



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



South Dakota kid grows up fast in wartime

Now living in Mosinee, veteran Dean Jensen reflects on military service and Honor Flight

By Karla Swita

For Gannett Central Wisconsin Media



DAN YOUNG/GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA

Navy veteran Dean Jensen says the Never Forgotten Honor Flight meant a lot to him.

MOSINEE — When Dean Jensen turned 18, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy along with two buddies. The native of Yankton, South Dakota holds fond memories of working and living aboard the naval ship and serving his nation that was engaged in the Korean War.

In 2013, Jensen had the chance to join a Never Forgotten Honor Flight crew and witness the memorials in Washington, D.C. that speak of his time in American military history.

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

Answer: In the Navy we were sure to get a clean bed to sleep in at night and a meal was waiting for us during the day.

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

A: I was a seaman and helped maintain the ship. I fueled ships at sea, worked the deck and spliced the line, or tied the ropes up to the docks when we got on shore. We were off the coast of Japan.

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

A: It was an honor to serve.

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

A: The experiences make you more mature when you come out — you grow up fast. I met a guy in the service who got me a job back in Mosinee in 1958. I was originally from South Dakota. I met Sharon and decided to stay here. We got married in 1960 and had four daughters.

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

A: It meant a lot. The night before we left they had a dinner for us. I enjoyed hearing stories about things that I didn't know happened. In Washington, D.C., I was able to see memorials representing all branches of the service. The Changing of the Guard and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were impressive. The Korean War memorial had statues of Marines wearing their rain gear. My daughter, Rhonda, made a book from that day to keep all the memories alive for me.

ABOUT DEAN JENSEN

Age: 81
Residence: Mosinee
Conflict involved in: Korean War
Military branch: United States Navy
Years of service: 1952 to 1958
Rank at discharge: Boatswain's mate



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dean Jensen was an 18-year-old from Yankton, South Dakota when he joined the Navy and served during the Korean War.



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 <http://www.neverforgottenhonorflight.org>

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