



Courtesy of Jeremy P. Amick

Local veteran Harold Markway displays a 48-star U.S. flag he acquired while serving in the Navy during World War II. After returning from the war, Markway went on to own and operate the Welcome Inn in Jefferson City for many years.

Leaving the farm

Local veteran tells story of service in the Pacific during World War II

By Jeremy P. Amick
news@newstribune.com

Harold Markway grew up in the Wardsville area where he developed an early respect for the agricultural lifestyle. As a child, he helped his father and grandfather work the land — an early exposure that helped influence his decision to leave high school after the 10th grade to help work on the farm.

With World War II embroiling nearly all American communities, many young men were drafted into military service; but Markway received a six-month deferment to help his father with spring planting.

"When my deferment ended," said Markway, 87, Jefferson City, "I was drafted into the Navy," which, he asserts, was

unusual since most draftees were placed in the Army.

He finished his boot camp at Faragut, Idaho, in early 1945, and was immediately assigned to the brand new USS Rowan — a small destroyer that carried 318 sailors.

Markway then traveled to Treasure Island in the San Francisco Bay, and received training in firefighting, wearing of a gas mask and the evacuation of a ship during an emergency.

From there, he met up with the rest of his crew in Seattle and participated in the destroyer's shakedown cruise to San Diego. They returned to Seattle and in April 1945 began loading the vessel with

Please see Markway, p. 2



Markway
during WWII

Markway:

Continued from p. 1

supplies before embarking on its first overseas deployment.

The ship stopped in Hawaii and the crew spent a few days training before sailing on to Okinawa, arriving just days after the Battle of Okinawa, the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific during World War II.

During his service, Markway continued to perform his primary duties as a seaman, keeping the ship clean and serviceable, and, as he recalls, taking turns with his fellow sailors "standing watch with binoculars on the lookout for enemy planes and ships."

The ship, Markway said, would often sail in blackout (with no onboard light visible from the exterior) to conceal their presence from Japanese forces.

While near Okinawa, all ships in the region were warned of an approaching typhoon and advised to leave the area. "It took us four days to ride out the typhoon and we took 45-degree rolls," Markway

to go to shore and walk around for about 30 minutes or so," Markway said. "In Nagasaki, I looked around and you didn't see anyone ... it was complete destruction everywhere except for a warehouse that was left standing near the beach."

Inside the warehouse, Markway said, were dozens of Japanese citizens huddled inside the only protective cover they could find.

With the war officially ended, Markway's ship returned to the United States and he was discharged from the Navy in June 1946.

He returned to work on his father's farm, but quickly decided that "chopping weeds out of the cornfield" was not how he envisioned his future. The recently separated veteran temporarily considered re-enlisting in the Navy since jobs were difficult to find.

Instead, his uncle got him a job bartending in Jefferson City and in 1950, he opened the C & H Tavern with his uncle as his business partner. In later years, Markway went on to own and operate the Welcome Inn, which he sold in 1982. The veteran continued to work as a

said. "That's the closest we got to being sunk."

One of the greatest threats to the safety of the destroyer, the veteran noted, were floating mines in the waters they sailed. The Navy began to employ minesweepers that would cut the lines keeping the mines shallowly submerged.

Once these mines floated to the surface, the minesweepers would fire on them with 20 mm guns, resulting in an explosion that would destroy the mines and prevent damage to any Allied vessels.

Shortly after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which precipitated the unconditional surrender of Japan on Aug. 14, 1945, Markway's captain took the ship into the harbor of both cities to allow his sailors to witness firsthand the destructive powers of the atom bomb.

"Several of us were allowed

bartender part time until 1990, when he retired.

Since 1950, Markway has lived in Jefferson City with his wife Mary, and is the father of three children. Active in many community and veteran organizations, the World War II veteran now encourages others to share their own military stories because it helps place into context certain historical events.

"I've heard some people say that we should have never dropped the bomb on Japan," Markway said. "But (the United States) was planning an invasion of the Japanese mainland, and I've always said that if that happened, we would have killed as many Japanese as the bomb ... in addition to all of the American lives that would have been lost."

Jeremy P. Amick writes articles on behalf of the Silver Star Families of America.
