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Alan [REDACTED] Biography

Case # [REDACTED]

Narrative Biography by Sarah E. Smith

Total Trial Solutions Biographer

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CONFIDENTIAL – ATTORNEY WORK PRODUCT

Alan [REDACTED]

(1924-2013)

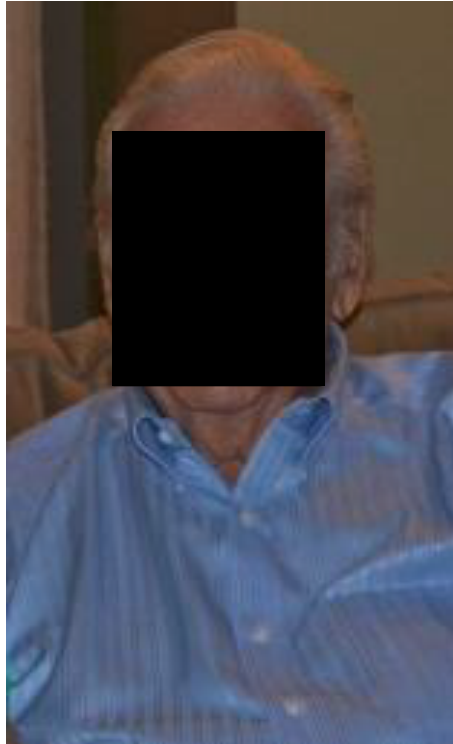


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1924-1940

Alan [REDACTED] was born on September 19, 1924 at his family's home in Meriden, Connecticut. His mother and father, Benjamin and Victoria, emigrated from Vilnius, Poland¹ in the early 1900s. Alan was eight years old when his father died of pneumonia, leaving his mother to care for five children. Alan had few memories of his father. "He remembered him as quite tall, handsome, nice, and extremely gentle," Alan's son Steven says. "Sadly, one of the other memories was of his father's wake, which was held in the family home." That "always was the sad part of Alan," his wife Maria says. "He always said, if my dad had lived, my life would be different."

Alan's mother worked two jobs to make ends meet. "Several relatives offered to take one or two of the children to make her young widowed life a bit easier, but she valiantly resisted and insisted on keeping her family together," Steven says. Alan worked odd jobs throughout the Great Depression to help support his family. "All his siblings took on jobs as well to help with the family expenses," Steven says. Alan's only indulgence was a double feature at the local theatre in town, which served as the beginning of "a life-long love of cinema," Steven says. "He impressed everyone with this encyclopedic knowledge of Hollywood – that continued throughout this life."

1940-1945

Alan tried to join the Army when he was 16 years old. "He lied about his age," Steven says. "He was told to return with his birth certificate to complete his enlistment." Alan took what little money he had saved, and hitchhiked to Canada. "He tried to enlist in the Canadian Armed Services, but again was told to produce his birth certificate," Steven says. Rejected but "still determined," Steven says, Alan returned to his home in Meriden, CT.

In September of 1941, Alan turned 17 and was adamant about enlisting into the US Navy. "Again, he was told he was too young, but he could enlist if he got permission from his mother," Steven says. "He threatened to run away from home," if his mother did not comply, and thus began Alan's career in the US Navy. Alan was sent to Newport, Rhode Island. He never contemplated that he would go to war, rather, "He imagined that the Navy was his opportunity to see the world and garner the adventures he dreamed of since he was a child," Steven says.



¹ Currently part of Lithuania
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In 1942, Alan was transferred to Tampa Florida, where he was assigned “to work with seven sailors from the Soviet Navy as they were assigned to the US Navy to learn and cooperate in future battle plans,” Steven says. It was during this time that Alan “picked up quite a bit of Russian and learned to drink vodka,” Steven says. In January 1943, aboard the Phaon, Alan set sail along with hundreds of others headed to the Marshall Islands, making stops in Guantanamo Bay, Samoa, and Funafuti.

On June 24, 1944, Alan was injured during an air raid by the Japanese G4M “Betties.” Alan “had not stepped foot on land for over a year and was sent back to San Diego to recover from his wounds,” Steven says. While Alan recovered in San Diego, he developed a love for California that would stay with him throughout his life. While in San Diego, Alan was assigned to guard German prisoners of war while training for the invasion of the Japanese home islands. Alan was still in San Diego when the war ended. He was honorably discharged. Following his injury, Alan was considered a disabled veteran and collected monthly disability payments for the remainder of his life.



Alan (center) pictured here with members of the Soviet Navy

Alan didn’t talk about his memories from being in the war. “He suppressed most of them for many years,” Steven says. “His interest in the war never died and for the rest of his life he voraciously read about the war and learned all he could about it. He said his quest to understand why it happened would help him understand what he went through.”

1945-1958

In 1945 Alan returned to Meriden and took a job in a factory. “He decided to quit and took advantage of the GI bill do to two things. First, he learned to fly and became a private pilot. He bought a share of an airplane with five friends,” Steven says. “He also wanted to pursue his passion for photography, so he enrolled in a photography program at Yale University and became a commercial photographer in the late 40s.” After becoming a professional photographer, “Alan took jobs working in big department stores in Philadelphia and New York City.”

While working as a photographer, Alan met a woman who moved to Europe, so he took a ship to Belgium, where

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he lived for one month and returned to the US “enchanted with the continent,” Steven says. With \$35 in his pocket, Alan went to Germany and looked for work. He stayed in a boarding house in Munich. He read the International Herald Tribune, where he stumbled upon an ad for a photographer in London. He persuaded the woman who owned the boarding house to let him use the telephone. “In those days, it was very expensive to call internationally,” Steven says. “He promised her would pay her back when he got the job.” Alan called inquiring about the job. He was invited to come to an interview in London. The \$35 in his pocket would not cover the trip, so Alan asked the owner of the company to pay for his ticket to London. The owner was shocked, but apparently taken by Alan’s “sincerity and insistence that he was the best man for the job,” Steven says. Against his better judgment, Monty Montgomery of Palmer Pictures sent Alan a ticket to London and hired him immediately. Some years later, Alan asked Monty why he sent him the ticket. Monty told him he was “impressed by his confidence,” and he was the only one to call about the job, Steven says.

Alan spent the next several years traveling throughout Europe working as a photographer for Palmer Pictures. “Alan shot at the ruins of numerous German cities and also attended amazingly fancy parties in major capitals,” Steven says. Alan always desired to see and experience new things. His love for travel is something that stayed with him throughout his life.



Alan (right) shown here with the current emperor of Japan, Prince Akihito (left)

Alan eventually left Europe and moved to San Francisco, where he took a job as a photographer aboard the SS President Wilson of the American Shipping Lines. “Alan did not actually work directly for the shipping company but rather rented space on the ship as a photographer,” Steven says. For the next few years of his life, Alan worked as the ship’s photographer on the 42-day cruise from San Francisco to Hong Kong. “The ship made stops in Honolulu, Manila, Tokyo, and then Hong Kong,” Steven says. Passengers at that time were paying \$10,000 per ticket. During one of his stays in Japan, Alan had his picture taken with the prince and future emperor of Japan, Prince Akihito. Alan carried the picture around Japan “to show people when he wanted to gain access to places he was usually not allowed to go.”

Eager to see other parts of the world, Alan swapped assignments with a friend who was the photographer on the SS Argentina that traveled from New York to Buenos Aires, Argentina.

On one particular voyage, Alan met a woman by the name of Auxilliadora [REDACTED], known as Maria. Maria came from a wealthy Brazilian family.² She traveled from her home in Brazil to the US for her for cousin's graduation from Oklahoma State University. She was accompanied by another cousin and her aunt. She spent the next three months traveling around the US, and was scheduled to return to Brazil but missed her ship because the car they had rented broke down in Texas. Maria was forced to spend a full month in New York City while waiting for the next ship.

The first time Maria saw Alan, she remembers telling her aunt, "You see that guy over there? I would marry somebody like that." To this day, Maria remembers her aunt's response. 'You're a mess. He's older than you.' The following night, Alan was seated at Maria's table for the captain's dinner. Alan introduced himself to Maria and thus a courtship began. "My aunt was not happy," Maria recalls. Throughout the two week trip to Brazil, Alan visited Maria in the company of her aunt. "Always there's a chaperone," Maria says. Maria's parents had flown from their home in Belo Horizonte to meet her when the ship arrived. It was then that Maria introduced Alan to her parents. Maria and Alan spent the next few days in Rio de Janeiro. When it was time for Alan to leave, Maria said good bye, imagining she would never see him again. Alan asked Maria if he could call her the next time he was in Brazil. Maria gave him her telephone number, but did not expect that he would call. Maria and Alan parted ways in late July. "He called me in August," she recalls.



Alan and Maria participating in a costume contest aboard the SS Argentina.

Like her cousin, Maria left her home in Brazil to attend Oklahoma State University. "She and Alan exchanged letters and the occasional phone call," Alan and Maria's daughter Victoria says. Maria lasted only one semester at Oklahoma State University before transferring to Marymount College in Tarrytown, NY. She told her parents she was terrified of tornados, but she really wanted to be more accessible to Alan. After transferring, she and Alan saw each other more frequently. "Alan was always very clear that he had no intention of marrying, and Maria had every intention of continuing her studies," Victoria says. Within months, Alan introduced Maria

² Maria's father was a doctor, who left his practice to pursue a political career.

to his mother Victoria. Victoria and Maria hit it off. Maria was so deeply connected to Victoria, she vowed that she would name her first daughter Victoria, no matter who she married.

On Easter Sunday, 1958, Maria told Alan she was moving to Paris. Alan could not bare the thought of Maria being so far away. “The next day he said, ‘No, you're not going to Paris, because we are getting married,’” Maria says. Maria told Alan he would have to ask her father first, so Alan planned a trip to Brazil to ask Dr. Edison for his daughter’s hand. Dr. Edison’s English was limited, so Alan’s later brother-in-law translated the exchange. Alan used to joke that he’s unsure whether his brother-in-law translated everything he said. Alan and Maria were wed on July 19, 1958 at the Basilica of Our Lady of Lourdes in Belo Horizonte, MG Brazil before a congregation of 800 invited guests. “It was a large society wedding that was televised,” Victoria says. The couple honeymooned on a friend’s private yacht.



1958-1964

After they wed, Alan and Maria moved to Burbank, CA, where Alan continued his photography career. Several months following their wedding, Maria became pregnant. A few months into her pregnancy, she developed toxemia and her doctors urged her to terminate the pregnancy. “I said, I will die, but nobody's going to take the baby from me,” Maria says. Maria was put on many prescription medications and heavily monitored.

Maria’s father, Dr. Edison, urged Alan to send Maria back to Brazil, where he and other colleagues could care for her and the baby. Alan complied, and later joined Maria in Brazil. Alan was in the delivery room when his daughter Victoria [REDACTED] was born. “In 1959, this was not the norm,” Victoria says. “She (Maria) said he just sobbed, the entire time.” Alan’s life was complete two years later, the day his son Steven was born.

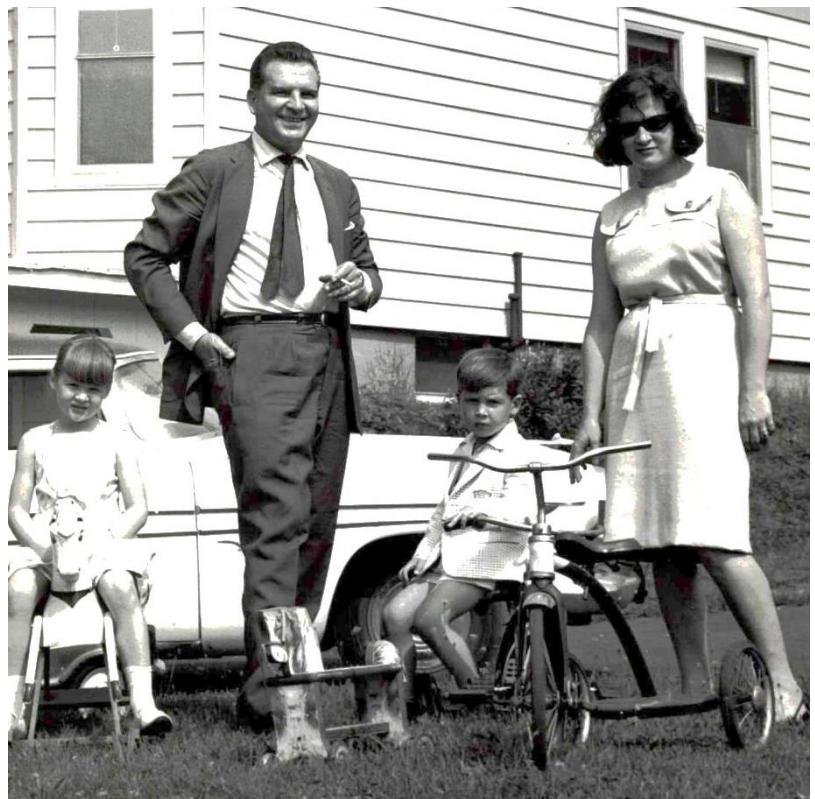
Maria was happy in Brazil. She was surrounded by her family, and had plenty of help raising her two children. Alan started a cement company with Maria’s brother Marcelo, which was very successful. In 1964, the Joao Goulart government was overthrown and the Authoritarian Military regime assumed power. This changed the way Alan thought about his

future in Brazil. “He had made friends, his company was doing well, his wife and children were happy, but he was unsure of the life that awaited him under a dictatorship,” Victoria says. “He had fought in WWII for freedom and he was not about to give that up.”

1964-1989

In 1964, Alan traveled alone to Meriden, CT, got a job, and rented a home large enough for his family. “He called me and said to my dad, you can put them on the plane,” Maria says, and thus their American family life began. “Maria had to learn to cook, keep house, and drive,” Victoria says, all of which had been done for her in her home country of Brazil. Victoria and Steven were enrolled in local schools and were soon fluent in English. “You know, we had a simple life,” Maria recalls. In 1965, Alan and Maria purchased a home on Byron Ave. in Meriden, CT. Maria says Alan referred to the home as a starter home, and told her “we will do better.” Alan was very proud of the life he built for his family. “He was a very pride-type of person,” Maria says. His mindset was, “We’re going to do [it] ourselves.” Alan was “not a consumerist,” Maria says. “Money was not part of our vocabulary.”

Alan was always a strong presence in his children’s’ lives. “He was an amazing dad. He didn’t have a dad, which is really interesting because he had no role model. He got it, and he did it,” Victoria says. “There was a delight in being a dad that he never had.” Victoria says Alan was “the guy who never missed a ballet recital, a piano recital, [or] a school concert.” Steven says his father not only supported but engaged in his interests “He engaged in my interests even though he personally had no interest whatsoever in certain areas.” He explains: “He was not particularly a sports fan, but he did everything he could to support my interest and love of sports. Everything from participating in sports to just taking me to baseball games, taking me to football games growing up.”



Alan was a very sensitive man when it came to his children. When it came time for Victoria to go to college, “He could not take her,” Maria recalls. “He sat over here and cried. I

said, 'Why are you crying?' He said, 'It's never going to be the same, Maria. She's never going to be home again the way she was.'" Things did change when Victoria and Steven left for college. "As hard as it was leaving Connecticut and all, it's kind of what my parents prepared us for," Steven says. "The distance just changed a little bit in terms of how we stayed connected, but it never interrupted or really affected it." Maria recalls that Alan was always the "soft" one when it came to the kids. "If he thought he was wrong, he was the first to come and apologize, and that was just something that always stuck with me," Steven says. "It was something I was so moved by." Steven says Alan "was someone who never carried a grudge. It served as great lessons certainly for me growing up."

Steven and Alan shared an especially close relationship. "My brother and my dad literally never butt heads. I never saw anything like it," Victoria says. "There was like this love affair. When Stephen got married, I thought my dad was going to die. He was crying so much, not because he didn't love Emmy, but because I think he was so afraid of losing his son."

Victoria says she always felt a sense of security when she was in the presence of her father. "He always gave a secure feeling, like if Dad was around, nothing could possibly go wrong. That defines him, I think, for me, that sense of like nothing could go wrong," Victoria says.

Alan instilled his love for travel in both of his children. "As a family, we did a lot of traveling together," Steven recalls. "Most weekends and all vacations were spent traveling around the Eastern seaboard," Victoria says. When Victoria and Steven were older, Alan took individual trips to Europe with both of them. "This one on one time was extremely special," Victoria says. "Each of us took a trip with him to Poland, individually" Steven says, "myself, my sister, and my mom."

In the late 1970s, Alan accepted a position as a logistics manager for ICOT Corporation, where he worked until 1983. "The firm was relocating and Alan did not want to uproot his family once again," Steven says. At the age of 57, "he was going to reinvent himself professionally," Steven says. "Alan began working for the US Postal Service with the understanding that within six years, he would retire with a government pension."

1989-2013

Alan retired at age 65. "The next year his first grandchild was born and he found his calling," Victoria says. Alan had a total of three grandsons, Andrew, Brian, and Eric. "There was a joy in his relationship with those boys." Long distance didn't keep Alan

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from having a close relationship with his grandsons. “Brian could barely speak when he was two/three years old. Every night he'd get on the phone and talk to my dad for like a half an hour,” Victoria says. When Brian was a baby, he “could be playing with a room full of people, my dad would look at him and go, ‘Hey, buddy.’ Brian would just stand up and go hold his hand. He didn't care where they were going. It was just they were going to have their time.”

Alan’s grandsons equally adored their grandfather. “I just remember Andrew telling his girlfriend, when he was like sixteen years old, about my dad. He kept saying, ‘Kathleen, he's the man! He's just the man!’” Victoria says. “I had never thought that that's how Andrew would describe my dad. It was just so unbelievable. It brought my brother to tears.”

Aubrey was the granddaughter Alan never had. “Aubrey [is] my best friend Denise's daughter,” Victoria says. “She adored her Grampy and visited often.”

Alan touched so many people throughout his life, but one particular relationship worth noting is that of Alan and his neighbor down the street.³ “We have a neighbor across the street, he’s a young fellow. He’s about 45 and he took Alan as a father,” Maria says. “He is autistic [...] Alan had a lot of patience for him.” Maria says the boy’s father never accepted him, but that Alan always made him feel like he was wanted.



Alan and Aubrey November 2012

As he aged, Alan’s mind remained “curious,” Victoria says. “His workbench in the basement was a source of leisurely hours of tinkering. He would buy broken radios just to see if he could fix them,” Victoria says. One year, Steven gave his father a computer. “Alan vehemently protested that he didn’t believe he’d enjoy it,” Victoria says. “Oh my God, [he was] addicted to the computer! He read all the Brazilian newspapers, talked to all his friends overseas because he had many. All my family in Brazil,” Maria says. “We would Skype regularly,” Steven remembers.

Alan was very proud to be a veteran of the US Navy. He was “very proud to be an American,” Maria says. “He never said once I'm a Polish American. ‘I'm American, Maria. This is the country that gave me [the] chance to live. That's my country where I grew up.’” Alan thought about the war throughout his life, although he was “very guarded regarding details,” Victoria recalls. During the later part of his life, “using the DAV Magazine as a starting point,” Alan attempted to reconnect with shipmates and friends from WWII. “To his delight, he received numerous responses and together with a few colleagues began planning a reunion,”

³ Maria does not share her neighbor’s name.

Victoria says. Alan attended a reunion in Washington D.C., where he was “greeted with a standing ovation,” Victoria says. “He was the reason they were all together. It took him years to gather the wherewithal to face his war memories and make peace with them.” Alan remained in touch with many of these men until his death. “They wrote and called and shared stories,” Victoria says. “He got to know their trials and tribulations as well as their success stories.”

Maria says that Alan was a “loner,” whose “life was reading.” Retirement gave Alan more time to read. Maria encouraged Alan to rent books instead of purchasing them. “He would go every day to the library,” Maria says. Alan made friends with “all the girls in the library [...] they got to know him very well.” “He was just a voracious reader. Voracious!” Victoria says. “I never remember my dad not reading a couple of books at the same time.



Alan’s enthusiasm for travel “never waned,” Steven says. “Even before retirement Alan and Maria began to travel extensively. They toured Europe countless times,” Victoria says. His family asked how he’d like to celebrate his 80th birthday. They were not surprised when he said “Travel!” Steven and Victoria began planning a trip to Portugal and Spain. “He was in great spirits,” Steven says. Alan allowed Steven to drop him off at destinations, and even allowed himself to use a wheelchair at the airports. “He still thrilled in discovering new people and places.”

Alan drove up until six months before his death. “He loved driving,” Maria says. When Alan was in his early to mid 80s, he purchased a Kia Soul. “He loved his Kia,” Maria says. “Ask me why I don’t know.” “For whatever reason, the most generous man in the world became very protective of his car,” Victoria says. “He let me drive it after a while, but he did not like my mother driving the car, which was hilarious. She’s an exceptionally good driver.” Throughout his life, “he had all kind of good cars,” Maria says. “He couldn’t care less, but that Kia was the love of his life.”

Prior Medical History

According to MidState Medical Center medical records, Alan has a history of “peripheral vascular disease, chronic atrial fibrillation, status post pacemaker placement, spinal stenosis, spondylolisthesis, coronary artery disease, prostate cancer, chronic iron-deficiency anemia, Paget’s disease, peripheral vascular disease, status post femoral-popliteal bypass, diastolic heart dysfunction, and osteoarthritis.” MidState Medical records also indicate that Alan has a history

of low back pain. Victoria says that in 1991 Alan had bypass surgery in his leg twice within 24 hours. According to Victoria, some years later it was determined that Alan should have never had surgery. Alan had “great pain” that made walking uncomfortable. However, “he walked constantly and climbed up and down the basement stairs several times a day.” When he was 80, Alan was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Steven says the type of prostate cancer that Alan had was not aggressive, and his doctors told him he would die of natural causes before the cancer would take his life.

Alan’s Fall & Subsequent Medical Treatment

“It was Sunday morning,” Maria recalls. “This man just had breakfast. He was fine.” Maria says that morning she made Alan breakfast in bed. “For 50 years he did for me. I figured it was time for me to start doing things like that for him.” Maria was in the kitchen when she heard Alan fall. “I heard the noise,” Maria says. “He was in the bedroom. I said, Honey, are you all right? He said, ‘Yeah, yeah, but I’m having difficult to standing up.’” Maria checked on Alan, who was responsive with no visible injuries. “I called my neighbor,” Maria says. “Alan was a big guy [...] and I’m not that strong.” Maria’s neighbor came over and helped her get Alan up and into a chair. Maria says she told Alan to sit still until she could change the bed linens and then put him into bed. “Did he listen, no,” Maria says. Alan went into the kitchen, where he fell again. This time, Maria says Alan “hit his head, and he hit his back.” Afraid, Maria called an ambulance. Alan was taken by ambulance to MidState Medical Center. Maria says they did many tests at the hospital, including an MRI. “Nothing was damaged at that point,” she says. Alan was admitted into MidState Medical Center on February 24, 2013 for excruciating pain in his back.

After a three day stay in the hospital, “They told me he needed rehabilitation,” Maria says. On February 27, 2013, Alan was transferred to Coccoma Memorial Health Care Center. Maria claims Alan saw an assistant, but not a doctor after being admitted into the facility. “Matter of fact, I think no doctor ever saw him,” Maria says. When Maria wasn’t sleeping, she was with Alan at Coccoma. “I would leave this house at 7:00 in the morning; I would come home at 10:00 at night. I would spend all the time that I could over there,” she says. Maria noticed Alan started “eating less and drinking less.” Maria voiced her concerns to staff again and again. Each day Maria visited Alan, she did not see an improvement. “I saw that he was not getting any better. I said to the nurse, you know he’s eating very little.” Maria says the nurses disregarded her concerns time and time again. According to Coccoma medical records, Alan became increasingly confused and disoriented. He’s food and fluid intake steadily decreased to the point where he was refusing both.

Maria was unable to go to Coccoma for a day or two due to a snowstorm, during which time she received a troubling phone call from Alan, who was hallucinating. “I panicked,” Maria says. Maria couldn’t get to Coccoma because of the snow. She called Steven and told him about

the phone call. Steven “jumped in the car and he drove the whole night in the snow,” Maria says. Steven left his home in Maryland at 11 p.m. and went straight to Cocomo. On March 9, 2013, Steven called an ambulance and had his father transported back to MidState Medical Center.

Victoria rushed home from Manhattan. She picked up her mom and went straight to Cocomo. When Maria and Victoria arrived, Alan was already in an ambulance. “He was just leaving,” Maria says. Alan was taken back to MidState Medical Center and evaluated. Maria says doctors told her he was severely dehydrated and had already entered “kidney failure.” Maria recalls that a kidney specialist was brought in, and said Alan needed dialysis, which his living will prohibited. “That was the beginning of the end,” Maria says. On March 21, doctors said that Alan was actively dying. “Once the doctors had diagnosed that he was actively dying, it was estimated that at age 88 and using DNR, he would pass in a palliative care within 24 hours,” Victoria says. Alan survived for ten full days. “A healthy adult, under those circumstances survives three days,” Victoria says. “His doctor and nurses were astonished. His primary care physician said that if it were possible to harness his will to live, bottle it, and distribute it, the world would be a very different place.”



Alan spent his final days surrounded by family and friends. “A few days before he died he start having a lot of hallucinations,” Maria says. “One night he said, ‘Maria, look who is coming.’ I said, Who? He said, ‘your mom. She looks good.’ My mother was dead already. I said, How about my dad? He said, ‘Uh-uh. Your father is the same.’” Maria giggles when she shares this story. “We had to laugh,” she says. Even in death, Alan still thought about his father. Just days before he died, “He said, ‘Maria you know who came and stayed with me most of the time?’ I said, No. He said, ‘Dad. My dad is here, Maria.’ I said, Good, say hello to him honey. I wish I



could meet him. He said, ‘You don't believe I'm seeing [him].’ I said, I don't know, if you see or not.”

“Earlier in the week I had whispered in his ear 'Dad, I love you so much!' and with eyes closed and in a barely audible voice he replied 'I know that.’” Victoria says those were, “his last words to me.”

Little Aubrey “was devastated when told he was in the hospital and she couldn't see him,” Victoria says. “She begged to visit and finally her mother relented. They both lit up when they saw each other. When he was no longer responsive, she would kiss his hand and play quietly in his hospital room.”

“Dad's final stay at MidState was dotted with confusion and unresponsiveness but miraculously he 'woke' up late that afternoon and asked for ice cream and anything Italian,” Victoria says. “We all spoke to him that evening. He recognized everyone. It was amazing. We hoped this was a positive turning point but was only a gift of a few hours.” Alan died on March 31, 2013. “He fought with everything that he had,” Maria says.

Losing Alan

“As per Alan’s wishes, there was no wake and he was cremated immediately,” Victoria says. “As a decorated WWII veteran, he was entitled to a full military burial,” which took place on April 27, 2013. “There were many tears, but they not only represented a great loss but were balanced by tears of joy celebrating the life of a wonderful man,” Victoria says. Alan’s ashes were placed in the Connecticut Veteran’s Cemetery.

Aubrey “insisted she wanted to go with him to heaven. She attended his funeral telling everyone she couldn't be with him because it wasn't her time yet. She now says she doesn't have to worry about what to do when it is her time because Grampy will show her.”

Maria says she expected to one day lose her husband, “or him lose me,” but never “imagined it would be like this.” Maria feels Alan’s death is the direct result of the lack of care he received at Cocomo Memorial Health Care Center. “I felt robbed. I felt that I could have had a few more years with him. I really do,” she says. “I feel scared to need one day to go to one of the nursing homes,” Maria says. “They don’t treat elderly people with dignity.”



Maria has chosen to remain in her and Alan's starter home on Byron Ave., where they spent most of their lives together. Victoria says she was "surprised," when her mother told her she was going to stay in the house alone. "She's never lived alone," Victoria says. "She married my dad when she was 22." Most weekends, Victoria travels from Manhattan to Meriden to stay with her mother.

Maria misses Alan every day. "You know grief doesn't know time," Maria says. "The rest of my life I'm going to miss him." Maria misses talking to Alan. "He was a fantastic listener. That's very rare for men," Maria says. "He was a very good listener. Even if he didn't have too much to say back, he was listening."

After his death, Maria could not bring herself to get rid of the Kia. "They want to buy [it] back because they [aren't] going to make this Kia again," Maria says. "I get letters and telephone calls, 'Maria, can you come in the showroom and pick up your car, give us the Kia.' I said I can't. How can I give up this Kia?" Maria says she feels especially close to Alan when she drives the Kia. "I talk to him," she says. Maria says when she looks at the car, "It's like looking at him."



Victoria has a picture of her mom and dad on her desk at work. During our conversation, the line goes silent. "I'm just looking at him," she says. "I actually have on my phone ten or twelve messages that I just can't erase." Victoria misses her father's advice, kind words, support, and love. "He was that presence that I took for granted," she says.

Steven tries to focus more on his father's life, rather than his death. "You know, this has been really hard on the entire family," he says. Steven misses his father's presence dearly. Like everyone else, Steven just wanted a few more years with his dad.

Alan was always thinking of others. Shortly before his death, he bought a bunch of batteries because they were on sale at Radio Shack. He gave them to his children and grandchildren. "I have those batteries," Victoria says. "I can't open the packet. He had bought batteries for all the grandsons, my brother, and me. We all happened to comment how nobody opened those batteries. They're like the most precious gifts."

“Two months after he passed away, the phone rang during the day. It was the first time that I was alone. It was one of the girls in the library,” Maria says. “She said to me, ‘Mrs. Roberts, we notice that Mr. Roberts has not come here for a long time. I hope he's all right.’ I had to tell them that he had passed. The girl could not finish talking to me. She got so emotional.”

Victoria and Steven are putting together a biography of their father’s fascinating life. “We've decided that we're going to really take this seriously, and for his grandchildren really truly dedicate time and write a true biography for him, because I think the kids deserve it.”

