

Jack Sulser

423rd Regiment, Company F
106th Infantry Division

Jack Sulser was a squad leader in the 106th Infantry Division's Company F, 423rd Inf. Regiment, on Dec. 16, 1944. The 423rd, along with the division's 422nd Regt., was in the Allied front lines during the Germans' last big World War II offensive the Battle of the Bulge.



Some 24 hours into the battle, the Germans broke through the regiments', perimeter defenses, surrounding Sulser and his comrades. "We were ordered to hold our positions," Sulser remembered. "A U.S. armored division was expected to fight its way to us the next day." But only a fragment of the division actually arrived, not enough men to counterattack. On Dec. 18, the U.S. regiments were ordered to fight their way out, Sulser recalled. "By then, the Germans had been reinforced by SS and elite armored units. And by midday Dec. 19, a quarter of both regiments had been killed."

The regimental commanders, realizing further escape attempts would be in vain, surrendered their troops. "Soon after, we were herded into boxcars, en route to our first POW camp," Sulser recalled. "We arrived at Bad Orb, 'Stalag IXB,' on Christmas Day and had the first food we'd eaten since Dec. 16." Ten days later, Sulser was herded aboard another boxcar for a POW camp at Ziegenhain. Until March 30, when U.S. troops liberated the camp, Sulser lived on what a U.S. Army doctor estimated was a 900-calorie diet: herbal tea for breakfast, soup for lunch and a slice of bread for supper. By January, the men began dying of malnutrition.

"We slept in triple-decker bunks, without heat, and had only cold water for washing and the use of one outside latrine," Sulser said. "On Easter Sunday, as the ex-POWs began conducting their own sunrise worship service, a U.S. Army chaplain arrived and passed out communion wafers and hymnals. It's then that we felt truly liberated, Sulser reflected".

Excerpts from "Portraits of POWs" by Chester Simpson, originally appearing in Soldiers Magazine, September 1994. Copyright by Chester Simpson, 1994, All Rights Reserved. Based on Mr. Simpson's forthcoming book, Portraits of Patriots

<http://home.planet.nl/~wijer037/Sulser.html>



Page last revised
James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org