

David Henry Edwards

422nd Regiment
106th Infantry Division

Who am I and why am I here?

(Ross Perot's running mate in the vice-presidential debates, 1992; old what's his name?)
(updated, August 10, 1998)

Lets begin with my father. My father is [David Henry Edwards](#) (1914-1955). He fought in World War II with the [106 Infantry Division](#) at the Battle of the Bulge. His specialization was pioneer which stands for combat engineer serving at the regimental level. Each of the three regiments of the 106th had an ammunition and pioneer (A&P) platoon in their headquarters companies. Dave served with the 422nd regiment of the 106th infantry. The 106th division arrived in Europe around the first of December 1944. Just a few days before the battle began on December 16, they took over positions held by the US 2nd Infantry Division in the old German Siegfried Line defenses in the Ardennes Forest Schnee Eifel (Snow Mountain).

The 106th division faced overwhelming forces of the German 5th and 6th Panzer Armies. [The 422nd and 423rd regiments were quickly enveloped by early morning on 17 December.](#)

Without resupply or support from other allied forces, they were ordered to attack to their rear to rejoin the division on the 18th. It was a hopeless maneuver for infantry to smash into massive armor forces, but it took some pressure off and bought some time for the remaining St. Vith defenders. The remnants of the two regiments surrendered on December 19 after they had ran out of ammunition and water and were about to be overrun. The 424th regiment and 81st Combat Engineer Battalion of the 106th supported by elements of the 9th Armor Division, 7th Armor Division and 168th Combat Engineer Battalion prevented the capture of the St. Vith road network until December 21.

The actions of the 106th contributed to destroying the German time-table to capture the critical port city and supply depots at Antwerp and allowed the allies to realign their forces and commit reserves. On December 23-24, the remnants of the 106th and supporting armor elements withdrew through the safety of the 82nd Airborne and 3rd Armor Division lines which had formed to their rear. In January 1945, Secretary of War Stimson announced the casualty list for the 106th: 416 killed, 1246 wounded and 7001 missing in action. The 106th Division suffered more losses than any other American division in WW II, over 60% killed, wounded or captured. My father was one of the missing and had been captured. He was home from the war in time for the birth of his fifth son, Leonard, on May 14, 1945. (I was born in 1950 and my younger brother Larry was born in 1951.)

In comparison to the long term POW situation of the Vietnam War, one might think that the relatively quick resolution of World War II after the Battle of the Bulge means that WW II POWs had an easier time of it than the Vietnam War POWs that were held for many years. But one particularly revealing comment was made by my father's friend Blair Colby (423rd Infantry) when he saw the Vietnam War POWs getting off the plane upon their release. One of the Vietnam War POWs carried a little dog off the plane, and Blair laughed (as only another former POW could possibly be entitled to do) and said that if they had had a dog during their POW experience, it would have been eaten. So, although

World War II POWs were clearly not held as long as most Vietnam War POWs, their hardships had their own unique severity. It is impossible and probably not worth the effort to try to classify one as more severe than the other. Blair's emaciated picture was on the cover of Liberty Magazine or Red Cross Magazine. Dave and Blair's last POW camp was at Bad Orb. If you want to read about one particular 106th Infantry POW's experience, download and read the war diary of Sergeant John Kline available at the [106 Infantry Division Association Home Page](#).



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