



The early years

New student Shafer quickly accepted by classmates

By Jane Smith
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

Raymond P. Shafer was a preacher's son, an Eagle Scout, valedictorian of his high school class, star athlete at high school and college, Navy veteran, a district attorney and state senator all before becoming governor of Pennsylvania in 1967 — the first governor from Crawford County and from northwestern Pennsylvania.

Born in New Castle, Shafer moved to Meadville in 1933 when his father was appointed pastor of First Christian Church of Meadville.

He was entering his senior year of high school and was quickly accepted by his classmates, being elected class president. He was also named valedictorian of the class as well as a member of the National Honor Society and a member of the school's championship basketball team.

Sports was not new to Shafer. He had played Little League Baseball as well as football.

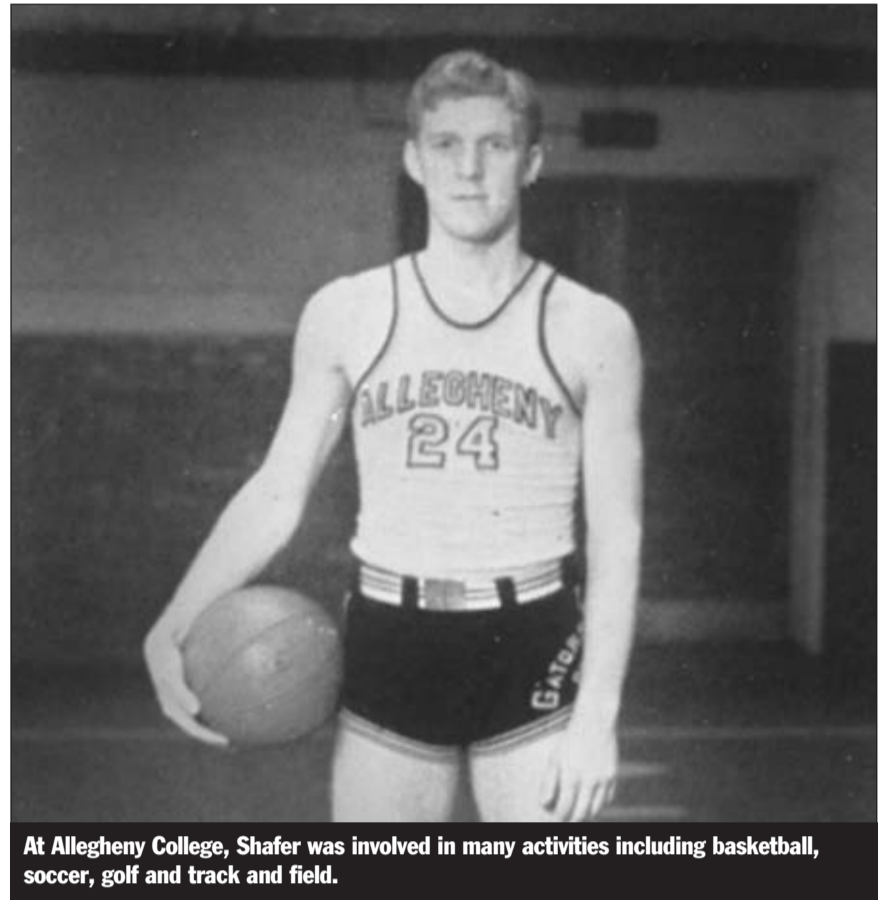
He also earned his Eagle Scout award. After high school, Shafer remained in Meadville where he enrolled in Allegheny College, graduating in 1938. He continued his service to his class, serving as its president for all four years. He also was president of the Allegheny Undergraduate Council.

At the college, he was involved in all types of sports, including basketball, soccer, golf and track and field. He also was a Phi Beta Kappa, candidate for the Rhodes Scholarship, a member of Phi Kappa Psi, Debating Club and the A Capella Choir.

He still made time for a personal life. He met his wife, Jane Davies, at Allegheny and the two married in 1941 — three years after he graduated.

After graduating from Yale Law School, Shafer was hired to work for a distinguished New York City law firm. However, his life changed during World War II when he joined the Navy, signing up just one day before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

He never returned to New York City.



At Allegheny College, Shafer was involved in many activities including basketball, soccer, golf and track and field.

Shafer enlists one day before Pearl Harbor

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Raymond P. Shafer didn't just serve his country as an elected official.

Prior to running for public office, he was in the U.S. Navy.

He was practicing law in New York City and had completed an application to join the Navy one day before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

The attack, Shafer recalled in 1995, only served to steel his determination. "I felt, like everybody, when Pearl Harbor was attacked, by God, I'm going to go out and fight for our country. I was very happy that I had signed up."

He received his commission as an ensign in Navy Intelligence Fourth District in New York. He served for 42 months

"... by God, I'm going to go out and fight for our country."

RAYMOND P. SHAFER

from 1942 to 1945.

During his service, he was commander of PT Boat 359 and an executive officer of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 27. He was officer in charge of the first U.S. Navy vessels in Manila Bay following the Japanese occupation and "had the honor of leading the first Navy vessels into Manila after Japanese occupation," he said in 1991. He was the leader of four PT boats in that action.

He also had the honor of escorting Gen. Douglas MacArthur as well as the ambassador of the Philippines from Manila to Corregidor when that island was retaken. "I took them on my boat," he said.

He saw 80 combat missions in the South Pacific and was at the first Office of Naval Intelligence.

During the 12-day battle of Corregidor, Shafer, under fire and using only a rubber boat, assisted in rescuing 27 paratroopers who were stranded on the beach.

Shafer saw action against the Japanese in the Solomons, New Guinea, Palau and the Philippines, including Manila Bay and the retaking of Bataan and Corregidor.

Lt. Shafer was awarded the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Philippine

Liberation Medal as well as a Navy commendation letter in recognition of his service.

In April 1945, he was called to put together another PT squadron when the United States was preparing to invade the Japanese mainland.

"When we heard the news that the bomb had been dropped (in August 1945), we just said, 'thank God.' If we had gone ahead with the invasion, millions of lives would have been lost on both sides," he recalled in 1995.

"I'm proud of the small part I had in World War II," Shafer said very humbly. "And, I'm proud of the citizens-turned-soldiers-and-sailors who served the greatest free society the world has ever seen."

Entering politics

Long political career starts in 1947

By Jane Smith
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

After the end of World War II, Raymond P. Shafer returned to New York City for a brief period, but then chose to come home to Meadville and joined the law firm of Herbert Mook.

Two years later, his long, successful political career began in 1947 as Crawford County's district attorney.

He won both the Republican and Democratic nominations in the spring primary that year, defeating incumbent Republican Kenneth W. Rice by 193 votes. He won the Democratic nomination with write-in votes.

In October of that year, Rice named his once-opponent as an assistant district attorney. "I feel that it would help him, help the

public and help me if the new district attorney did not have to take over the duties of the post all at once," Rice said when making the announcement.

The assistant DA position had been vacant for two years after Herbert A. Mook resigned. Mook, who was a law associate with Shafer, was elected to a judgeship in the Crawford County Court of Common Pleas the same year that Shafer was elected DA.

Mook served as judge until his death in 1964. Shafer, who was lieutenant governor at the time, served as a pall bearer for Mook.

Shafer was re-elected DA in 1951 and served through 1955.

During his terms as DA, he handled more than 12,000 cases of all types, including 3,000 criminal cases, and he had a 90

percent conviction rate.

He also worked to reconcile husbands and wives, and parents and children so their disputes didn't have to go to court.

In an interview several weeks after he left the DA's office, Shafer said he was still receiving letters and messages commending him for a "job well done."

Also as DA, Shafer was active in dealing with youths' problems. He worked directly with the juvenile court and juvenile probation office and dealt with all types of juvenile cases.

As DA, he was "on call 24 hours a day and there was seldom a day he didn't get inquiries after regular hours," according to a 1956 Meadville Tribune article.

While heading the office of the county's prosecutor, Shafer also served as a member

of a special legislative committee of the District Attorneys Association of Pennsylvania. He also was chairman of Penal Affairs Committee of the Northwest Section of the Pennsylvania Citizens Association during that time.

"I'm very grateful to the people of Crawford County for permitting me to serve as their district attorney for the past eight years," Shafer said in the Tribune article.

"I appreciate the loyalty and service of all the people who have served on the district attorney staff and wish to thank the police officials and law enforcement agencies for their excellent cooperation," he added.

Shafer chose not to seek re-election for a third term, instead setting up a private law practice and then running for office of state senator in 1958.

Both parties recognized Shafer's vote-getting prowess

By Jane Smith
MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

Having won two campaigns for the elected post of Crawford County district attorney, Raymond P. Shafer decided to run for the state Senate seat representing Crawford and Mercer counties.

He had the same resounding success he had when he ran for DA; he was elected on his first bid for political office outside Crawford County. He first was successful in the Republican primary election of 1958, defeating Edward M. Young of Grove City, a former state representative.

"Shafer's surprise victory in the GOP state Senate event had politicians of both parties remarking about the former DA's vote-getting prowess," reported an article



in The Meadville Tribune the day after the May primary.

That fall he defeated fellow Crawford County resident Harold

Turner of Rockdale Township, who later was elected to the post of county commissioner. In his concession speech, the Democrat said, "it was a good, honest race, and the best man won."

A humble Shafer said, "I am gratified by the support that has been given to me by both counties."

"Government is every citizen's business," Shafer said in campaign literature seeking votes. "I hope you will join with me in working to provide maximum government services at minimum expense."

He began his service as a state senator in January 1959 — the first state senator from Meadville since the 1920s.

He was appointed to seven committees: Agricultural, Banking, Constitutional Changes, Corporations, Elections, Judiciary

General and State Government.

"I am very gratified with my committee appointments," he said, noting he particularly wanted the Judiciary General Committee and the Constitutional Changes assignments. He said the constitutional assignment may prove to be one of the most important since revision of the constitution was expected to be one of the legislative issues that session (as it turned out, the constitutional revision didn't happen until after Shafer was elected governor).

A month after taking office, Shafer was given the rare privilege of making the first speech in the new session of the Senate by giving the annual Lincoln Day address.

He was named to a five-member unemployment compensation study committee and to a special

committee on legislation in 1960. He was on a Joint Legislative Committee to establish rules of procedure for fiscal sessions and a committee probing the Department of Public Welfare.

He was appointed by Gov. David Lawrence as coordinator between Crawford County and the state for the Committee on Children and Youth.

He co-sponsored a bill dealing with migrant farm labor and served on a legislative study commission that drafted school district reorganization legislation.

In the 1961-62 session, Shafer served on the following committees: Corporations, Elections, Historical Preservation, Judiciary General, Law and Order, Military Affairs and Aeronautics and State Government.