Early Life

Gunnar William Erickson was born on December 21, 1918, in Butte, Montana.[1] His parents Selma and Andrew Erickson were both born in Finland.[2] Andrew arrived in the United States from Finland in 1916 and Selma arrived in 1917. The two married in June of 1918.[3] The family moved to Spokane, Washington, sometime during Erickson's early childhood.[4] Erickson graduated from Libby Junior High in 1934, with 113 other students, making it one of the largest classes in school history.[5] He went on to attend Lewis and Clark High School, where he was active in many activities, such as Art Club, Adelante, Quill and Scroll. He was also a desk editor and associate editor of the student journal.[6]

WSC Experience

Erickson attended Washington State College from 1938 to 1941, majoring in Electrical Engineering. Along with his general education and engineering courses, he took several military courses.[7] While at WSC, he was a member of the Montezuma Club, a social club in Stimson Hall.[8] He also joined the Associated Engineers' Club, early on at his time on campus.[9] He

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[1] Gunnar William Erickson, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services; Helena, MT, USA; *Montana, Birth Records, 1871-1919*; Box Number: *99,* https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61591/records/65712. (accessed August 2025).
[2] IBID.
[3] Selma Erickson, Declaration of Intention, National Archives and Records Administration (Nara); Washington, D.C.; *Naturalization Records of the U.s. District Court For the Eastern District of Washington, 1890-1972*; Microfilm Roll: *19*; Microfilm Serial: *M1541,* https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1193/records/4452085 (accessed August 2025).
[4] Gunnar Erichson [Gunnar Errickson], Year: *1930*; Census Place: *Spokane, Spokane, Washington*; Page: *13A*; Enumeration District: *0054*; FHL microfilm: *2342250,* https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6224/records/112747302 (accessed August 2025).
[5] "List Graduates of Libby High," *Spokane Chronicle*, May 22, 1934, pg. 7.
[6] "The Tiger," Lewis and Clark High School, (Spokane: 1938), 334.
[7] Erickson, Gunnar William, The State College of Washington, Washington State University Registrar's Office.
[8] *Chinook*, Washington State College (Pullman: 1939), 279, https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/chinook/id/15168/rec/2, (accessed July 2025).
[9] *Chinook,* 312.

continued to be active with different engineering associations throughout his academic career. In 1941, he was elected secretary of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers.[10] In 1942, he was one of fourteen undergraduates to pledge to Sigma Tau, an engineering honors society. According to the Evergreen, the WSC student newspaper, students were selected based on "scholarship, practicality, and sociability."[11] He graduated with the class of 1942.[12]

Military Service

Erickson enlisted in the United States Navy after graduation. He trained at Cornell University in New York, where he received his ensign's commission in June of 1942, just shortly after graduating from WSC. [13] There, he completed a course in Diesel Engineering. He was then transferred to Miami, Florida, where he completed a Sub-Chaser course. He was promoted again in June of 1943. He received orders to go to California, where he was assigned as Assistant Chief Engineer aboard the U.S.S Austin. [14] He served in the Pacific for about a year. In 1944, he was taken to the naval hospital in Seattle, Washington, for pneumonia, where he died on February 18. He was given military funeral rites in Seattle, before having his remains transported to his family in Spokane.[15]

Postwar Legacy

[10] "Engineers Elect Pierce President," *Washington State Evergreen*, March 19th, 1941, https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/evergreens/id/15616/rec/5, 3. (Accessed July 2025).
[11] "Engineer Honorary Pledges Fourteen," *Washington State Evergreen*, April 10, 1942, https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/evergreens/id/17819/rec/9, (Accessed July 2025).
[12] "They Gave Their Lives," *Powwow* (Pullman: 1946), 16.
[13] "Funeral Here," Washington State University Manuscripts Archives and Special Collections, War Records, 2, 13, b.
[14] Letter from Mr. and Mrs. William Erickson to the Registrar's Office, Washington State University Manuscripts Archives and Special Collections, War Records, 2, 13, b.
[15] "Funeral Here," Washington State University Manuscripts Archives and Special Collections, War Records, 2, 13, b.

Gunnar William Erickson is buried in the Syringa plot at Riverside Memorial Park, in Spokane, Washington.[16] He left behind a fiancee named Mildred Diefe. The couple had planned on getting married during Erickson's next leave.[17] His family held their own funeral in Spokane, at the Hazen & Jaeger Funeral Home.[18]

Pictures (4 total):



Citation: "Funeral Here," Washington State University Manuscripts Archives and Special Collections, War Records, 2, 13, b.

[16] "LTJG Gunnar William Erickson," Find a Grave Memorial, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/77742563/gunnar_william-erickson. (Accessed August 2025).
[17] "Funeral Here,"
[18] "Erickson, Lieutenant (J. G) William Gunnar, *the Spokesman-Review,* February 24, 1944.



Citation: "The Tiger," Lewis and Clark High School, (Spokane: 1938), 334.



Citation: "The Tiger," Lewis and Clark High School, (Spokane: 1938), 356.



Citation: "LTJG Gunnar William Erickson," Find a Grave Memorial, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/77742563/gunnar_william-erickson. (Accessed August 2025).