

Geist honored for service to Legion

Written by Chris Lee

Jack Geist was recently honored for 60 years of continuous service to the American Legion. He received a certificate from Shirley Kadlec of American Legion Post 90 in Holyoke for the honor.

John or Jack, whichever name you prefer calling him, became a member of the Legion a year before he moved to Holyoke from Denver where he had lived since being discharged from the war.

Geist was the commander in Holyoke when the Legion moved to its current location. He remembers they still had a group of WWI veterans here that were the core of the Legion when that move was made.

“The Legion is a good organization,” Geist said. “They’ve been good for the community here I think.”

Geist didn’t have an extensive service career but was busy with different cadres all over the United States. These cadres took soldiers and built organizations such as schools around them. Different cadres were sent out to create new places to train more men during the war, according to Geist.

One place he was involved was Lowry Field when he enlisted in the Air Force. The Air Force took over Ft. Logan and made a clerical school out of it, according to Geist. He said he didn’t have much to do with the school but was in the food supply division. He served there for about seven months before going out on another cadre to Chicago where the Air Force had taken over some hotels downtown.

He said they took over the Stevens Hotel, which is now known as the Hilton, and developed a radio school.

He was on another cadre that went to Grand Rapids, Mich. where they took some more hotels and made a weather school.

From there he went to Chanute Field in Illinois. They cut down on the food supply soldiers and

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replaced them with civilians.

After the change they began sending soldiers to school. Geist was sent to radio school at Scott Field and became a flying radio operator. He said that happened just as the war was coming to an end.

He graduated and was assigned to B-29 airplanes but the war was over and he was discharged from Turner Field in Georgia.

After being discharged, Geist moved back to Denver where he bought his own business. He ran an ice cream parlor and small cafe for five years before moving to Holyoke.

He served with Dale Reimer in the service and Reimer wanted some help with his grain business in Holyoke. So in 1951, Geist moved to town and purchased part of the Reimer-Smith Grain Co., where he spent many years.

Geist was born in Ft. Collins and farmed with his dad between there and Wellington before entering the service.

Geist and his wife Irene were married for 56 years when she died in 1997. They have a daughter Janet and son Jack. He has three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.