

30 DAYS OF HONOR ★ *A Salute to Local Vets*

Typewriter pilot contributes to war effort

Marshfield man lost brother to Germans

By Dan Richter

For Gannett Central Wisconsin Media

MARSHFIELD — Bob Fehrenbach had always been interested by airplanes, which made his decision to join the Marshfield High School Aviation Cadet Program during his senior year such an easy one.

All of Fehrenbach's brothers were already serving in World War II, including his brother, Don, who was a bombardier.

"I was getting to the age where I was going to get drafted and two of my brothers were in the Air Corps, so they encouraged me to go into it," said Fehrenbach. "There were about 50 guys who volunteered for the cadet program but only 12 of us qualified."

Decades later, Fehrenbach was able to relive some of those experiences when he made his Never Forgotten Honor Flight in 2011.

Question: What did you do in the service and where were you stationed?

Answer: I joined the Marshfield High School Aviation Cadet Program and had some training but then had to have surgery. By the time I recuperated the Germans had surrendered and the cadet program was closed. As a result, I didn't have to go overseas and instead could pick any base I wanted to work at, so I chose Andrews Field in Washington, D.C. I spent the rest of my military career as a payroll clerk and piloting a typewriter, so to speak. I enjoyed the job immensely and made the best of it.

Q: What is your most enduring memory from your time in the service?

A: I had an officer at the Fort Worth Air Force Base that was kind of like a father to us guys. He had a house in Fort Worth and came out to the base on Christmas Day to take us back to his house for the day. He really wined and dined us. It was December 1945, the first Christmas I had ever spent away from home, but he made us feel welcome. His name was Capt. Hurley and I wished many times that I could have gotten back to him in my civilian life.

Q: What do you most want people to know about the conflict in which you served?

A: We lost a lot of good people. I always remember when my brother, Don, was first reported missing in action while on a B-17 bombing mission over Germany, so every time I see in the paper or hear about a fellow being killed in the service, it brings back that memory. I think back to when we got the telegram stating that my brother was missing in action and presumed dead, because they never found his body. It's something that stays with me to this day.

Q: Tell us about your life after the service and how your time in the military affected your civilian life.

A: I ended up being a photographer and working with a printer in Marshfield and at studios in the Greensburg area. The military was a real education, though. It became my values. Some of the guys just made it terrible for themselves because they didn't like the service or want to be in it, but I can't say that. I had a great experience.

Q: What did going on the Honor Flight mean to you?

A: The experience of the Honor Flight was unbelievable to me. My going back on the trip was like an old reunion because I had seen the White House and some of the memorials back when I was stationed there but it was quite something to see how the place has changed and grown up. There were trees that were just 3 inches in diameter in '45 and now they're all grown.

ABOUT BOB FEHRENBACH

Name: Bob Fehrenbach
Age: 88
Residence: Marshfield
Conflict involved in: World War II
Military branch: United States Army Air Corps
Years of service: 1944 to 1946
Rank upon discharge: Sergeant



DAN YOUNG/NEWS-HERALD MEDIA
 Bob Fehrenbach is pictured as he served in the U.S. Army Air Corp during World War II.



DAN YOUNG/
 NEWS-HERALD MEDIA
 Bob Fehrenbach of Marshfield served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II. He took part in a Never Forgotten Honor Flight in 2011.



A FLIGHT TO NEVER FORGET

» The Central Wisconsin chapter of Never Forgotten Honor Flight celebrates its fifth anniversary this spring. Since April 2010, the Honor Flight program has taken more than 1,700 veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam from Central Wisconsin Airport to Washington, D.C., to view the memorials built in honor of their service.

» 30 Days of Honor is a project of Gannett Central Wisconsin Media to profile veterans who have taken an Honor Flight, or are scheduled, and to encourage more veterans to do so. Profiles will appear each day April 26 through Memorial Day.

» Veterans may apply for a free Honor Flight (or loved ones may apply for them) by filling out an application. The only qualification for a veteran to take an Honor Flight is to have served in any branch of the U.S. military during the periods of World War II, the Korean War or Vietnam War. Veterans do not have to have been in combat. The applications and more information are available at www.neverforgottenhonorflight.org.

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