

CONFIDENTIAL

For The WAR CRIMES OFFICE
Judge Advocate General's Department -- War Department
United States of America

*W.D.
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In the matter of the fail- * Perpetuation of Testimony of
ure of the German army to * James Frederick Zeiser, Sgt.,
provide adequate food, * ASN 35142619.
quarters, and medical at- *
tention for American prison- *
ers at Buchenwald Concen- *
tration Camp, September 1944. *

Taken at: 6712 Jersey Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Date: 27 July 1945
In the Presence of: Maynard E. Hanson, Special Agent, SIC, 5th Svc.
Questions by: Maynard E. Hanson

- Q. State your name, rank, serial number, permanent home address, and the date and place of your birth.
- A. James Frederick Zeiser, Sgt., ASN 35142619. My permanent home address is 6712 Jersey Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio. I was born on 29 April 1915 in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Q. What educational institutions did you attend?
- A. I graduated from high school in Cincinnati, Ohio, and then attended a six-months course at the Sage Institute of Neon, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Q. What was your civilian occupation?
- A. I operated a neon sign business in Lafayette, Indiana, for about two years.
- Q. Have you recently returned to the United States from overseas?
- A. Yes, I arrived on 11 June 1945 at Boston, Massachusetts.
- Q. Were you a prisoner of war?
- A. Yes, for about 10 months in France and Germany.
- Q. Will you state where you were held prisoner and the dates of your imprisonment?
- A. I was captured in Paris, France, on 11 July 1944 and taken to the Fresnes prison in the northern part of Paris and I was held prisoner there until 15 August 1944. I was moved by rail from Fresnes prison to Buchenwald concentration camp at Weymar, Germany, where I was held from 20 August 1944 to 19 October 1944 when I was transferred to Stalag Luft #III, at Sagan, Germany, where I was imprisoned from 21 October 1944 to 27 January 1945. I was then transferred to Stalag 7 A, at Mocsburg, Germany, where I remained prisoner until my liberation.

Failure to provide adequate food & quarters

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- Q. Do you know of any atrocities or mistreatment of American citizens or prisoners of war at any time?
- A. Yes
- Q. Will you describe this mistreatment?
- A. I arrived at Euchenwald Concentration camp near Weymar, Germany, on 20 August 1944 together with about 170 other American airmen. For the first three weeks of our internment at this camp, we were confined to the "Lower Lager" which was simply a fenced enclosure in which there were about 10,000 prisoners including Poles, Jews, German political prisoners, French, Russian and British. We were so crowded that we could not walk freely without bumping into other prisoners. Because of this crowded condition, and the length of time we were confined in this enclosure, the sanitary conditions became unbearable as there were no toilet facilities provided. There were four small tents erected in this area that were used for housing sick prisoners. Each man was supplied with only a pair of trousers, a shirt and a cap. When it rained we were soaked to the skin and the area became like a pig pen with the mud and filth several inches deep. While confined in this area we received but a meager German ration of food. At 4:30 AM daily one half bowl of porridge was provided to be shared by two men. At 11:00 AM we received a cup of tea. At 5:00 PM we each received one-sixth loaf of bread and one half bowl of soup which was usually uneatable as it was poorly prepared from a base of dehydrated vegetables. Twice a week we each received a very thin slice of sausage that was about one and one half inches in diameter and twice a week we received a few small cooked potatoes. On these days however, the soup ration was cut one half. After about three weeks we were moved to a "Central Lager" and assigned to barracks with about 720 men to a building. We were each supplied with a blanket and there were four tiers of shelves against the walls which served as bunks. About 50 per cent of the men had open sores as a result of infected flea bites as proper medical treatment was not provided.
- Q. Did you receive any Red Cross parcels while a prisoner of war?
- A. Yes, on the average we received weekly one parcel to be shared by two men with the exception of several weeks when none arrived and during the time we were in transit.
- Q. Can you identify any of the persons responsible for this incident?
- A. Yes. The German guard in charge of our Lager was a Wehrmacht private by the name of Hoffman. He was about 30 years of age, short, heavy set and stocky, about 5 feet 8 inches in height and weighing about 180 pounds, with dark hair and average complexion. He was a man with a mean and arrogant disposition. The assistant Lagerfuhrer was a German political prisoner who had been in the camp for 11 years. His name was Bach or Bock and can be identified as he was a tall, middle aged man who had an injured foot. The foot was amputated across the middle of the arch and he wore but half a shoe and walked with a slight limp.
- Q. Can you identify any of the victims of this incident?
- A. No, I do not know the names of any of them.

James Frederick Zeiser

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State of: Ohio

County of: Hamilton

I, James Frederick Zeiser, of lawful age, being duly sworn on oath, state that I have read the foregoing transcription of my interrogation and all answers contained therein are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

James Frederick Zeiser
James Frederick Zeiser, Sgt.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of August 1945.

Joseph J. Johnston
JOSEPH J. JOHNSTON, Major, Ord.
Summary Court Officer
Authority Par. 3, S.O. 122
Hqs Fifth SvC, 22 May 1945

CERTIFICATE

I, Maynard E. Hanson, Special Agent, SIC, 5th SvC, certify that on 27 July 1945, personally appeared before me James Frederick Zeiser, Sgt., and gave the foregoing answers to the several questions set forth; that after his testimony had been transcribed, the said James Frederick Zeiser read the same and affixed his signature thereto in my presence.

Place: Cincinnati, Ohio Maynard E. Hanson
Special Agent
Date: 1 August 1945 Fifth Service Command