

John L. Hall

423 SVC/106

How I avoided capture

This is the story as it happened on December 16, 1944.

Ordered to take three trucks, proceed to St. Vith to pick-up our daily supply of rations. Was exposed to artillery fire on Skyline Drive and at AUW. Picked up our supplies and started return trip to Service Co. C.P. Did not make a proper turn at Auw and ran into the 14th Calvary Area. Turned back to Auw and was in the lead truck with my driver named Decker. We were forced to halt. Other vehicles were in the road, one Jeep was 81st. Engineers and a three quarter ton carry-all was 590th Field Artillery My truck received small arms fire thru the Cab.

We left the trucks and took shelter in a farm house where there was personnel from 423rd. Service Co, 81st. Engineers, 589th Field Artillery and 14th Calvary. Trying to set up a defense, a machine gun was taken from one of the Jeeps and set up on the second floor. For better observation, a hole was punched thru the roof. 'Could only locate the enemy by an occasional movement, as their camouflage was good against the snow. It was decided to Fire the old barn across to the East side of the road thinking German Riflemen must be using it. After firing, the enemy was seen leaving the area. Some members from 81st Engineer and I, alternating with machine gun and rifles, picked off some of the enemy. I was using a rifle borrowed from Wm. Devine; the rifle was on loan as I was only armed with a 45 automatic. (The above information can be verified on pages 33 and 34 from the book "ST Vith, The Lion in the Way" by Cpl. Dupuy, also "A Time for Trumpets" by Charles MacDonald, p.111). Then four tiger tanks hit us. Eight rounds of 88 Ammo came into the building. There was no way to combat this adversity. The stairs to the ground floor had been damaged. Some of us jumped out the back window to the ground. The Field Artillery Captain who had assumed command was at the corner of the building with a white handkerchief tied on the end of a rifle barrel, trying to surrender.

Several of us decided, we would make a break for the woods below the building. We could not re-enter the building without being exposed to machine gun fire from the tanks. The lead and rear tanks also had a field of fire to the woods. There was a barbed wire fence between the building and safety of the woods. One soldier was shot as he slowed to climb over the fence. One or two of us at a time took a chance and dived under the fence; came up running and made the safety of the woods. Do not know how many did not make it.

Eight or ten of us got together and decided to by-pass Auw and make for the road leading West back toward St. Vith. When we got to the road we found that Germans had control. Back tracking and staying in the woods, so we would not be exposed to gunfire, we went Southwest and located a 589th Field Artillery Battalion group in the vicinity of Laudesfeld.

I was with various outfits the rest of the Battle of the Bulge.

On December 16, 1944 we were to draw rations for 3207 men.
December 26, 1944 there was 68 members of the 423rd Infantry accounted for.



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James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org
jimdwest@centurylink.net