

BB gun ended dreams of flying Navy planes

By Aaron Nathans

The Capital Times

SUPERIOR — It's tough to live way up here and still be a leader in Madison, a six hour drive away by car.

Toby Marcovich prefers to

fly. Once upon a time, he even imagined a life spent in the air.

As children, Marcovich and three of his friends signed an oath in blood: They would join the Navy Air Corps, and then pursue careers in the aviation

industry.

But as a 10-year-old, he was shot in the eye with a BB gun. He has used one glass eye ever since.

"I got a purple heart in the battle of North 23rd Street," he

said.

The other three did go fly planes for the Navy. Marcovich got into the Navy reserves for two years.

"I lied my way into the Navy until they found out how many

eyes I had," he said.

Marcovich, a Jewish kid growing up in Superior during the Depression, learned to use his fists to survive on the tough streets. As a youth, he worked on an ore boat.

His large family in the two-state area included cousin Robert Zimmerman, who later took the name Bob Dylan. Marcovich's great-grandfather was the brother of the musician's great grandfather. Marcovich, who is 10 years older, said his family was close to Dylan's mother.

Marcovich went to UW-Madison for an undergraduate education, and was offered a scholarship to attend Harvard Law School. That scholarship was rescinded once "the Jewish quota had been filled," he said. He stayed at UW, and as a law student, he campaigned against Joe McCarthy, and dined with William Proxmire and Gaylord Nelson before they were famous.

He returned to Superior, serving as assistant district attorney and city attorney. He set up his law practice in 1968. One of his more memorable cases included representing six families of the crew of the Edmund Fitzgerald, a steamship that sank in Lake Superior in 1975. Five years later, he helped his clients reach a generous settlement with the ship's company and its insurer.

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Marcovich and his wife of 51 years, Sharon, have two grown daughters and nine grandchildren. Because their eldest daughter and her husband have health problems, the Marcoviches are taking care of their three boys.

In his 40s, Marcovich learned to fly, figuring if he didn't learn then, he never would. The FAA gave him a special exam and granted him a license. At age 75, he still flies his Cessna 421 plane to Madison for regent meetings.

"I do get a lot of time to think on the airplane," he said. "From the air, it gives you a different perspective on things."

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