

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: WWII VET MAX BERGEN



It was difficult to find a dry eye in the room at the conclusion of the five-year anniversary party of the WDVA's Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls on Feb. 1.

Following the various hors d'oeuvres, desserts and speakers, 94-year-old Max Bergen moved to the front of the room and spoke emotionally about what the Veterans' Home's anniversary meant to him.

"It's just such a beautiful place to be," Bergen said of the Chippewa Falls home. "To spend the rest of my life here is the greatest blessing I could ever have, and I thank God every day for this place."

Bergen, originally from Cameron, Wisconsin, served as a tail gunner on a B-17 for the Army Air Corps during World War II from 1943 until 1945. On March 29, 1944, while flying over Brunswick, Germany, his life changed in an instant. The plane he was on was shot down and upon crash landing, Bergen and his crew were captured and held as Prisoners of War. Bergen was held in confinement for 14 months until May 3, 1945 when he was freed by General George S. Patton's Third Army in Germany.

A few years ago, Bergen shared his story in an interview by the Wisconsin Veterans Museum for its oral history collection. In it, he said that despite the hardships he went through during his military service, he felt honored to have the experience to do so.

"It was an absolute privilege to serve in defense of our country," he said. "I would do it again in a heartbeat -- I would do it all again."

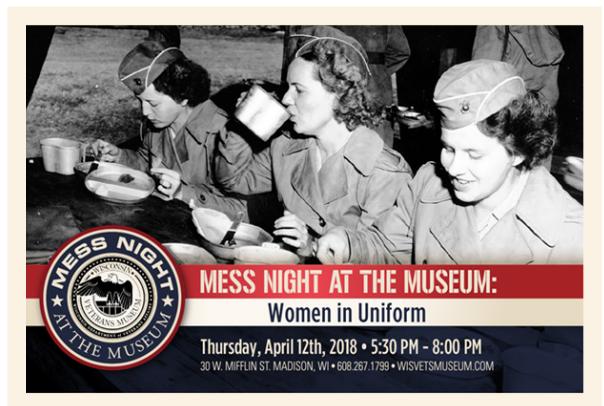
As the years passed by, Bergen's priorities shifted and revolved around finding an appropriate place for him and his wife, Florence, to call their home. They were looking for somewhere with around-the-clock nursing care; a community with likeminded people that felt like home. After 13 months on the waiting list, they were admitted into the Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls.

"It became such a relief to our family," he said of the immediate care they received. "Everything is done for me; I don't have anything to fear or be worried or anxious about ... it's a beautiful facility, everything is beautiful."

After 69 years of marriage, Florence passed away last year. Bergen said that throughout his stay at the Veterans Home, he's remained impressed with the intricate care offered to not only he and Florence, but to all members.

"What makes it a five-star place is the staff," Bergen said. "They care about you and you can feel that. I am so appreciative of this place."

MUSEUM NOTES



**April 12, 2018
5:30 – 8 P.M.**

It's almost time for another Mess Night at the Museum. This time, the program will honor women in uniform, as the Wisconsin Veterans