

I Guard Nazi Prisoners

by Pfc. Norm Saunders

This account of life aboard a U. S. train carrying Nazi prisoners to internment camps is an authentic bit of after-the-battle reporting by an Army MP who was a civilian artist. That his eye missed no telling detail is evident from both his first-person story below and his on-the-spot pencil sketches on these pages.—EDITOR



ONCE IN THE U. S., AXIS PRISONERS ARE HERDED INTO TRAINS BOUND FOR CAMPS IN INTERIOR. UNIFORMS ARE A MOTLEY OF THEIR OWN AND ALLIED ARMIES

Until I was assigned as an Interior Guard on a Prisoner of War train, the only German soldiers I had seen were in newsreels and training films.

The thousands I have seen since then look and act much as the first 50 did. They are shorter than American soldiers by half a head or more, and they are younger—their ages vary from 15 to 40, but the majority appear to be 18 or 19.

After being herded into a coach and placed three in a double seat, the first thing they look for is the water cooler. After Africa, they have little faith in any water supply.

And hungry! They're the hungriest lot I ever saw. At meal time, we bring bread, then potatoes, then meat, and next salad or other vegetables, with coffee last. Sauerkraut and frankfurters are a real treat to them, and ice cream just tops everything. They simply can't believe ice cream.

Picnic plates and utensils amaze them, and they say "America must be *kaput*"—nothing left but paper plates. When we throw the dishes away, they are flabbergasted by our extravagance! After washing and shaving, they'll dry themselves with a dirty old towel day after day, rolling it up and restoring it to their packs. They never use the paper towels furnished them until we show them how.

Their craving for candy and chewing gum is as great as for cigarettes. They are allowed to smoke for 30 minutes after each meal. The miserliness with which they save butts speaks for the quality and quantity they are used to.



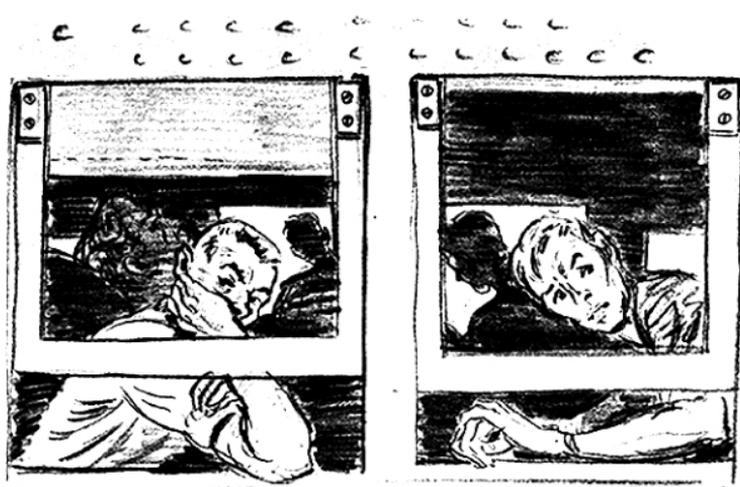
NAZI CAPTIVES EN ROUTE EAT AS IF STARVED. THEY'RE CRAZY ABOUT ICE CREAM



EACH COACH CARRIES 50 PRISONERS. ONLY ONE MAY MOVE ABOUT AT A TIME

The Nazis are extremely curious about America—they gaze out the windows constantly. Each train-load usually includes one or more Germans who were in the U. S. before the war—and some lived in Brooklyn. Twice I have been asked, "How're the Dodgers doing?"

These more-traveled Germans point out various towns to their fellow-captives. Those who have never been here before are most curious and eager to see Indians, cowboys, the Mississippi river, and Chicago. War plants along our routes are the real eye-openers to the Nazis—those factories blazing away as we travel across America day after day. At first the prisoners look with mere interest and curiosity, then they stare unbelievably, and before we reach the camps they just sit dumbfounded at the train windows. They have lost their arrogance and are a lot quieter and not so sure that Germany will win the war.



CONSTANTLY STARING out the windows, the Nazis lose confidence in Hitler's might as they pass countless war factories. Note the wooden stops permitting windows to provide ventilation but not means of escape.



WOUNDS SUFFERED BEFORE CAPTURE ARE DRESSED BY U. S. MEDICAL OFFICERS



ARTIST SAUNDERS TITLES THIS "A GOERING AIR-BORNE TROOPER IS GROUNDED"



JOURNEY'S END IS AN ISOLATED U. S. PRISON CAMP. WARY OF THE TOMMY-GUNS, PRISONERS LEAVE THE TRAIN QUIETLY—STILL CURIOUS BUT NO LONGER ARROGANT



CLICK

THE NATIONAL PICTURE MONTHLY
NOVEMBER, 1943 * p. 16

OldMagazineArticles.com