

William Treadwell Jr.

U.S. Coast Guard



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Growing up working at his father's Algonquin, Illinois marina helped William Treadwell Jr. in a way he probably would never have predicted: during his tour of duty with the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II. Treadwell was a natural at sea because he was used to being on his father's marina handling many boats. While others were getting seasick from the choppy North Atlantic waters aboard the U.S.S. Pride, Treadwell was doing just fine. Treadwell enlisted in 1943 at the age of 18 and attended boot camp in New York.

During his war service, there were many frightening experiences, the first happened before he even left U.S. soil. He was standing guard one night and this figure approached him in the dark and he yelled Halt! his son, Stephen Treadwell, said. The figure kept coming and then he yelled, Halt! again. The figure kept coming, and it turned out to be Jack Dempsey, the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. As it turned out, Dempsey was doing

physical training on the base. I told my dad, I'm glad you didn't shoot him, Stephen said. Meanwhile, there was the disturbing sights and sounds emanating from off the East Coast that served as a wake-up call to the young boy from Elgin, Illinois.

The Germans were sinking ships, said Stephen Treadwell. All you saw was the explosion and you could hear it. You knew a ship got hit by a torpedo. Aboard the U.S.S. Pride, Treadwell had a job that had nothing to do with his skills. His son can't recall what the job was, but during a leave, he went with his father to Milwaukee to see Ralph Evinrude, maker of the famous outboard boat motors. Upset by the fact that Treadwell's skills at boat-pumping weren't being used, Evinrude wrote a letter to the Department of War. By the time he returned to his ship, the Captain had reassigned him, putting him in charge of all the ship's pumps. It made him feel good because he was finally doing something that he knew, his son said. He had a lot of experience doing it.

One memory he shared about his tour of duty was a moment that seemed to last forever. The U.S. sailing vessel directly behind the U.S.S. Pride was being torpedoed by the Germans. Everyone waited quietly, as seconds dragged on like hours. Everybody was at their stations, but they weren't doing a whole lot, said Stephen. You know they were out there, and you don't know where they are at. You don't know if you're going to be next.

Fortunately, the Pride was never hit. Other difficulties, however, included the extremely cold temperatures and having to check German sailing vessels in search of hiding soldiers. He had a Tommy submachine gun, Stephen said. He was hoping that they had gotten everybody off the ship, but he had no way of knowing. Treadwell and his crew were traveling through the Panama Canal when they learned the Japanese had surrendered. He returned to U.S. soil and was discharged in Florida in 1945.

William Treadwell went home to Elgin,

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Illinois, but then moved to Algonquin to work at his father's business, Treadwell Marina. Across the street from the marina lived a young girl he came to know. He married Rosalie Ellis Justice in 1947. William Treadwell operated Treadwell's Marina for many years and was a volunteer with the Algonquin Fire Department. He later went to work with his son in construction. After retiring, he bought two trailers, one in Minnesota and another in Texas, and he lived out the rest of his days there. He humbly accepted several medals for his service to the United States when he celebrated 50 years with the American Legion, Stephen said. William Treadwell died at the age of 82 on April 15, 2006.

Story of William Treadwell Jr.
Algonquin, Illinois

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