

Jack W. Zordell
M Company, 422nd Regiment
106th Infantry Division

My diary reads as follows:

Jack W. Zordell, 16174677, this serial number reflects my enlistment in the Signal Corps after extensive attempts to join the other services and being rejected for near-sightedness.

I was sent to radar school in Ashland, Wisconsin during the summer of 1943. In August, I was offered the opportunity of going to the University of Wisconsin based my test grade for ASTP in high school.

I attended the school for one semester. The program was eliminated for all except seniors and we were sent to Fort Benning for basic training in December. After an abbreviated 13 week training period due to the outbreak of spinal meningitis, we were sent to the 106th Division in [Camp Atterbury](#), Indiana. The division had just returned from maneuvers in Tennessee and sent all except non-coms to POE as replacements.

During the summer of 1944, I was the jeep driver for the executive officer. That fall I was transferred to [M Company 422nd](#) as a ammo bearer for the heavy machine gun squad. The division moved to Camp Miles Standish. During the trip, I had a severe attack of asthma. I was hospitalized and had to choose between shipping overseas with the division or going as a replacement after recovery. I went with the division on the Aquitania and recovered enroute.

After docking at Edinburg, Scotland, we went by train to southern England Quonset huts. We practiced in the rain and slept in pup tents. We did have a pass to visit Coventry and go to a play at Stratford on Avon.

After crossing the channel in an LST, we disembarked at Rouen, France in the rain. We traveled to the front-line dugout and replaced the 2nd division. We were in snow and the dugout had several inches of water. Since overshoes were not available, I alternated socks under my belt to my feet. Managed to have frostbitten feet anyway.

After several days and nights of large vehicle movement on the German side, the attack started. Our machine gun strong point was by-passed, and other than numerous V-1 maneuvers over our position, we finished the rations while awaiting further orders. Three days later, we started back toward our lines. I had the only can of ammo --five minutes of firing at most.

After one night, we joined a column and after traversing a hill, 88 fire cut the column behind us. We were in a small gully when the order was given to break up the weapons and surrender. We joined a large group which were being searched. I hid a carton of cigarettes under my belt and put my watch above my

elbow and was undetected. We were walked to a clearing at nightfall where we slept [?] spoon-fashion.

We boarded 40 & 8 boxcars near Prium. The car had a foot of manure and approximately 3 feet of partition on one end. We didn't have room to sit at the same time. I lit a cigarette and saw the butt being dragged by someone on the opposite side of the car. We were bombed one night in a railroad yard. The car was locked so that we did not get out, Fortunately we were not hit. During the last day of our five day journey, we broke the partition boards and burned them in a helmet.

Upon arrival at [Stalag IVB, Mulberg](#), we were interviewed, assigned POW numbers, 311861, and given a tetanus shot in the chest. I managed to have dysentery which helped reduce weight and eliminate one pair of extra pants. We talked constantly about food, and scrounged potato peelings and in the spring, dandelion leaves. Thirty of the privates were put on a train to a brick factory near Wittenburg, Enroute we stopped and transferred at a train station and were spit-on by the civilians.

There were 30 British POW's working at one oven of the factory. We were divided into groups--several for oven loading and unloading, and others for removing overburden and loading clay by hand. The process was dynamiting the clay/overburden and loading the clay into narrow gauge railway cars. We would pickup the tracks and relocate them by hand. This was rough on bare hands in winter.

One day the engineer removed his gloves and laid by the track, and I stole them. I hid them in the outhouse. There was pandemonium and punishment--stand with arms stretched in front et al. Never discovered but had to work extra detail on Sunday in town. Our standard work week was dawn to dark Monday through Saturday.

A typical day's nutrition was as follows: ersatz coffee [chicory] for breakfast; a half-canteen cup of turnip mash for lunch; and a sawdust bread slice with another half-canteen cup of turnip mash for dinner. For one dinner each week, a slice of overcooked horse meat was added. We received one Red Cross package per month which was divided between 30 of us. Our supervisor was a one-legged veteran from WWI.

Our guards were Russian front disabled veterans. After Roosevelt died, we were walked toward the Russian line and back to the US lines since the US troops were getting close to the factory. While camped near the Elbe river across from Bitterfeld, a squad of 104th division troops rescued us and took the guards prisoners. I was taken in by a mash unit at a Luftwaffe field. On VE day [one week after rescue], I consumed some wine and couldn't leave the cot for three days. In spite of much over-indulging, I survived to take my first plane ride to Camp Lucky Strike at LeHavre. After being served eggnog anytime, and full service by German prisoners, I weighed in at a flabby 230.

We boarded a navy transport for the trip back to the US.

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