



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



Brothers in arms

Veteran Lester Sukow recalls time with brother while serving in WWII

JOY MARQUARDT
FOR GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA

MERRILL — Lester Sukow of Merrill had the privilege of being accompanied on the Never Forgotten Honor Flight by his youngest son Brian in October 2011.

A Merrill native and a 1939 graduate of Merrill High School, Sukow was drafted into the United States Army Air Force during World War II. Among his experiences in the military, Sukow — a telephone installer and repairman — remembers surviving what he thought was a typhoon while aboard a ship headed to Japan and witnessed a Japanese aircraft being shot down overhead.

Prior to entering the service, Sukow married his wife Elanie in 1941. The couple have four children, four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren and will be celebrating their 72nd wedding anniversary in June. An avid outdoorsman, Sukow still enjoys cutting and hauling wood and spending time with family at their cabin in the woods north of Gleason.

Sukow, a longtime member of the Merrill Eagles Club and American Legion Post No. 46, received an award for more than 50 years of service with VFW Post 1638 of Merrill.

Question: What did you do in the service? What was your job and where did you do it?

Answer: I went for basic training in Atlantic City, New Jersey. I became a telephone installer and repairman at various places in the South Pacific. We fixed telephones and ran telephone lines at the air bases. I was stationed in New Guinea, the Philippines and spent time on Leyte Island and other places.

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

A: My brother Reno was a machine gunner in the Air Force and I got to meet with him and spend time with him on one of the islands. We went swimming and enjoyed the island. It was a joy to be able to get together with him. We had another brother stationed in Germany at the time. All three of us were in the military at the same time.

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

A: The atomic bomb was deserved. It had to be dropped in order to end the war.

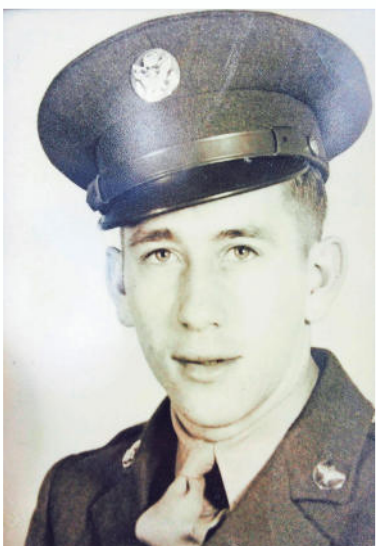
Q: Tell us about your life after the service and how your time in the military influenced what you have done since.

A: After the war, I went back to working at Weinbrenner Shoe Co. in Merrill. I worked there until 1952 and then opened Les' Sport and Cycle Shop in downtown Merrill. We carried everything from guns and fishing equipment to tennis racquets and bowling shoes. I retired when I was 61 years old. I don't really think the military affected my life after the service.

Q: What did the Honor Flight mean to you?

A: It brought back a lot of memories, especially of some of the men I served with. I enjoyed the flight and seeing all of the monuments. We appreciated all of the people who showed their respect at the airport when we came home, and it was nice to receive all the letters during Mail Call on the flight home.

About Lester Sukow
Age: 94
Residence: Merrill
Conflict involved in: World War II
Military branch: United States Air Force
Years in service: 1942-1945
Rank upon discharge: Private 1st Class



T'XER ZHON KHA/GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA
Sukow was drafted into the United States Air Force during World War II.

T'XER ZHON KHA/GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA
Honored veteran Lester Sukow, of Merrill, poses for a photo Thursday at his house.



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 1,828 veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam and 1,106 guardians 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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