was in the 87th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized of the 7th Armored Division. After 19 months of training in U. S. camps, he sailed on the Queen Mary for Europe. Landing in Scotland, after six days, he went by train to a camp about 40 miles from London, England. From England, he sailed to France and was assigned to an Armored car. Besides the Car Commander, there was a driver, radio operator, and Juline, the gunner. The guns, a 30-caliber machine gun and a 37 MM gun, were mounted so that one gun could be fired at a time, or both guns could be fired at the same time.

The Armored Car was sent far ahead of other troops to scout out the position of the enemy. When ordered to outpost at the City of Verdun, France, Juline's car was fired on by the Germans. The bullets came through the front hatch of the car and ricocheted. The driver received shrapnel in the back. The Car Commander had shrapnel go through his face — in one cheek and out the other. Juline was hit in the right shoulder and still has shrapnel embedded there after 36 years. The Car Commander stood up in the turret and surrendered. After the Armored Car had gone a short distance, under guard, a company of Germans with all types of weapons came into view. Without surrendering,

the four in the Armored Car would have been blown up on the day of capture, Sept. 1, 1944.

The Car Commander was sent to a hospital. The other three were sent to a temporary camp to join a few hundred prisoners of war. After a few days they were packed like sardines into freight cars and moved from one camp to another. During the trip to the final camp, about 40 miles southeast of Berlin, Juline spent four days and nights in the cramped quarters of a box car.

For three weeks the group lived on German prison rations until the American Red Cross could bring in food. Meanwhile, the prisoners were given a cup of black coffee for breakfast, a thin soup made of sugar beet tops or rutabagas, and one-sixth of a loaf of bread for dinner, and supper consisted of another cup of black coffee or tea. After the three weeks, the weekly Red Cross parcels arrived to supplement their diet. From five to seven packs of cigarettes were included in the weekly parcel. Occasionally the prisoners were able to bribe the German guards into giving them a loaf of bread for cigarettes. At first thirty cigarettes could buy a loaf of bread, but later the guards demanded fifty. The prisoners cut their own cigarettes into three parts, smoked butts, and waited for the next Red Cross parcel to arrive. Juline described the Red Cross parcel sent to the prisoners for Christmas as containing the following: Four packages of Spearmint gum, 4 oz. can Vienna sausages, 7 oz. can salted mixed nuts, 12 oz. can mixed candies, 3 3/4 oz. package tea, 1 package Prince Albert tobacco, 1 pipe, game of chess, 14 oz. package fancy dates, 8 oz. can honey, 8 3/4 oz. can cherries, small can deviled ham, 12 oz. can boned turkey, 1 pound can plum pudding, and 2 scenic pictures of places in the United States.

Many times they were with help

58. Juline was a prisoner for five months. The prisoners were never bodily harmed by the guards during his stay at the camp. On the morning of Jan. 31, 1945, the sound of approaching Russian forces was heard by the prisoners. Around noon the prisoners were taken out on the road by their guards. Spearheads of the Red Army, thinking they were Hungarian soldiers, fired on the group. Several Americans were killed and wounded. The guards then returned the prisoners to the camp and later that day the Russians entered, killing all of the guards and liberating the prisoners.

59. The freed prisoners were told by the Russians to head for Odessa, Russia, on the Black Sea. No help was given for transportation or food procurement. They were ordered to proceed in small groups. Juline and a fellow from Ohio, who was capable in the German language, traveled together. At various times it protected their lives to explain in German that they were liberated prisoners trying to leave the country. One time they had a feast on tin-canned foods found in the basement of an abandoned German hotel which had been bombed out by the Russians. They walked, rode on horse-drawn wagons, on old Russians vehicles, and on American trucks which were leased to the Russians.

It was nearly three weeks before they arrived at Odessa, where they stayed for some time before shipping on a Scottish boat to Naples, Italy. After a time at Naples, they sailed on an American ship, landing in Boston, Mass., on Apr. 20, 1945.

Olaf and Juline returned to Grafton at the close of the war. They both retired from employment with the Great Northern Railroad, the company for which their father had been section foreman for more than forty years.

Olaf Selliken married Laura Johnson Bevan of Portland, Ore., in December, 1947. They had four children — Julie, Portland, Ore.; Lauren, Grand Forks, N. Dak.; and Janice and Lowell, Grafton. Olaf's only grandchildren are Julie's children —