

Highlighting Heroes: Harold Gary

Montrose Active Living Center Participant

Harold Gary served in the Navy Air Force for just over three years, from Oct 1942 - Dec 1945. He opted to enlist before the draft so that he would have some control over where he went. He remembers the Navy Air offered trade skills like radio aviation, mechanics and flight engineering. Harold chose mechanics. His post entailed protecting convoys from sub and air attacks along the Atlantic Coast, as 1 of 9 men per plane aboard an average of 12 hour flights.

When Harold returned home he married his sweetheart - whom he had shared letters back & forth with while in service - and went into farming while they raised their six children. He used his mechanical knowledge to maintain the farm equipment.

In a time when photography was not an everyday event, Harold instead mentally captured the scenes he saw while in flight. One such memory is of hundreds of ships in a convoy over the ocean, while the moon rose on the horizon. He enjoyed the education he received, and the time off with colleagues he met.

Harold put together a book from his brother's letters in the service to their mother, and last year spoke at the Montrose High School on Veteran's Day to the students of their experiences. Harold's brother enlisted at 19, just made Captain at 21, when he was shot down in Belgium. The school faculty told Harold afterwards that the kids were spellbound by his story. Harold stated he was honored to give the half hour lecture.

When he receives expressions of gratitude for his and his family's service to our country, Harold says he never knows quite what to say, so he shyly replied, "you're welcome."

Once again, thank you Harold for you and your brother's service, as well as your ongoing willingness to enrich our community's youths!