

## Alan Shaver

*424th Regiment, Company D  
106th Infantry Division*



### Alan Shaver Notes

names on Italian currency: Clyde T. Holloway, Ernest E. Sanderson, Ohildon (sp? Sheldon?) Okin, Edward Baldwin, Gunther E. Hines, Wm. H. York

names on French currency: Robert Mayer, George (?) Warner, J.M. Surratt, Carl F. Lundquist, George Kaufman, Nat Patterson, Harold Willams, E.J. Hodge, Tony Barredo, Eric Engdahl, K. Austin, Roy E. Sharp (?)

members of 2nd squad: Cpl Shaver, Diaz, Barredo, Collins, Davidson, Geraci

notes a name: Harold J/Goslin

notes a name: Elfrida Hoffmann "Vor der Kaserne von dem gropen Jeu"

09/28/1954 Selective Service number 11 173 25 84, is classed as 5-A

names of fellow soldiers: Shaver, Diaz, Davidson, Geraci, Collins, Elmer, Scironie, Smith T, Swafford, White, Petrarca, Rist, Ozorowski, Murrey (scratched out), Worthman

09/08/1943 arrives in ROTC in Madison WI

12/05/1943 returns to North Henderson on leave

12/16/1943 reports to Fort Sheridan in Chicago

12/28/1943 transferred to Fort Benning in Columbus, GA

3/30/1944 transferred to Camp Atterbury in Edenburg, IN

10/11/1944 transferred to Camp Myles Standish in Boston MA

10/20/1944 Unit prepares to ship out from Aquitania, Port of NY

10/21/1944 ships out at 1000

10/28/1944 Port call at Glasgow, Clyde of Perth

10/30/1944 unit is stationed at Banbury England

12/01/1944 leaves England; Ship South Hampton

12/06/1944 lands at LeHarve France

12/06/1944 bivouaced at Ayaville, France

12/09/1944	12 miles west of St. Vith, Belgium
12/12/1944	in Steinbrauk, Germany
12/16/1944	at Bulge Winterspelt Hark helenfiled. Battle of the bulge began 12/16. Dad survived by playing dead. The Germans were going to each foxhole to shoot the wounded. They stopped just before reaching dad.
12/18/1944	at Beraub Belgium. Later that day (12/16), another survivor attempted to escape. Leaving the fox hole, that person crossed a ridge. Dad heard gunfire, and never knew whether or not the person survived.
12/23/1944	bivoaced west of Wielsahm. Dad and 1 other survivor left their foxhole under cover of darkness. He reported hearing the Malmedy massacre on 12/17.
12/25/1944	at Champ de Hare Belgium
12/26/1944	at Manhay Belgium
12/31/1944	at Klevis Belgium
1/2/1945	at Chateau-Hody, Belgium
1/4/1945	at Stavelot & Malmedy; Hotel Bal Moral, Joa Belgium
1/5/1945	at Winamplanche Belgium
1/9/1945	at Aisemont, Belgium
1/10/1945	at Spineau & Wanee, Belgium
1/13/1945	at Heunemont Belgium
1/19/1945	at Ebestang & Deidenburg Belgium
1/29/1945	at Strivaux (Plainsviey) Belgium. Probably wounded about this time
2/6/1945	at Paris, France. Most likely for medical treatment
2/9/1945	at Mortorville (Losheim) Germany
3/6/1945	in the woods
3/8/1945	at Burk-Basson (Pillbox) Germany. The picture!!!
3/16/1945	at St. Quentein France
4/3/1945	Bivoaced at Range (Neon Renney) France
4/8/1945	at Rennes France
4/25/1945	at Heideshein Germany
5/12/1945	at Sprendlingen Germany
7/1/1945	at Camp Allan Jones 21 kl from Mayen Germany
7/7/1945	at Sprendlinger Germany
7/11/1945	at Schollbronn Germany
7/22/1945	at Camp Lucky Strike, LeHarve France
8/22/1945	at Tiddworth Bks England
8/28/1945	at London England
8/29/1945	at Tiddworth Bks England
9/4/1945	at South Hampton England
9/5/1945	Depart South Hampton England on the Queen Mary at 1100
9/10/1945	Arrived Port of NY at 0830
9/10/1945	at Camp Kilmer Brunswick, NJ
9/13/1945	at Camp Grant, Rockford, IL
9/14/1945	Home on leave
11/2/1945	at Camp Grant, Rockford, IL
11/11/1945	at Mayo General Hospital
12/16/1945	at Home
5/13/1946	Discharged from the Army at Fort Sheridan IL; Co M, 320th Inf; Wounded in Belgium in 1945

Dogtags: 16102222 T44-44 B P

106 Golden Lion Division, Co D, 424th Inf Regiment

***Whimsical Fate in a Foxhole*** -- Alan E. Shaver: Some parts of this account were told to Robert Shaver by Alan (November 1945) and by his wife, Bonnie (February 1990). Alan Shaver was six months out of high school and in a college military program when he was inducted into the regular U.S. Army in December 1943. One year later, he was serving as a front-line infantryman in the brand-new, totally untested 106th Infantry Division in Belgium. This division was assigned to a central position in the Western Allies line of deployment. The Allies by then had had some success along the second front in Europe by breaking out of their Normandy strongholds, liberating France, and by even advancing into some German territory. But the final rout of the German Wehrmacht had not yet begun.

About one month prior to that December, Alan's brother, Bob, then in England on active duty with the U.S. Eighth Air Force, had visited Alan in his division's bivouac in southern England. The day of visitation was dark and gloomy. Endless rows of the 106th's tents marched up and down hill beneath a heavy canopy of browning oaks. Alan was taciturn and resigned, and Bob was filled with foreboding of the extreme unpleasantness that undoubtedly was in Alan's near future. He also had a strangely unreasoned guilty feeling because he much preferred his flying lot, although odds for his survival were probably less than those of Alan.

In Belgium it was the position of the U.S. 106th Division and one or two others that the Germans singled out on December 16, 1944, to bear the brunt of their thrust to begin one of the most famous battles in all the annals of warfare. If successful, the Germans hoped to delay the Allied advance by at least a year, and in their fondest hopes they would stay forever the further Western advance into German territory or throw the Western Alliance out of Europe altogether.

As 38 German divisions rushed headlong to begin the Battle of the Bulge, Alan's division and a few others were decimated, never to be reconstituted. The German losses, exacerbated by their offensive stance, were even greater, some 200,000 casualties and prisoners (World Book Encyclopedia, 1966, v. 20, p. 397), but for two weeks the outcome for the Allies was extremely tenuous. On line in Belgium, Alan was in a third foxhole down from the summit of a hill and on the side sheltered from the Germans. Came the German-chosen time to commence battle, and hordes of them swarmed over the hill and killed all the Americans in the three foxholes except Alan.

He dared not move and played dead. Other Germans appeared and shot the already slain American soldiers to assure that they need not be burdened by wounded prisoners. Before Alan's turn came for the coup de grace, the German leader said something like, "Oh, come on, let's go, " and go they did.

[Alan recounted this story directly to his son (Dennis). Alan noted there were 2 other soldiers with him in his foxhole. During the afternoon, one soldier left the fox and crossed a ridge behind them. Alan reported hearing some gunfire later, but he never learned the fate of that soldier. That night, under the cover of darkness, Alan and the other soldier left the foxhole in search of the American lines, which they found a couple days later.]

Alan departed the foxhole, and during days of bitterly cold, snowy weather and isolation in the somber Ardennes Forest, he eventually found the security of the far withdrawn

American lines. On one of these days he was startled to come face to face with two Germans. He killed one of them, who, Alan said, seemed to be younger and less well trained than was he. Alan had been quicker, but he remembered this second irony of wartime fate to befall him. He was affected in later years by recollection of such whimsy and the impartiality of the tragedy of war.

Alan was wounded and received the Purple Heart, but whether it was during engagement in the Battle of the Bulge or in another is not known here.

[Alan recounted this to Dennis as well. He was wounded by shrapnel while marching in formation near Stavelot, Belgium on 29 JAN 1945. A grenade was tossed into the ranks. The man nearest the grenade was killed. The man behind him was cover head to toe with shrapnel, which shielded Alan, who was behind him. Alan picked a piece of stray shrapnel in his ankle.]

During that critical pre-Christmas 1944 time in the Ardennes, the entire Eighth Air Force, stationed in England, temporarily abandoned its high—altitude strategic bombing of Germany and flew tactical support missions for the beleaguered U.S. troops focused at Bastogne, Belgium. But not at the beginning of that great battle, for the Germans had chosen their optimum time, one of bad weather, which kept the Eighth Air Force and other Allied air power grounded.

At last the weather cleared by December 24. Thousands of heavy bombers, Flying Fortresses and Liberators were sent aloft from scores of East Anglia airfields. Bob's B-24 Liberator crew, which knew of the 106th Division's plight and that of others, flew lead ship for the 389th Bomb group on one of the tactical support missions, this one to Bitburg, Germany. Bitburg, just over the border from Belgium, was a principal staging and supply center for the German push.

Bob's crew and he as one of the lead navigators received a special "Lead Crew Commendation" for its meritorious achievement of the destruction of the target at Bitburg. This was the same Bitburg that received the world's attention when in 1985 President Ronald Reagan made his controversial memorial visit to the military cemetery at Bitburg. Here were emotional and nostalgic experiences and memories, for both Alan and Bob, of December 24, 1944, and the preceding days, recollections that, for Bob, surged powerfully forward again in his mind in 1985.

Not for Alan and Bob alone, however, for Alan's second son, Donald, was serving in about 1970 as a Russian interpreter in the U.S. Army in Europe. He visited the monument that America raised in honor of Alan's 106th and other divisions that absorbed the full force of onslaught and in honor of other units that saved the day at Bastogne. Those men and others went on to victory in that battle by early January 1945 and thence, months later, to victory that ended the European war. We may think that more than whimsical fate entered Donald's mind.

Source: "To Plant a Tree", A Glass-Edgar-Shaver-Koons Genealogy, by Robert H. Shaver, and dedicated to Alan E. Shaver, 1990.

Source: Dennis Shaver, son of Alan Shaver



From top left is Robert Shaver , Jim Shaver, Alan Shaver, Donald L. Shaver

### Dad's Story

Corporal Alan E Shaver  
ASN# 16 102 222106 Inf Div,  
424th Inf Regiment, Co D, 3rd Mortar Platoon, 2nd Squad

Our Dad never talked with us about his experience in the Battle of the Bulge. He shared very little with our Mom or his siblings or family. When his two older brothers returned from the war (both aviators), he did not join in on the story telling. Like many veterans, it seems that this was a chapter of his life that he would rather forget. However, he did keep a small pocket size spiral notebook with him and dutifully recorded the dates and locations where he was, from the time he entered the service in 1943 until he was discharged in 1946. Using this and lining it up with the official history of the 106th, we often thought it might be possible to piece together the story of what happened to him then. However, it wasn't until Dennis did some excellent research into his military record that we were able to put it all into some sort of context, filling in the blanks with some reasonable assumptions. Since this December is the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, this seemed like as good a time as any to put it all on paper. Since Dad couldn't tell the story himself, we will tell it for him. Dad was 16 and a junior in high school when Pearl Harbor was attacked. His oldest brother, Uncle Bob (3 years his senior), was a sophomore in college, and his next older brother, Uncle Jim (2 years his senior), was a freshman at the same college. Both dropped out of college and joined the Army Air Corp in 1942, soon after Pearl Harbor. Both became officers: Bob went on to become a navigator on a B24 "Liberator" bomber, flying out of Norwich, England, and Jim became a fighter pilot, flying a P-47 Thunderbolt out of Pisa, Italy.

Dad was very proud of both of his older brothers and idealized them. He was 17 when he graduated from high school in June, 1943. He was eager to serve like his brothers, but he wouldn't turn 18 (the minimum age for enlistment) until September. So instead of waiting, he enrolled in a new Army program especially

for 17 year olds, called the "ASTP Reserve" (Army Specialized Training Program). The purpose of this program was to provide technicians and specialists for the the Army. Participants were selected based on test scores and grades. They attended colleges and universities at government expense, in uniform, receiving a military paycheck. Upon turning 18, they were officially sworn into the service, and considered on active duty. Their service commitment was the same as any other enlistee. They attended regular college for 18 months, then they would either go to officer school or go on active duty as a highly skilled and specialized enlisted soldier. Dad was selected for the program and went to Engineering school at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This is the first entry in his spiral notebook, showing he arrived there on September 8, 1943, age 17. Unfortunately, like many military programs, ASTP did not work out as planned. By the end of 1943, the Army had too many 2nd lieutenants already, so those finishing their ASTP program did not have a chance to go to officer school. Further, many generals were not interested in highly educated specialists; they needed infantry soldiers now, not technical specialists a year from now. In order to meet this need, the Army allowed them, in critical cases (such as staffing new units) to "involuntarily transfer" ASTPers into the infantry once they turned 18.

This quickly became the norm, and by February 1944, the program closed down and nearly all the 110,000 ASTPers were in the infantry. Many of them felt like they had been betrayed by the Army. This is undoubtedly what happened to Dad. Dad's hopes to follow in the footsteps of his two older brothers and become a highly trained and educated officer were over. He was now a "grunt", a "ground pounder", a "dogface"- in other words, an infantry soldier. After 3 months in ASTP, and completion of one term of basic engineering, his notebook shows that on December 16, 1943, he went on active duty and was given 2 weeks leave for a home visit before reporting to his new duty station-Basic Infantry Training at Fort Benning, Georgia, where a drill instructor was happy to whip these new "college boys" into shape. After 3 grueling months of running, pushups, rifle range, and obstacle courses, his notebook shows he graduated and received new orders to report to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, home of the brand new 106th Infantry division, the "Golden Lions", arriving on March 30, 1944. For the past year, the 106th had been slowly accumulating all the men and material needed to come up to full strength. Some of the men had been together for quite some time, but Dad arrived just as the Division was reaching its' full strength. This is incorrectly referred to as ROTC in the notes, a significantly different program, offering a four year scholarship in return for 8 years service.

From March to October, 1944, the Division would train and practice together, engage in war games, and do everything possible to learn their individual skills and to coordinate with the various units that made up the 106th: the 422d, 423d, and 424th Infantry, 81st Combat Engineers, 589th, 590th, 591st, & 592 Artillery Battalions, and the other specialized troops, totaling over 10,000 people. During this time, Dad received his first promotion, from E2 (Private ) to E3 (Private First Class). Finally, the time came to ship overseas. The 106th took the long train ride from Indiana to Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts, over a 10 day period from October 9 to October 18. Dad arrived on October 11, and a week later, on October 21, he was boarding an ocean liner for the trans-Atlantic journey. Moving the entire division would require 3 different ships- the Queen Elizabeth, the Aquitania, and the Wakefield, leaving from 3 different ports- Boston, New York, and Brooklyn. The trip would take a week. By October 30, Dad's unit, the 424th, was in their temporary barracks in Banbury, England. They would stay at Banbury for a month before crossing the channel to the European Theater of War. Uncle Bob's bomber base was 133 miles away, just outside Norwich, England. Somehow he learned that his little brother was in Banbury, so he managed to arrange a ride to Banbury to see him. Dad was undoubtedly happy to see his older brother, but Bob described him as "taciturn and resigned" and "filled with foreboding" about going into combat. Alan was no doubt disappointed that he hadn't done as well as Bob, and Bob said he felt a little guilty about what Alan would face, even though the survival rate for bomber crews was probably less than that for infantry. They wished each other good luck, said their good byes, and hoped to see each other at the end of the war. A few days later, Dad was crossing the English Channel, heading for Le Havre, France. He landed on December 6. Little did he know that within 10 days, his brand new, totally untested and inexperienced unit, would be overrun by two crack Panzer divisions and two battle hardened Infantry divisions. Most of the men around him would either be dead or captured, in what would be the largest and bloodiest single battle of the entire war, and the third deadliest campaign in American history. Dad had just recently turned 19. However, that wasn't Dad's immediate concern. They arrived to a cold drizzling rain in Le Havre, and

had to march to the outskirts of town in the cold rain to get to the trucks that would transport them to the front lines. However, the orders were confusing and the destination kept changing. They only got about 56 miles and had to stop and bivouac outside Rouen, in open fields, rain, and deep mud. Finally on December 8, they received definite orders to go to St. Vith. Over the next 4 days, Dad traveled 300 miles through Amiens, Cambrai, and Maubeuge in France, and Philippeville in Belgium, before finally arriving at the village of Steinebrück, on the German/Belgium border. It was December 12, just four days away from the start of the Battle of the Bulge.

The next day, Dad's unit moved just over the German border to Winterspelt, another pleasant farm town in rolling countryside, surrounded by the dense forests of the Ardenne, near the base of a ridge called the "Schnee Eifel," where they relieved the 2nd Division. The 2nd has just been in a grueling and bloody campaign around the city of Aachen, and had been transferred here to rest and recover, since this was considered the quietest and safest spot along the whole European front. The 2nd had already dug all the foxholes, positioned all the artillery, and set up camp. They were more than happy to turn everything over to the 106th, equipment and all, and head back to the rear echelon for rest and re-outfitting. Since this area of the Ardenne was considered so safe, the 106th was stretched out over the ridge and surrounding area impossibly thin. The Army manuals stated that a division should never be stretched out more than 5 miles on a front. However, the 106th was stretched out covering a front of more than 26 miles. Many of the units along the front were not even in view of their neighboring unit. The 422nd and 423rd were strung out along the top of the ridge line, projecting out into Germany, and Dad's unit, the 424th, was lower down in a draw near the end of the ridge line. As was typical for the front lines, they slept in their foxholes. The night before the attack was brutally cold, well below freezing. The only protection from the cold that the GIs had was the ponchos or ground clothes which they pulled over the top of their foxhole to keep in the warmth and to keep out the snow. Those that could sleep, slept curled up in a tight ball. Suddenly, in the early morning hours of December 16th, exactly one year after leaving the University of Wisconsin for active duty, he and his unit were shocked awake. The air was split by a sharp roar. There was a thunderous impact, and the ground seemed to rise up underneath them. It was still dark, 5:30 in the morning. It was the first time most of them had ever been subjected to an artillery barrage. The shells kept coming in almost without a break. Everyone was awake now, trying to get as close to the bottom of their foxhole as they could. The walls of some of the foxholes started to cave in, huge branches began falling from the trees overhead. Although it didn't seem possible, the shelling became even more intense. There were high pitched whines among the deep explosions, the whistle of shrapnel, impacts thudding against trees. Men were screaming, hollering for medics, crying out in pain. The entire ridge line was erupting in flames and smoke. The smell of explosives was everywhere. The same thing was happening everywhere along the front, as far as the eye could see. Finally, it stopped. It was still dark, 6:40 in the morning. The nonstop tempo of the shelling had continued for over an hour. On the far side of the ridge (the German side), the searchlights came on and the distinct mechanical clanking of heavy vehicles became audible.

The tanks were coming. Not just a few, but columns of tanks. Four German divisions began advancing on the thin lines of the 106th. They sat and waited as the sounds got closer and closer. Further down the ridge line, they heard gunfire erupting from American positions, then another position joining in, then another. Still they waited until their targets came into view. Now it was their turn. Huge tanks were followed by waves of grey or white uniforms. Dad's unit responded with artillery, heavy machine guns, rifle fire, it was surprising how many had actually survived the brutal shelling. After a while, the firing slowed down. They had repulsed the initial assault, and had in fact captured 32 prisoners, including 2 officers. One of the officers carried the top secret plans for Operation "Grief", Plans detailing how the Germans intended to use captured vehicles for deception purposes. This important intelligence was passed along to headquarters, and helped tip off the Americans to the presence of imposter GIs. The battle continued to rage back and forth through the morning. By noon Dad's unit, the 424th, had driven the enemy back along the whole line of its front. However, German reinforcements continued to pour in and by dark, (5:00 PM at that time), German forces were closing in on Winterspelt. By midnight, at least a company of Germans was inside the village, with more pouring in by the hour. Dad's position had become perilous. Although the 424th had inflicted high casualties on the opposing German force, they were becoming increasingly isolated and running low on ammunition. There were no more American reinforcements to commit. In the hours prior to daybreak, Dad's position was overrun. As the troops passed through, Dad feigned being

dead. He could hear the Germans going from foxhole to foxhole to insure there were no survivors, followed by an occasional shot. Fortunately they stopped and moved on before they got to him. He checked the nearby foxholes, and only found one other person alive. The rest of his squad was either dead or missing. They left under cover of darkness to find the way back to their unit. Winterspelt was now in German hands. Their leaders tried to organize an orderly retreat back to the Our River (midway between Winterspelt and St Vith) in order to protect the crucial crossroads town of St Vith, but confusion reigned, and as thinly spread out as the unit was, communication was difficult to impossible. The retreat did not go well, and many soldiers lost their way in the face of advancing Germans. Despite the heavy fighting, headquarters still did not realize the full scope of the German attack. Like many others of the 106th, he was now on his own, behind enemy lines. The valley continued to echo with the sound of firing, heavy vehicles, and artillery explosions, with bright flashes across the horizon. Once again, it was bitterly cold. He began the deadly task of trying to make his way through the woods filled with Germans back to the American lines. This task was made even more difficult since the American lines were moving away from him in front of the German advance faster than he could move towards them.

For the next 24 hours or so, Dad would be dodging German patrols trying to link up with friendly troops. He related to Uncle Bob later that at one point he suddenly found himself face to face with two German soldiers. He stated that whether by superior training or better luck, he shot first, killing one, with the other running away. He said that the one he killed looked to him to be even younger than he was. The bulk of the 424th was pulling back to the west and south, across the Our river, roughly into the area between Steinebrück to the north and Beho to the south. The next day, December 17th, enough remnants, stragglers, and reinforcements had arrived to start forming a defensive line. Dad's notes appear to indicate that he most likely rejoined his unit on the 18th near Beho. Dad's companion units which had initially been on top of the ridge, the 423rd and 422nd, were also in serious trouble. The German columns were moving north and south around the base of the Schnee Eifel, hoping to cut off the American retreat. They had cut a wedge between Dad's unit, the 424th, near the base of the ridge, and the troops on the ridge. The following day, the 17th, the North and South Arms of the German pincer came together. The Americans were surrounded.

Over the next 2 days, the trapped Americans fought valiantly to break through, while other American units tried to rush to their aid, but they were not successful. On the 19th, running out of hope and ammunition, both regiments, 6,000 GIs, surrendered and became German prisoners. It was one of the largest mass surrenders in American military history. Fifty percent of the division's strength was now gone in the first four days of the battle. Meanwhile, the units and remnants of units who did make it to St Vith and the nearby vicinity immediately began the serious work of setting up a defensive position. St Vith was an important crossroads town for road and rail junctions, just as important as Bastogne, to the South. For the German offensive to succeed, their plans called for them to roll through St Vith on the first day on their race to the Meuse river. Every hour that the Americans could delay the Germans made German success that much less likely. Remnants of the 106th, along with remnants of other units, held off German forces vastly superior in numbers and armor for five days, until the 21st, earning a Distinguished Unit Citation. They were credited with ruining the German timetable for reaching Antwerp, the necessary key for the German offensive to succeed. The Germans moving in to surround St Vith had now moved in between the collection of American forces at Beho and the Americans inside St Vith. On the 21st, on the verge of being surrounded, the Americans escaped the encirclement by withdrawing down the road to Vielsalm, 12 miles away. On the 23rd, the forces from Beho, swelled by more stragglers and lost detachments, including Dad, joined them.<sup>2</sup> It is not clear when he actually rejoined them, but his diary says he was in "Beraub" on the 18th. This most likely refers to Beho. I could not find any location or place identified as "Beraub".

Although it had seriously been delayed, the German advance had not been stopped at St Vith. However, the battered American forces were regrouped and organizing, and ready to take the offensive. On the 24th and 25th, Christmas day, they intercepted the German advance at the town of Manhay. The American forces (including Dad's unit) arrived at this crucial crossroads town first and occupied it on the 24th. However, when the bulk of the German advance arrived, the defenders were overwhelmed, and by Christmas eve, it was in German hands. The next day, the 26th, dawned cold and clear - bad news for the

Germans. Clear weather meant that the American air power could come in to support the ground troops. The familiar roar of the P-47s was no doubt a welcome sound for Dad and the other GIs. Their attack on Manhay was reinitiated, and after a bitter, grueling fight, Manhay was back in American hands by the end of the day. German advance in that sector had finally ground to a halt, just 34 miles from where it had started in Winterspelt, and 126 miles short of the goal of Antwerp. With the return of clear weather, the same thing was happening all along the entire length of the Bulge. The Americans were counter-attacking. Near Celles, the furthest penetration, practically within site of the Meuse River, the 2nd Panzer Division had not only been stopped, it had been annihilated. That same afternoon, Patton had broken through to the encircled troops at Bastogne. The 26th had definitely been a good day for the Allies. Even so, it would be another month before the Americans had pushed the Germans back to the lines where the battle had started on December 16. Dad's unit remained at Manhay until December 30. They would soon be back in combat, but not before they had a well deserved 10 day rest and resupply break. This was also an opportunity for the 106th to acknowledge those GIs who had participated in stopping the German advance, and Dad received another stripe - he was promoted to E4, Corporal. His unit spent the first few days at the supply depot in Anthisnes. Then on 3 January 1945, the unit went to Division HQ, in the famous tourist city of Spa, about a half hour away, where the brass had appropriated space in the historic Hotel Balmoral as their temporary offices. Spa is well known for the healing properties of its natural mineral springs, but, while it is unclear why Dad's unit was sent there, the GIs were probably not there to partake in any mineral baths, facials or pedicures. But at least they didn't have to sleep in foxholes. On the next day, January 5, Dad's notes indicate that they continued on to the small nearby village of Winamplanche, just outside Spa. On January 9, they got the word that they were heading back to the front lines, to the area of Trois Pontois. They would be attacking the Germans across the Ambleve river, in an attempt to push them back toward St. Vith. Dad's notes show he was in Anthisnes, a municipality which contains the village of Hody. Dad's notes identify it as "Chateau-Hody", which is actually a Chateau in the village of Hody. The current incarnation of this landmark is called the "Radisson Blu Balmoral Hotel & Spa" Aisomont, just southeast of Trois Pontois, on the 9th, and moved to the small hamlets of Spineux and Wanee, a little further southeast, the next day, in preparation for the attack. The attack started at 4:30 AM on the 13th, heading toward the German garrison at Henumont, less than 2 miles away. There they attacked the German mainline of resistance head-on in fierce fighting. A platoon of tanks was sent to assist them, but got bogged down in the snow. The battle continued all day, so they dug in for the night, spending another brutally cold night in foxholes. When the attack continued the next morning, they found that the Germans had withdrawn during the night. The next couple days were taken up rounding up small groups of Germans left behind and resupplying and reorganizing. The 106th, which now consisted of only a single regiment, the 424th (the only one that had avoided capture on the Schnee Eifel), was now within twelve and a half miles of St. Vith. On January 19, they were headed back to combat again. They moved over to Deidenberg, five and a half miles north of St. Vith, in preparation for the final assault on what remained of the Bulge. The attack started on the 25th, with the 106th advancing on and capturing the towns of Medell and Meyerode, outside of St. Vith. This would be the battle in which Dad would be wounded and receive the award of the Purple Heart. He would carry the offending piece of shrapnel in his ankle for the rest of his life. St. Vith was recovered from the Germans, but once again, Dad did not make it into St. Vith. Nobody ever wanted to get wounded, of course, but if it wasn't life threatening, at least you got some relaxed and quiet "R & R" (rest and recovery) time. And in Dad's case, you got the coveted R & R pass to Paris. His notes show that on January 29, he stopped overnight in Plainevaux on the French/Belgium border, and on February 6, he was in Paris. It must have been wonderful, even on crutches. On February 9, he rejoined his unit inside Germany, at Losheim, near where the Bulge had started. The men and officers of the truncated 106th were likewise hoping for a little rest and recovery, but instead found out that they were once more headed for the front lines in combat status. As they pushed through Losheim, the artillery thundered around them again and the ground shook. But this time, it was American artillery targeting the Germans, not vice versa. Even without their artillery, though, the Germans were putting up tough resistance as they withdrew deeper into Germany. Booby traps and trip wires were a constant threat. They would spend the month on defensive patrols and mop up. They didn't know it at the time, but this was to be their last combat assignment. On March 15, the 106th was pulled off of the front lines. It was finally time to replace the 422nd and 423rd (captured at the beginning of the Bulge). Dad's unit was sent first to Saint-Quentin, France, near the Belgium border, and then 2 weeks later to the historic and picturesque city of Rennes, France, some 4 hours away in the province of Brittany, where the

replacements started pouring in. As the new fresh kids checked in, Dad, at 19 years old and in the country for only 3 months, must have looked like a grizzled combat veteran. They returned to Germany on April 25 to Heidesheim, near Mainz. Five days later, Hitler would commit suicide. Another week later, and Germany had surrendered. What the army needed now was not combat soldiers, but Prisoner of War guards, for the ever increasing number of captured German soldiers. Dad would spend most of the next three months between Heidesheim and the nearby Sprendlingen detention centers. Both were about 2 hours away from where I (Don) would be stationed while in the Army in 1974-77. Many people would look at the job of guarding hundreds of prisoners as the ultimate boring job. Not Dad. He looked at it as an immense intellectual challenge. His mother had great grandparents who had emigrated from Germany in the 1840s, so he had previously been exposed to German. He decided to take advantage of the opportunity to converse with Germans on a daily basis as a way to sharpen his language skills. To this end, he obtained books on learning German (Hugo's Simplified German), which, in his customary methodical fashion, he dutifully inscribed with his name on the inside fly leaf: "Alan E. Shaver, Co D, 424th Inf". We know, because those books remain on the book shelf in Don's library to this very day. Finally, on July 22, seven months after arriving in Europe at Le Havre, he was leaving Germany behind for good, sailing out of the same port. However, he was not yet headed home, only to England, where his status would be in limbo. The war in the Pacific was not yet over. Brutal battles had raged all across the Pacific to the very doorstep of Japan, and so far the fanatical military leaders had given no indication of surrendering. They pledged to defend their homeland to the last man, if necessary, as they had with many of the islands where they had lived or occupied. President Truman had to make the terrible decision of whether to launch a ground invasion on the island of Japan. To do so would require an army of at least a million men. That would mean that combat veterans like Dad would have to be reassigned to combat once again, this time in Japan, where the casualty rate would undoubtedly be high. Dad, along with many of the other GIs in a holding pattern in England, certainly must have had many sleepless nights waiting to see if they were going to get orders to the Pacific. Fortunately for them (and unfortunately for the helpless civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki), President Truman decided the use of the newly developed Atomic bomb to convince the Japanese not to undertake their fanatical defense of the island. The bomb was dropped on August 6, and then again on August 9. Japan surrendered unconditionally on August 15, 1945. I suspect that a collective sigh of relief among all the GIs waiting in England broke out across the country. On September 5, Dad was finally boarding the Queen Mary for the trip back to the States. I don't know if he got down and kissed the ground when he arrived in New York 5 days later, but I'll bet he felt like it. He was finally back home in North Henderson, Illinois, on September 14, 1945. In one week, he would turn 20. During his time in Europe, he had been in numerous fire fights, several battles, overrun and left for dead, and stranded behind enemy lines. But back in the US, he was not old enough to vote or drink beer. During November, he had to go back up to Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois, for additional out-processing, but he was home for the holidays by December 16. It would be the first Christmas he would spend at home since he had been a senior in high school. I'm sure it was a very merry one indeed. He was honorably discharged from the service the following May 13, 1946.

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