

Norman Segal

424th Regiment
106th Infantry Division

Lucky streak followed soldier

October 3, 2008

At 96, Norman Segal has a fearless streak. Throughout his life, the former soldier in the **106th infantry division** of the Army during World War II never shielded himself from daring pursuits. From dodging mines in the European-African-Middle Eastern theaters without a scratch, to starting a career as a local real estate agent at age 90, Segal can list several instances of odds-defiance on his résumé. Now retired, Segal lives in Sarasota with his wife of 27 years, Aina, the author of the autobiographical book, "Battered Heart."



CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS / KATHRYN BRASS Norman Segal, who enlisted when he was 29, was almost 10 years older than many of the men he served with during World War II. Now 96, he lives with his wife, Aina, in Sarasota. "It was cold and snowy and people were getting wounded and captured. We went to the Siegfried Line and crossed this big field. The next day, we found out that we had been walking on a field of mines, but they were all frozen so they didn't go off.

'I enlisted. I was 29 when I went into the Army and I had been working in the textile business at the time. I was sent overseas as a replacement and I joined the **106th Infantry Division. I was in the heavy weapons company.**

I used to go on advance and radio back where to send the mortar shells; that was my job at the beginning. I was overseas for a year, stationed in Belgium in a place called Givet.

Later on, we were on our way to Bastogne when it was surrounded by McCall, when he said "Nuts" to the Germans. We were supposed to be in Bastogne, but since they were surrounded, we were told to just take off.

I went to Givet. I had met a family there that I became friendly with, and I went back home with them. They were very nice -- a man, a wife and their three daughters. I'll never forget when they gave me a bathroom with a big tub, and a kitchen. I'd been sleeping in foxholes for so long.

I was much older than most of the men in the group. They were young, all of them, maybe 18 and 19 years old. The weather was terrible. We'd sleep in haystacks. We were sent to the Battle of the Bulge, between the 422nd and 423rd regiments, backing up the front lines as the **424th** regiment. I led this group in combat across Belgium into Germany.

It was cold and snowy and people were getting wounded and captured. We went to the Siegfried Line and crossed this big field. The next day, we found out that we had been walking on a field of mines, but they were all frozen so they didn't go off, fortunately.

It was so cold and all we had to wear was our regular Army outfit. It's amazing I never got hit with any shrapnel because, all around me, people were getting hit. I saw plenty of kids get killed. You're so bound up in what you're doing, you don't pay much attention to it. You're really numb. I've blocked it out for the last 50 years. I never opened up about it.

We were crossing into France and there were all these little battles every day. When we first took off, after the Bulge, we didn't have overcoats. I didn't have any face-to-face combat with the Germans, but I had a German luger I took home with me.

I was a tech sergeant. I had a lot of men to watch over. After the war, we were in Germany, and I was in charge of a non-commissioned officers (NCO) club and we had parties. I really was living a charmed life, especially having been in the infantry. I was never injured. It's hard to believe, I know. I'm a very lucky man."

ABBY WEINGARTEN, Sarasota Herald-Tribune - Sarasota, FL, USA

Note: After publishing this account I received emails from 106th Vets, pointing out several discrepancies in the above article. But I wasn't there, so I am in no position to correct anything. I leave it up to you as to its authenticity and accuracy.



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