

Former Shores mayor dies at 93

■ Gierhart presided for 10 years

By Janet Begley
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Fred "Fritz" Gierhart

INDIAN RIVER SHORES — There are only a few things that former Indian River Shores Mayor Fred "Fritz" Gierhart loved more than a good conversation — his family and friends and the great outdoors.

He was an expert marksman, holding two world records for his shooting skills. He often took hunting trips with friends, including Bing Crosby, Ernest Hemingway and Robert Stack.

"He shot with a lot of famous people," said Lyda Harmon, his daughter. "He was so good at shooting that even in his 70s, he could outshoot people in their 50s. He was a

man's man."

Gierhart died at his home on Aug. 3 at age 93, after a long life filled with many friends he made during his 10 years as mayor of Indian River Shores. He served as mayor from 1983

to 1993; vice mayor from 1981 to 1983; and as councilman from 1977 to 1981, and was responsible for establishing the town's community center.

Harmon, of Vero Beach, said she wasn't certain why her dad decided to enter politics, but believed he felt he could make a contribution to the community. He and his wife, Mary Ann, moved to the area from Indiana in 1972 and were married for

See GIERHART, 12A



FRED "FRITZ" GIERHART



Fred "Fritz" Gierhart, 93, of Indian River Shores, FL died peacefully at his home on August 3, 2014. He was born on March 2, 1921 in Columbus, OH. Mr. Gierhart co-owned Commercial Motor Freight Trucking Company in Indianapolis, IN. He retired in 1972 and moved to Vero Beach from Zionsville, IN. He was Mayor of Indian River Shores for 10 years. A dedicated sportsman and conservationist, he was a lifelong competitive shooter and held 2 world records. He was a national trustee of Ducks Unlimited, a benefactor member of the National Rifle Association, a U.S. Navy Veteran of World War II, and a member of the Navy Intelligence Team that broke the Japanese Naval Code.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 65 years, Mary Jane Gierhart in 2007. He is survived by his daughter, Lyda Harmon, his son-in-law, Steve Harmon, 2 grandsons, Fritz Harmon of Franklin, NC and Douglas (Brandy) Harmon of Coloma, MI and 3 great grandchildren, Chloe, Devin, and Athena.

There will be a memorial service at Christ By the Sea Methodist Church, 3755 Highway A1A, Vero Beach in the Memorial Gardens on Friday, August 29 at 10:00 a.m. Memorials may be sent to Christ By the Sea Methodist Church or VNA Hospice of the Treasure Coast, 1110 35th Lane, Vero Beach, FL 32960.

12A » Saturday, August 9, 2014 » SCRIPPS TREASURY

FROM 1A

GIERHART from 1A

65 years before her death in 2007.

"All my dad wanted to be was a farmer," Harmon said. "He loved the outdoors and was happiest when he was outside. But since his dad owned a trucking company, he and his brother went into the family business, running Commercial Motor Freight in Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky."

After attending Ohio State University, Gierhart entered the Navy, serving as an elite member of Navy Intelligence.

He was part of a team that broke Japanese code during World War II, resulting in the sinking of many enemy ships. He joined the code-breakers when there were fewer

than 50 members before Dec. 7, 1941. The code-breaker team played a large part in the United States' crucial victory in the Battle of Midway.

After moving to Indian River Shores, Gierhart became proficient at boat restoration, founding Indian River Custom Yachts.

"He loved restoring old sailboats and motor boats," Harmon said. "He loved being on the water, bringing those old boats back to life."

In addition to Harmon, Gierhart is survived by two grandsons and three great-grandchildren.

The family is planning a memorial service for Gierhart at a later date. Contributions in his memory can be made to VNA Hospice House or Christ by the Sea United Methodist Church, both in Vero Beach.