



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



‘I was very proud that day’

Veteran Roy Olson appreciates chance to visit Korean War Veterans Memorial

By Dan Richter
For Gannett Central Wisconsin Media

Originally from Ohio, Roy Olson joined the United States Navy at the age of 19, serving during the Korean War.

“At that time there was a draft going on, so you either got drafted or you could enter the military on your own and go where you wanted to go. That’s what I did, and I have no complaints,” said Olson. “I’m very proud of the branch I was in, and I’d do it again if I could.”

Olson, now living in the town of Easton, near Ringle, talked recently about his four years in the Navy, his civilian life after the service and the Never Forgotten Honor Flight he took in 2013.

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

A: I was in charge of the No. 1 boiler room aboard our ship, so I had to do everything to keep the boilers going, clean them and all that. I was stationed in San Diego and traveled to Japan, Hong Kong, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Midway, the Philippines, Korea twice and Hawaii five times.

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

A: I remember swimming in the ocean while down in the Philippines. It was like swimming in a bathtub, the water was that warm. It was almost too warm and wasn’t that refreshing.

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

A: There were things that we did while in the service that we’re not allowed to reveal. People say, “Oh, you can talk about it,” but no, you can’t. Sometimes you can’t reveal where you were or what you had to do. We had to sign papers in some of the places we were, and you saw some scary things.

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

A: I got a job with Eastman Kodak and worked for them for almost 27 years. I was a repair and service engineer and worked on microfilm equipment. I started out in Milwaukee, and one day the boss called me in, I think it was 1975, and he asked me how I’d like to move to Wausau. I asked him, “Where the hell is Wausau?” and when I came home and told my wife, she said the same thing. So we moved here and I would travel all the way from Rhinelander to Stevens Point. I used to repair all the machines at Wausau Insurance and was there almost every day because they had 12 microfilm machines.

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

A: I enjoyed seeing Arlington (National Cemetery) and all the memorials, but the Korean War (Veterans) Memorial was the most fabulous one. It really caught my eye, and that was the first time I’d ever been there. I was very proud that day, and the people on the trip were unbelievable. People applauded us the whole way and when we got back to Central Wisconsin Airport, the group of people that were waiting for us could put tears in your eyes. It made me feel so proud.

ABOUT ROY OLSON

Age: 81
Residence: Town of Easton
Conflict involved in: Korean War
Military branch: United States Navy
Years of service: 1952 to 1956
Rank upon discharge: Second-class boiler technician



T’XER ZHON KHA/GANNETT CENTRAL WISCONSIN MEDIA

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Roy Olson, of Ringle, poses for a photo Tuesday afternoon 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 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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