

Honor of a Lifetime

By Ed Kirchenwitz, Owner and Golf Course Superintendent, Sunset Hills Golf Course

I was extremely lucky to be accepted as a guardian on a recent Stars & Stripes Honor Flight with 112 World War II veterans from Wisconsin. I now have a better understanding as to why they are referred to as the greatest generation. They are all heroes, yet very humble in every respect.

The Stars & Stripes Honor Flight is a non-profit organization that sends WWII veterans free of charge to Washington DC for a one-day trip to see the memorial built in their honor. The goal is to get as many veterans as possible to the memorial, but time is running out. Did you know that every 86 seconds another WWII veteran passes away? So time is of the essence. The faster money can be raised, the sooner they can get these veterans to Washington DC before it is too late.

Last year on June 16th, I did a Longest Day of Golf fund-raiser at Sunset Hills Golf Course. I took pledges for every par, birdie and hole-in-one; or people could just donate a set amount. I started golfing at 5:00am and continued playing until 9:00pm. Sunset Hills is a par 3 course with a yardage of 1466. I played a total of 369 holes that day. I had 229 pars, 38 birdies,



92 bogies and 10 double bogies. Unfortunately, no hole-in-ones was recorded, but a few came pretty darn close! I putted every ball into the cup, no "gimmies" allowed. My customers, friends and relatives were very generous; donating a total of \$5,533.00, way beyond my expectations. This amount paid for 11 veterans to go on the Honor Flight.

Now, since I have been privileged enough to be a part of one of these flights, I have decided to hold another Longest Day of Golf event on Saturday, June 23rd. We are inviting any WWII veterans from Sheboy-

gan County who are Honor Flight alumni to attend. We will be having a brat fry for them and we hope they will stay awhile, share stories of their trips with each other and be on hand to cheer me on as I golf as many holes as possible.

By sharing this story with you, I am hoping that everyone reading this will go back to their perspective courses and take up a collection from their employees in honor of a friend, relative or course patron that served in WWII. Also, if you know of anyone who is a WWII vet, please encourage them to fill out an application to go on an Honor Flight, if they have not already done so. You can find all the information you need at www.starsandstripeshonorflight.org. Checks for donations can be made payable to Stars & Stripes Honor Flight and sent to:

Sunset Hills Golf Course
Attn.: Ed Kirchenwitz
W3634 Sunset Rd
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

Along with donating money to make the trips possible I encourage everyone to attend a homecoming celebration at the airport when the flights arrive back in Wisconsin. Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee has had over 6,000 family and general citizens welcoming these men and women back with signs and cheering.

The program is nationwide and Wisconsin's Flights are not just in Milwaukee La-Crosse has Freedom Honor Flight, Madison has the Badger Honor Flight, the Fox Valley has the Old Glory Honor Flight, Wausau has the Never Forgotten Honor Flight and the NorthWest part of the state has the Honor Flight Northland out of Duluth.

Anything you can do for this wonderful organization would be greatly appreciated. And I know, from experience, that any veteran blessed by this donation will appreciate, and remember forever, that one day in Washington DC for the rest of his or her life.



Ed with Leo Bauer, who was a member of the U.S. Army, Ninth Air Force Division at the World War II Memorial.