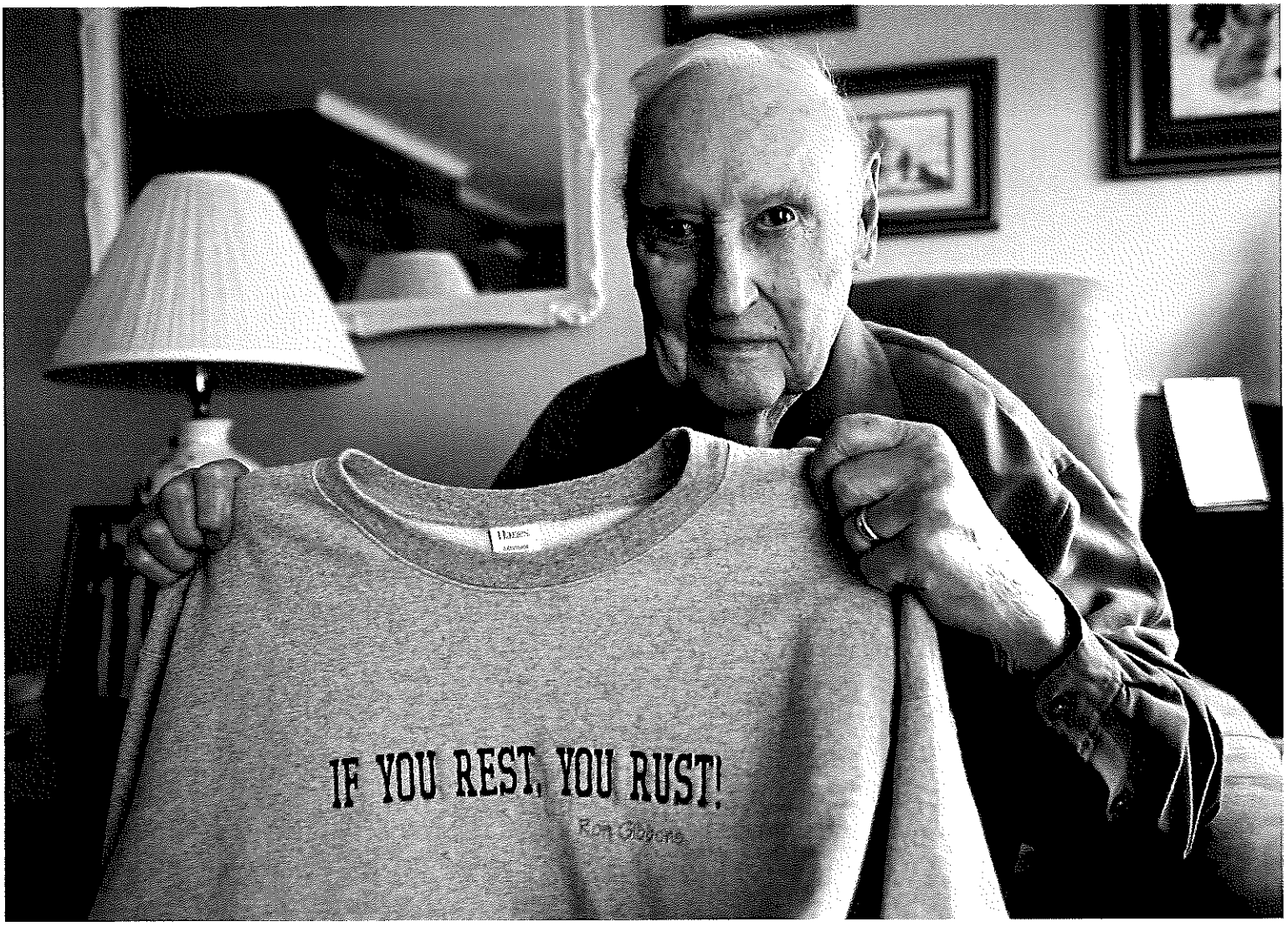
THE OVERLOOK



Ron Gibbons at his Hurley home holding up a crewneck embroidered with his motto, "If you rest, you rust." Photo by Michael Sofronski/The Overlook.

ESSAYS & PROFILES /// HURLEY

At 99, World War II Veteran Ron Gibbons on Finding Joy and Working at Lowe's

Drafted out of high school in 1945, the Hurley resident finally received his diploma 80 years later.

by **Isabella Schoonover** /// November 11, 2026

On Mondays and Fridays, Ron Gibbons waters flowers and chats with customers in the lawn and garden section of Lowe's in Kingston. At 99, the World War II veteran hasn't slowed down.

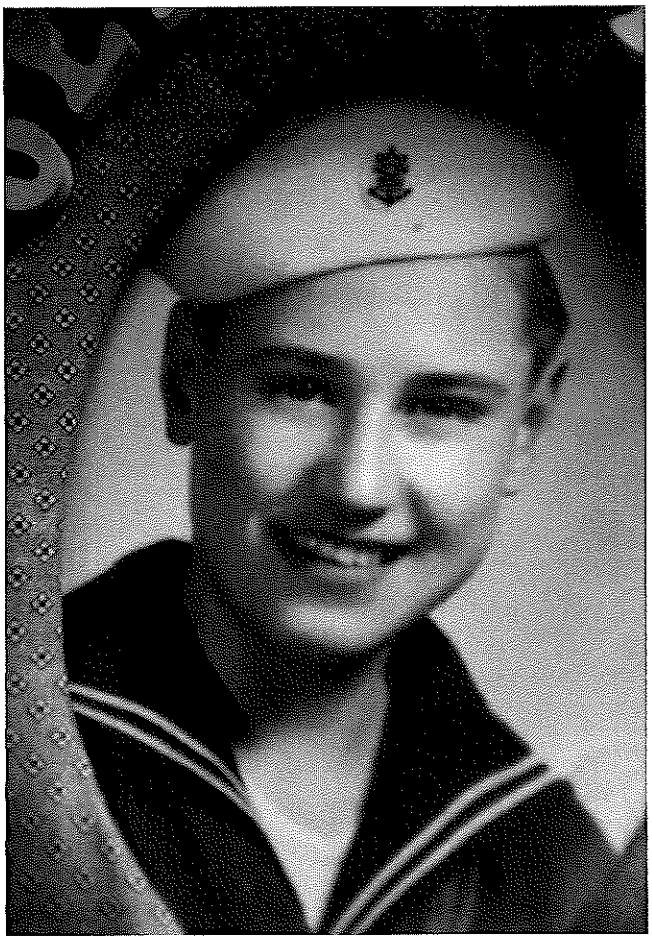
"If you rest, you rust," Gibbons said in an interview at his home in Hurley, reflecting on his life ahead of Veterans Day. "I very seldom sit still. I'm always doing something, and I enjoy it."

He started working part time at Lowe's in 2007, at 80, long after retiring from IBM in Kingston, where he spent 35 years in purchasing, personnel, and management training. Continuing to work and keeping a sense of humor, which he said he gets from his father, keeps him young.

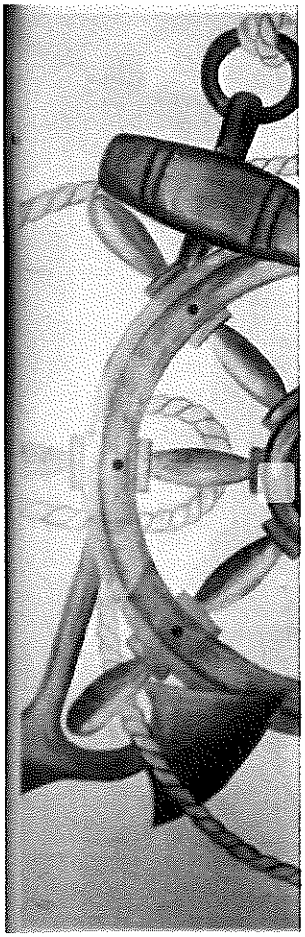
"My dad was always telling jokes," he said.

Longevity runs in the family. His father, a musician, lived to 100, and his mother lived to 97.

Gibbons was born in Gloversville in 1927, a time when the Fulton County town was the center of the American glove industry. As a boy, he joined the **Sea Scouts** and loved sports, playing baseball and football in high school.



Ron Gibbons was an 11-year-old Sea Scout in 1938.



Ron Gibbons at age 18.

His senior year was cut short in 1945, when he was drafted into the Navy. He was sent to boot camp at **Naval Station Great Lakes** in Illinois.

"All of a sudden I became an adult," he said. "I had to make my own decisions. My mom and dad weren't there."

After boot camp, the Navy assigned him to the aircraft carrier **USS Hornet (CV-12)**, where he served from March to August 1946. After Japan's surrender, the Hornet had ferried troops home to the West Coast; for Gibbons' entire time aboard, the ship stayed in San Francisco, he said. The Hornet is now a museum ship in Alameda, California.

"The first night on board, I got lost. The full complement of the ship was 4,300," he said.

He said he was grateful to have joined late enough to avoid combat.

"I was very fortunate to get in the Navy," Gibbons said. "On the ship I had a lot of friends of all different backgrounds. You can learn a lot of information from people with different backgrounds."



Ron Gibbons served in the Navy from 1945 to 1946.

After his discharge in 1946, Gibbons studied accounting for a year at Rider College in Trenton, New Jersey, now Rider University. He then transferred to **Champlain College** in Plattsburgh, which operated from 1946 to 1953 to help veterans returning from the war earn degrees, according to the New York Archives Partnership Trust.

The **GI Bill** covered his tuition and paid him a $75 monthly stipend, Gibbons said. The 1944 law gave veterans a year of schooling plus **time equal to their military service**, up to 48 months; his service earned him about 2.5 years, he said.

He studied business administration and played football at Champlain for about a year and a half before his benefits ran out and he had to leave without a degree. Afterward, he spent three years at Sears, Roebuck and Co. in Gloversville and four at General Electric in Schenectady before joining IBM in Kingston in 1955.

Over 35 years at IBM, he moved from guest services to production and then engineering purchasing, where he was named buyer of the year. He later worked in personnel and finished his career teaching workforce and management courses. After retiring in 1990, he ran a part-time lawn-care business until he started at Lowe's.

He and his wife of 68 years, Mary, 90, built their Hurley home in 1962 and still live there. He has four children, 10 grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren.

"We're both very active and able to do things, which is very good," Mary Gibbons said.

When he's not "bouncing around," the couple plays cards and talks about old times, she said.

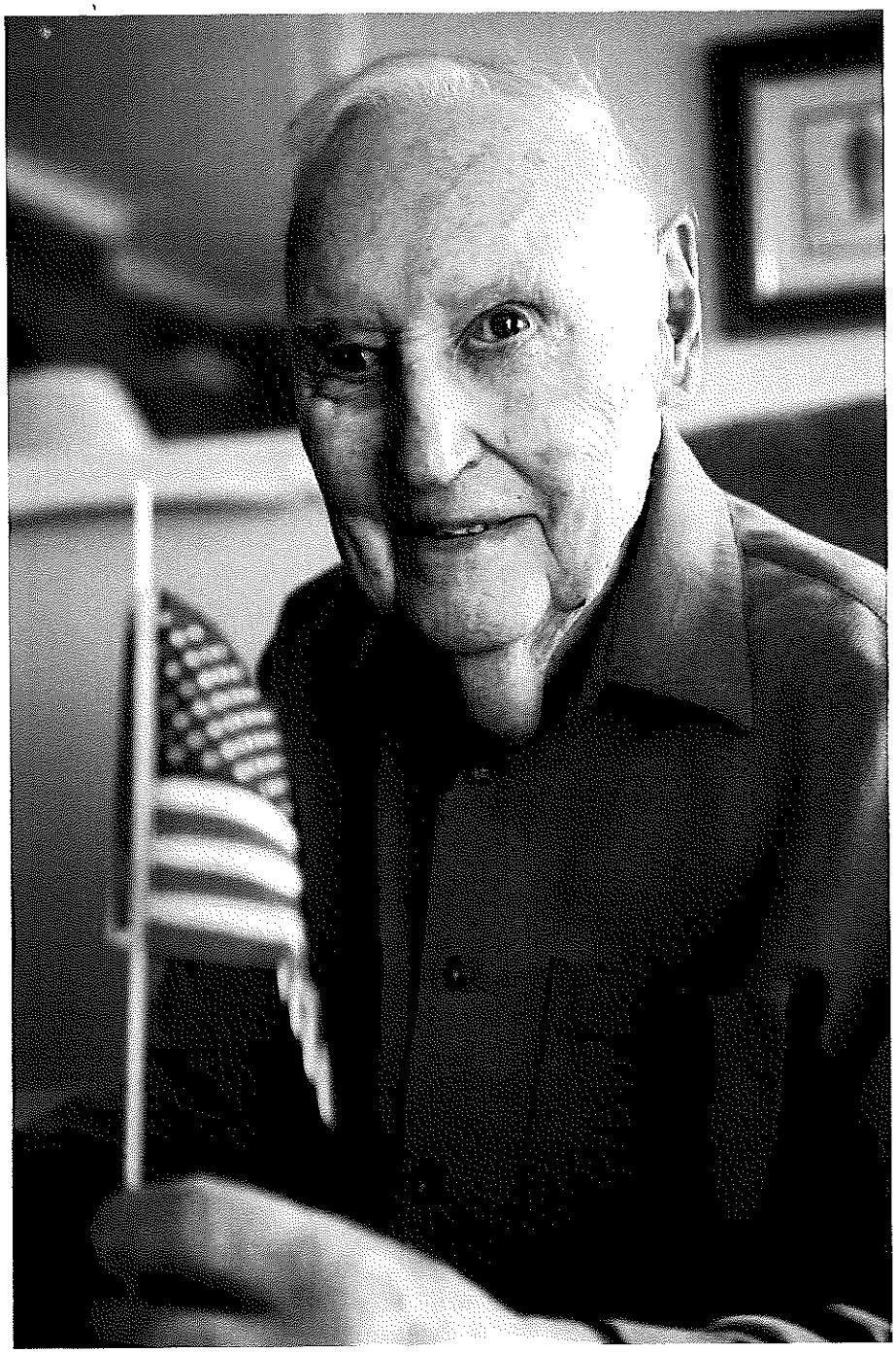


Photo by Michael Sofronski/The Overlook.

Gibbons keeps in touch with one of his college football teammates, who is 98. His Navy shipmates have all died, he said.

He said he feels honored when strangers recognize his service, and as a self-described people person, he enjoys it.

"I went shopping and several people congratulated me. I had my World War II hat on, they saw that and they said thank you for your service. So it was nice," he said.

Asked for advice on living a long, healthy life, Gibbons said, "Enjoy every day, and if you can do things, do them."

In that spirit, he wrote last year to the superintendent of the Gloversville school district, asking to take part in the district's graduation ceremony. He'd been drafted before he could attend his own.

The superintendent said yes.

Eighty years after leaving high school, Gibbons finally got his diploma in June 2025.

Archival photos courtesy of Ron Gibbons and photographed by Michael Sofronski/The Overlook.

*Isabella Schoonover is a staff reporter for The Overlook covering Woodstock, Saugerties, Hurley, and surrounding Ulster County communities. Send correspondence to **isabella@theoverlooknews.com**.*

© 2026 The Overlook, All rights reserved
Powered by Newspack