

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Helps surprise local WWII hero with high school diploma, Congressional Gold Medal

Posted on Monday, Jun 19, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

APPLETON, WI — Today, Rep. Gallagher joined members of the Appleton Area School District, local veterans, and members of the Appleton community in surprising WWII Veteran Armin Barth with his high school diploma. Barth, a long-time Appleton resident, had never earned his diploma as he dropped out of high school when he was 14 to join the Merchant Marines and serve in World War II. After his courageous service in the Merchant Marines, Barth enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps before returning to Northeast Wisconsin to raise his family and work as a truck driver for Consolidated Freightways in Menasha, WI – a career he had for 55 years.

At the event, Mr. Barth was surprised and presented with a high school diploma from Appleton West High School. He was also surprised with a Congressional Gold Medal, which he earned for his heroic service as a member of the U.S. Merchant Marines during WWII, and presented with an entry Rep. Gallagher made in the Congressional Record on Mr. Barth's behalf.

In part, Rep. Gallagher wrote, "Armin has many accomplishments throughout his career to be proud of, but one of the most important has been his family. Armin shared many valuable life lessons with his children as they grew up and placed a special emphasis on education, as he was never able to graduate high school. The lessons Armin instilled in his children resulted in several college degrees or other advanced certifications. Today, I extend my sincere congratulations to Armin for receiving his High School Diploma from Appleton West High School."

Read the full entry he made in the Congressional Record below:

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the legacy and service of a truly remarkable man, Mr. Armin Barth. A proud Wisconsinite, husband, father, grandfather, and veteran who has dedicated his life to service.

In the spring of 1944, World War II was raging in both the European and Pacific theaters, as the United States military and allied forces beat back the advance of the Axis powers. Against the backdrop of global conflict, a young man by the name of Armin Barth, from Appleton, Wisconsin, raised his right hand to serve his country. On June 24th, 1944, at just 16 years of age, Armin chose to postpone his high school education and serve as a Merchant Mariner.

This was not a decision that young Armin would have made lightly – the United States Merchant Marine suffered a higher proportion of casualties during the war than any other branch of the United States military. German and Japanese naval forces understood that the maritime logistics enterprise was the lifeblood of the allied war effort; therefore, the U.S. merchant fleet became a favorite target of Nazi submarines in the Atlantic and Japanese kamikaze planes in the Pacific.

Putting the potential dangers out of his mind, young Armin knew that he had a vital job to do. Merchant ships sailing under U.S. and allied flags transported military personnel, hardware, ammunition, food, petroleum, and medical supplies in support of troops in contact all over the globe, providing a critical link between the American wartime industrial base and the front lines. From June 24th to August 15th, 1944, Armin Barth served as a messman aboard the SS Canada Victory, a supply vessel which had been constructed as part of the World War II Emergency Shipbuilding Program. Following this assignment, he once again took to sea as a utilityman aboard the troopship Alcoa Patriot from September 9th to December 14th, 1944.

Young Americans who answer the call to serve in the Armed Forces, especially during wartime, are deserving of the praise and admiration of a grateful nation. As a testament to his character and courage, Armin Barth answered this call not once, but twice, before his 18th birthday. On June 9th, 1945, Barth enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. He achieved the rank of Private First Class and served honorably as a Motor Transport Operator and Dispatcher until his discharge from the United States Marine Corps Reserve on April 14th, 1950.

Upon his discharge from the United States Marine Corps, Armin and the love of his life, Lois, built their home in Appleton and proudly raised five children: Jean, Joan,

Gary, Keith, and Kevin. Following Armin's service in the military, he applied the leadership skills he gained to his civilian career as a truck driver for Consolidated Freightways operating out of Menasha, WI, which he did for 55 years. Furthermore, Armin has continued to support and serve his local community by transporting fellow veterans from the Appleton VA Clinic to the VA in Milwaukee for appointments.

Armin has many accomplishments throughout his career to be proud of, but one of the most important has been his family. Armin shared many valuable life lessons with his children as they grew up and placed a special emphasis on education, as he was never able to graduate high school. The lessons Armin instilled in his children resulted in several college degrees or other advanced certifications. Today, I extend my sincere congratulations to Armin for receiving his High School Diploma from Appleton West High School.

Mr. Speaker, I once again thank Armin Barth for his unwavering service and dedication to the United States. Our nation is safer, and Northeast Wisconsin is better, because of his service. I urge members of this body to join me in honoring Mr. Armin Barth for his selfless commitment and service. Mr. Armin Barth is deserving of the highest degree of recognition. Mr. Speaker, I yield back.