

Gordon Gosh Serves Country In 2 Wars

Warson Woods alderman heads to Washington, D.C., on Honor Flight

by Mary Shapiro

Warson Woods Alderman Gordon Gosh served his country in two wars – World War II and the Korean War. On April 22, his countrymen will honor his service when he takes an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.

Honor Flights are conducted by non-profit organizations dedicated to transporting as many U.S. military veterans as possible to see the memorials of the respective war they fought at no cost to the veterans.

"I'm excited and really looking forward to this," said Gosh, who turns 90 in August. His eldest daughter, Cynthia Davis of O'Fallon, Mo., will accompany him on the day-long trip.

Warson Woods Mayor Larry Howe describes Gosh as "a kind and gentle soul and typical of his generation, who would never say anything about himself unless prodded. Too many of these individuals have a story to tell and, with each passing day, those stories remain untold."

Gosh's story has taken him all over the world.

Born in Chicago, Gosh was the eldest of three sons. He grew up in Pontiac, Mich., graduating in 1945 from Pontiac Central High School. He enlisted in the Navy in June 1945, immediately after graduation while the U.S. was still at war.

A recruiter originally signed him up for an officer training program, but that program was canceled as World War II was drawing to an end. He was transferred instead to the Hospital Corpsman Training School at San Diego for basic medical training. He completed training at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital as an operating room technician. From there, he was transferred to the Naval Academy Hospital in Annapolis, Md., working in the operating room.

Toward the end of 1946, he was transferred to Adak Island, part of the Aleutian Islands – and again was put in charge of the operating room at the U.S. Naval Hospital.

"We had so much fog, snow and rain there. After surgery, we transferred patients for quicker recovery to the



Warson Wood resident Gordon Gosh displays the medal he earned while serving in World War II and the Korean War.

photo by Diana Linsley

mainland because the weather was so dismal," Gosh remembered.

He was overjoyed to be transferred on Christmas Eve of 1947 – with only three hours' notice – to the USS Helena CA-75, a heavy cruiser and flagship of the Seventh Fleet. His ship went to the Asian area with visits to Shanghai and Tsing Tao, China. In 1948 he went ashore with Marines to assist U.S. citizens into Tsing Tao, through country controlled by the Chinese Communist army.

Some of those memories are somber, as his operating room also served as the embalming room. He served on the Helena from 1948 to 1949 when he was discharged from the Navy.

His break, however, was short.

"The Korean War started in 1950, and the Navy called me to back into the Navy Reserve because there was a shortage of operating room technicians," he said.

Gosh was sent to the naval base at Norfolk, Va., and then was assigned to the USS Midway CVB-41 carrier, the flagship of the Sixth Fleet from 1951 to 1952. On that ship, he traveled the world – Cuba, Haiti, Spain, France, Italy, Gibraltar, Sicily and Greece.

"During this time, I took University of Wisconsin correspondence courses, and, in the evenings, I used the operating table as a desk," he said.

A chaplain stopped by one evening and saw Gosh looking at travel brochures instead of doing his lessons. The chaplain told the ship's captain, who in turn named Gosh tour coordinator. As

tour coordinator, Gosh took his officer and enlisted shipmates to Switzerland and France.

"I took 15 of the guys skiing at the 11,000-foot Jungfrau Mountain near Interlaken in Switzerland – only one or two had skied before, and we made quite a sight," he recalled.

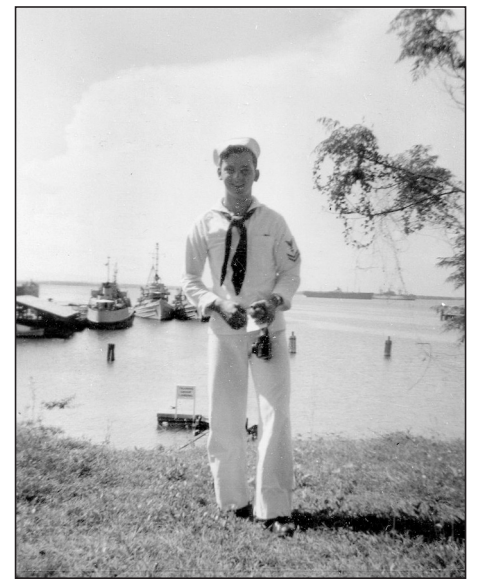
For his military service, Gosh received medals including those for World War II, National Defense, the American Campaign, the Navy Occupation, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign and the China Occupation.

As the Korean War was winding down, Gosh was released from the Navy in 1952, returning to the University of Toledo, where he met and married then classmate, Marylin.

"He invited me to join a new chapter of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship which he had helped get started on campus – otherwise, we would have never met," she said. The couple will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary in June.

A professor from the University of Toledo referred Gosh to the University of Chicago and Northwestern University for their pre-med curriculum. Gosh attended Northwestern where he graduated in 1954 with a degree in biochemistry.

Gordon and Marylin had four children. Their eldest son, Gary, a pilot who served in the Air Force, died in 1986 at age 30 on a honeymoon flight with his wife Valent. Son Jeffrey, who also served in the Air Force, lives in Crestwood; daughter Cynthia Davis, of O'Fallon Mo., is a former state legislator



Gordon Gosh joined the Navy after he graduated from high school in 1945.

and O'Fallon alderman and operates the Back to Basics Christian bookstore; and daughter Cathryn Nelson is an ICU charge nurse in Dallas. Gordon and Marylin have 14 grandchildren including Benjamin Davis, an Air Force pilot.

Gosh worked from 1954 to 1965 for Swift and Company in their food research lab in Chicago. Later in his career he moved to Boston to work for the William Underwood Co. He worked in developing the drawn steel can used universally today for food products. In 1982, Pet Incorporated bought William Underwood, and Gosh was transferred to St. Louis.

"We moved to Warson Woods in 1983, to the first home we looked at," said Gosh, retired from Pet since 1992.

Gosh has kept busy in retirement. He repairs fitness equipment at local YMCAs and is a master gardener at the Kemper Center of the Missouri Botanical Garden. As a certified arborist, he also volunteers with the St. Louis Forestry Council.

Gosh has served as Warson Woods alderman since 1995.

"Warson Woods is special. The neighbors are nice to each other and the city is convenient to everything as well as offering great shopping facilities," he said.

Gosh said he is looking forward to the April 22 Honor Flight.

"But I feel like I was the one who really benefited from my military service, through the education, culture and discipline," he said.