



LIFE AFTER PEARL HARBOR



Major Joseph M. Gosselin



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Major Joseph M. Gosselin

To Maria

Joseph Gosselin
USAF RET.

AS TIME WENT BY

Today, it being my birthday, I was reminiscing about where these last 85 years have taken me. I remember growing up in cold water flats where the only central heating system was the wood stove in the kitchen for heating and cooking. Being nine in the family meant we had to share beds with three other family members, heating bricks on the stove, wrapping them in a towel and taking them to bed for heat and a little comfort.

I remember moving five times to progressively improve living conditions; listening to radio on a crystal set with a hundred feet of antennae strung from our window to another house in the neighborhood and a washing machine for clothes instead of the wash board. The lamplighter would go around the neighborhood lighting the gas streetlights with a long pole and match. I recall a record player that you had to wind up. A vacuum tube radio was a great entertainment center. Street vendors sold fruits and vegetables, ice cream vendors came around daily in the summertime.

I remember coming out of the house one winter evening and going back in to inform them that tomorrow would be a nice day because the sky in the north was all red and finding out that the center of the downtown was on fire and help was called in from as far as fifty miles away. It took three days to put it out.

The Depression was a trying time with eleven mouths to feed and no jobs. I remember pulling a little wagon

with my dad to where bread and some food was rationed out to everyone on a weekly basis. Mother was a magician making do with what we had. We survived until President Roosevelt picked the country up with the WPA, the ERA and other programs that put people back to work and enjoying a living standard.

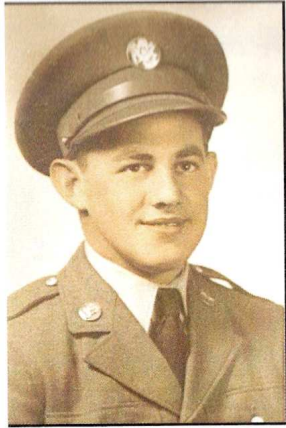
I remember helping my dad during Prohibition make beer in the basement, and storing it for each one of my brothers' weddings to celebrate. We also made root beer in the summer.

I remember seeing the Graf Zeppelin passing over our house at a low altitude from Germany and reading about its demise when it came in for a landing at Lakehurst Airfield, New Jersey, and crashed in flames. It was filled with hydrogen gas, and static electricity from the cables dropped to the ground to bring it to a landing, ignited the hydrogen.

I remember after graduating from Durfee High School, going to a CCC Camp (Civilian Conservation Corps) and spending part of that summer doing forest cleaning and bridge building in New Hampshire. I next got a job in a children's clothing mill as a shipping clerk at \$14 per 40 hour week.

That brings me to listening to the news about the Pearl Harbor Japanese attack, joining up after Christmas and going off to War in January 1942.

LIFE AFTER PEARL HARBOR



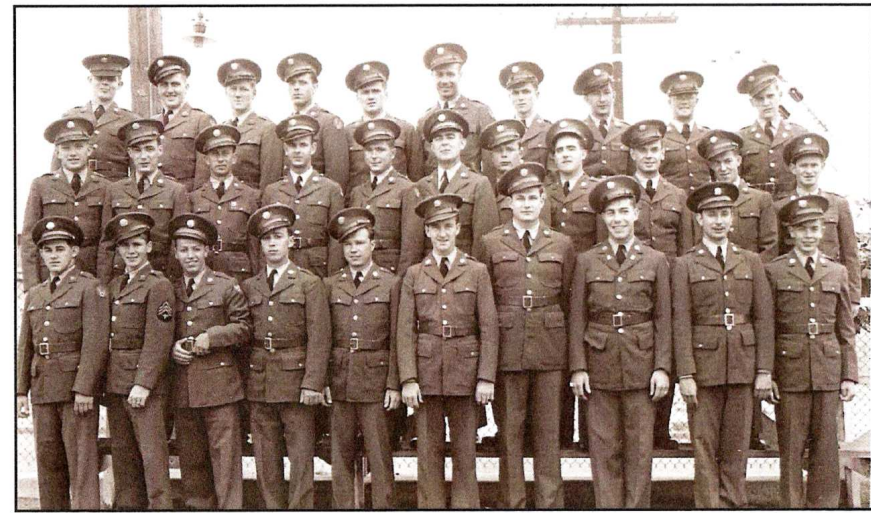
December 8, 1941

This is the story of my life after Pearl Harbor. I enlisted before Christmas 1941, but was told to report in Boston for recruitment during the first week in January. From there, I was sent to Camp Devens to be processed and issued clothing. After four days, I received my orders, and a group of us were put on a train to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, on the outskirts of Saint Louis. We were supposed to be classified and sent on in a week, but there were cases of spinal meningitis and the whole camp was quarantined. We spent the rest of the winter in Missouri and in April were classified to be trained as aircraft mechanics.

Our entire class was moved next to Ocean Park, California, one mile from Santa Monica. We lived in a hotel and bussed daily out to Inglewood School of Aeronautics about 10 miles away. We had a great time while we learned to be Aircraft Mechanics. Training lasted until October, when we graduated and were moved to another hotel on the Santa Monica Boardwalk. Muscle Beach was on our doorstep and we were assigned for specialist training on A-24 (a Douglas Dive Bomber), at their aircraft factory in El Segundo.

We traveled across the whole country in train coaches without sleepers and ate out of mess kits in a freight car. We weren't able to leave the train for two weeks. When we stopped at sidings, we'd give the kids in the area money to buy us cigarettes and candy. Sometimes the train would pull out before the kids got back.

When we reached our destination at Hunter Field, we were notified that the outfit we were supposed to join moved out the week before.



Aircraft mechanics class in dress uniform

We were orphans on this installation and a new outfit was formed with our class of 30 members as its nucleus. By that time, we had been in the service almost a year and still none of us had a rating. Others at the base were new by comparison, but were already corporals and sergeants after only three and four months service. They had even been given 10-day leaves during that time. Because we were graduate aircraft mechanics, we were assigned to be crew chiefs, though we were still only privates with authority over our helpers who were Corporals and Sergeants. When we complained about our time in service without leave, were told to put our names on the list and leave would be assigned according to seniority. This did not go over well with the servicemen on the base because our group out-ranked everyone there in service time. Finally, we were given 10-day leave for the first time in one year.

While we were waiting to be assigned to a new group, some of us asked about being assigned to another branch of service. At a Cadet Corps bureau on the base, we were allowed to take exams for Officer Training as Navigators, Bombardiers and Pilots. All of those in our class who took the exams passed and were reassigned to the Army Air Corps Cadet. We were sent to Nashville, Tennessee for classification and I was assigned Bombardier School.



Class in fatigue dress

I took my primary training at Ellington Field, Texas and after satisfactorily completing the program was sent to Advanced Training at Bombardier School in Big Spring, Texas. I got sick as a dog on my first low level plane ride, especially when the pilot took evasive action. I graduated on August 5, 1943, Class 43-11 as a 2nd Lieutenant and was discharged from the regular service so I could be commissioned. We were given \$150 allowance to pay for our uniforms that were tailored for us by the local tailor.

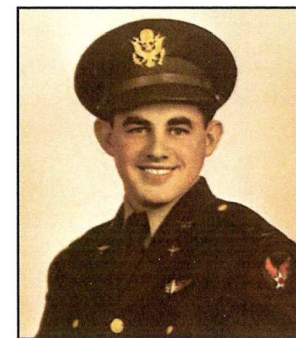
Instead of a leave, they gave us 10 days travel time to reach our individual destinations. I was assigned to go to Ephrata, Washington, and figured I didn't have enough time to go from Texas, home to Massachusetts, and still report for duty in Ephrata. In those days, travel was mostly by train, and crossing the country took more than a couple of days. I decided instead, to travel to Los Angeles and visit with friends I'd made at school there. After four days, I left by train for Washington.

I was assigned to the 395th Bomb Group, in Ephrata for advanced training as part of a combat crew. The following listing is the crewmembers that originated here and stayed together throughout our assignment to the 395th and all our missions thereafter.

- 2nd Lt. Richard H Read (Pilot)
- 2nd Lt. Clinton K Kemper (Copilot)
- F/O Samuel Blum (Navigator)
- 2nd Lt. Joseph M. Gosselin (Bombardier)
- S/Sgt. Harold R. Goodwin (Radioman)
- S/Sgt. William A. Parry (Engineer)
- St Ralph C. Brinson (Waist Gunner)
- Pvt. Earl V. Moye (Waist Gunner)
- S/Sgt. Henry H. Doudican (Tail Gunner)
- Sgt. Joseph A.G. Levasseur (Ball Turret Gunner)

We trained as a crew on a B-17 and flew missions dropping practice bombs on the Moses Lake region, before we were transferred to Redmond, Oregon for advanced training. There we flew practice missions to become familiar with air combat and hitting a target with 50 caliber machine guns.

After completing our training, we were given ten days to report to our next base of operation. A number of us got together and paid a truck driver from a convoy to take us from Redmond, Oregon over the mountains to Spokane, Washington, so we could book a flight to our home as a side trip on our way to Grand Island, Nebraska. In Grand Island, new B-17s were prepared for shipment overseas. We were assigned to ferry two aircraft, B-17G, from Nebraska overseas, with half of our crew in one plane and the other half in the second plane. On the first leg of our journey, we landed at Romulos Airport, Detroit, Michigan. The next day, we flew to Buffalo, New York. The third day, we flew to Dow Field in Maine. The following morning, we continued on to Gander Airbase in Newfoundland and stayed there a couple of days, waiting for favorable weather before heading across the Atlantic.



2nd Lt. Joseph M. Gosselin

We took off at about 9 p.m. and the following morning, we landed in Belfast, Ireland where we delivered the aircraft. The next day we crossed the Irish Sea by ferry to Scotland and continued on to Stone, England for further assignment.

About two days after reaching Stone, I had the chills and decided to go on sick call. The medic took my temperature and immediately called the doctor, who took me to the sick ward. There were no empty beds so the doctor had a patient get out of one bed and put me into it. My temperature must have been over 104 degrees, for him to take such action. I was given medication, and for two days, I never left the bed while they changed my soaking wet sheets every four hours. The rest of my crew shipped out while I was in the infirmary, and when I came to after three days, I was told when I asked, that they had left. Though I wanted to leave and join them, the doctor said I was not going anywhere until I had recovered, and he would see to it that I would join them when I was discharged. He kept his word, and I traveled alone with my orders to the base where we were assigned, from the replacement pool, to the 412th Squadron 95th Bomb Group (H), Horham, England.



*B-17 crew, front row: Pilot, co-pilot, navigator and bombardier;
Back row: Ball turret, top turret, tail, waist, radio man*

We never really had an aircraft of our own. We flew on our first combat mission on December 30, 1943 and flew a different aircraft on each mission we participated in after that. We learned from an announcement on the public address system between seven and eight o'clock in the evening when a mission was scheduled for the following day. We'd be told that the smoking lamp was out, which meant that the bar was closed and there was a mission in the morning. We never knew who was going on the mission. At about 4:30 a.m., those members scheduled to fly were individually awakened and told to prepare. Breakfast for those chosen was at 5:00 a.m., and the cook would select eggs from a private supply especially for scheduled mission members and prepare them to your choice. When we weren't flying, powdered eggs were the norm. Following breakfast, all crews gathered in the briefing room for the mission and it was then that you found out what the target was for that day. It was then that all the necessary plans, takeoff time, altitude for rendezvous with our fighter escort, ETA (estimated time of arrival) at target as well as the turning point were laid out. In order to keep our destination secret our flight path was never a direct route to the target. A veteran pilot was assigned to the first mission for a new crew with the new crew pilot taking the position of co-pilot. Our first mission target was Munster, in the northern part of Germany. We were assigned to fly in the number three position, off the left wing of the lead aircraft. After briefing, the Pilot and Co-pilot performed a pre-flight inspection on the aircraft and the rest of the crew went to the armament shack to select and prepare the 50 caliber machine guns to install in their respective positions. As Bombardier, I installed two guns in the chin turret and checked out the bombsight.

The navigator shared the nose compartment with the Bombardier and prepared his flight charts and navigational instruments. Behind the Pilot and Co-Pilot, the Flight Engineer manned the top turret with twin guns. The Bomb Bay was located behind the top turret with a narrow catwalk for access to the back of the craft and into the radio compartment where the Radioman manned the radio and also a gun mounted in the top of the compartment. The Ball turret gunner was located just aft of the radio compartment with twin 50-Calibers. The two Waist Gunners each had a 50-Caliber mounted on the sill of an


open port exposed to temperatures as low as 60 degrees below zero in the winter. The Tail Gunner had twin 50s in the cramped quarters just aft of the tail ailerons. At 0700, a flare gun was fired from the control tower signaling all aircraft to start their engines and line up for takeoff. We were third plane to takeoff after the preceding plane cleared the end of the runway and was airborne. Rendezvous with the rest of the formation was at 10,000 feet and circling until all the planes reached the formation. In all there were between 30 and 40 aircraft. From takeoff to full formation took about three hours, before we proceeded on to our assigned target. At the time of our first mission, fighter cover extended only as far as the other side of the English Channel and improved as newer planes and belly tanks were used to extend their range.

When we passed over the coast of Holland, we ran into flack and one blast exploded just in front of the lead aircraft. It was evident that there was damage and the lead plane banked sharply left in front of us, causing us to do the same. After making the turn, our assigned pilot realized the aircraft had casualties and was heading back to England. We turned around hoping to catch up to the rest of the formation. The craft, heavily loaded and slow in reaching the formation, was a prime target for any enemy planes in the area. The tail gunner soon notified the pilot that fighters in the area were approaching from the rear. The pilot decided to salvo the bomb load to lighten the aircraft, making it possible to reach the safety of the rest of the formation. By salvoing from the pilot compartment, instead of allowing the bombardier to open the bomb bay doors and dropping them, the doors dropped open from the holding rods and could not be closed until someone cranked the screw rod down to engage the doors and close them electrically. As bombardier, it was my job, and at 30,000 feet, had to connect my oxygen mask to a walk-around bottle, about the size of a five-gallon pail. There was no room for a parachute. I had to go aft from the nose compartment up between the pilot and co-pilot, crawl between the legs of the top turret gunner and into the bomb bay. Unable to maneuver through the catwalk with the oxygen bottle, I had to climb around the open bomb bay holding on to the bomb racks with one hand and holding the bottle with the other. The cranks to operate the worm gear are stored in the radio compart-

ment and after reaching the radio compartment and getting a crank, I started back to the front of the bomb bay. Half way across the bomb bay, the plane vibrated and I dropped the crank. I held on to the bomb rack to keep from falling out the open bomb bay. I could feel myself starting to run out of oxygen as I slid down into the nose compartment. The Navigator, realizing my plight, plugged me into the oxygen system. After a short rest, I was able to make the journey back to the radio comp for a second crank and got the worm gear screwed down to engage the bomb bay doors and close them electronically. We proceeded to the target with the rest of the formation without any bombs to drop. That was my baptism by fire on my first mission and my confidence in our assigned veteran Pilot.

On March 6, 1944, our primary target was Berlin, and we were assigned the number three spots in the lead formation. We expected to pick up a fighter escort around 10 hundred hour, but at approximately that time, the escorts we picked up were ME-109s. Coming in at about one o'clock high, they made a wide circle around our formation until they reached a position of eleven o'clock high. Once there, they peeled off and came at our formation one after the other. We were on the left side of the formation and the ME-109s passed just below our left wing, putting us directly in the firing path of all the aircraft to the right and above us, in our formation. The damage to our aircraft was twofold from enemy fire and friendly fire. I didn't realize we were damaged and out of control, until the pilot ordered us to get our asses out because we had lost considerable altitude. We bailed out around 20,000 feet and, after regaining consciousness from the lack of oxygen between 20,000 feet and around 13,000 feet, I saw the air was filled with white and off-white parachutes. The colored parachutes were from the German Aircraft, and there were more whites than colored, an indication that there were heavy enemy losses. On my way down, I looked to my left and observed a ME-109 flying by about 500 feet away and fearing being attacked by it, I waved to the pilot and he returned the wave, much to my relief. Upon landing we were rounded up in a village meeting place and received the chilling message, "FOR YOU THE WAR IS OVER." Those of us, who were picked up in the area, were transported to an interrogation center outside Frankfurt. That was the last time I saw the rest of my crew.

When I was interrogated by a Major Koche, the only information I would give them was NAME-RANK-SERIAL NUMBER, evidently, not enough, because I wound up spending over two weeks in solitary confinement. Once when I was called in for interrogation, I walked into the room to see my Tail Gunner standing there beside the Major.

	Name: Gosselein
	Vorname: Joseph E.
	Dienstgrad: 2. Lt.
	Erk.-Marke: 2648 21. 3
	Serv.-Nr.: 0 - 688 964
Nationalität: USA	
Baracke: 191	
Raum: 4	

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	
Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben	
Kriegsgefangenen-Stammregister: Stalag Luft 3	
Name: GOSSELIN	
Vorname: Joseph M.	
Geburtsort und -art: 13.8.20 Fall River, Mass.	
Religion: röm. Kath.	
Vorname des Vaters:	
Familienname der Mutter:	
Lichtbild 	
Nähere Personalbeschreibung	
Besondere Kennzeichen:	
Fingerring 	
Name und Anschrift der zu berücksichtigenden Person in der Heimat des Kriegsgefangenen: 76 148 East Main St. Fall River, Mass.	

POW record confiscated from Germans upon liberation

After not being called for questioning for about four days, I summoned the guard and said I wanted to see the Major. A few hours later I was taken to the Major's office and he informed me that he knew enough about me to let me go on. He took out a file and proceeded to read me the details of the mission, the plane number and the outfit and base I came from. He even asked me if I knew a Lt. Irving. I couldn't remember, but was told I should, because he bunked next to me in Big Spring, Texas.

"Do you know this airman?" he asked beligerently.

I hesitated and said, "Yes"

"You should know him because he is your Tail Gunner," he barked in a huff.

The guard was told to take my crewmate out and let him take a shower and clean up. The Major proceeded to interrogate me and when I would not give him any more information, he angrily told me, "You can go back to your cell and rot."

"How about that?" I thought, "Not everyone is only giving NAME, RANK and SERIAL NUMBER."

I was the only one to be separated from my crew and ended up at a different POW camp. After interrogation at a center outside Frankfurt, I was withheld longer than the rest of my crew; I was sent to a transient camp in Frankfurt, Dulag Luft. When I inquired about the members of my crew, I was told they had passed through there a number of days before my arrival. On the night of March 22, the Royal Air Force, in a night raid on Frankfurt, virtually destroyed the camp and devastated the city in a truly frightening raid. The only protections we had were two concrete tunnels, one on each side of the compound that had recently been built, but had not been completely covered with dirt. A 1000-pound bomb and other smaller bombs landed in the compound leveling everything for 100 yards in all directions except the two tunnels in the compound. An airman next to me was standing against the wall of the tunnel, and was killed from the concussion. The bomb impact was within 40 feet of our shelter, and splintered the wooden door at the end of the tunnel. After the concussion, I thought the shelter had caved in because of the weight across my legs. When someone lit a match, the airman was lying across my legs with his skull split open like an egg. We were unable to help him as he drew his last breath. Some of the men at the end of the tunnel suffered injuries and one had a broken arm.

The guards allowed those injured to be treated at a first aid station outside the compound. I helped the one with the broken arm, and on the way to the first aid station we walked a couple blocks and saw the extent of the damage from the air raid. Incendiaries were everywhere, and people were trying to salvage home furnishings from burning houses that were destroyed by the bombs.

We were kept in the tunnel in the compound overnight. Unexploded bombs in craters kept the POWs on edge because we didn't know if the bombs had delayed action that could explode at a later time of impact. The POWs who took the airman out to be buried in an area close by, the next day, also came upon a couple of RAF Airman dead from some aircraft downed during the raid and their bodies

(See the listing of my missions leading up to Berlin.)

Record of ETO Missions 1943-1944

Date	Mission Number	Missions	Targets	Comments
12/21/1943	~~~	Practice	~~~~~	~~~~~
12/23/1943	~~~	Practice	~~~~~	~~~~~
12/27/1943	~~~	Test Hop	~~~~~	~~~~~
12/28/1943	~~~	Practice	~~~~~	~~~~~
12/29/1943	~~~			
12/30/1943	1	Bombing	Ludwitszhaven-Mannheim	40 100lb incendiaries
1/2/1944	~~~	Practice	~~~~~	~~~~~
1/4/1944	2	Bombing	Kiel—Dock Area	10 500lb Demolition
1/5/1944	3	Ellensberg	Ball Bearing	12 500lb Demolition
1/7/1944	4	Bombing	Ludwitszhaven Chemical Works	12 500lb Demolition
1/21/1944	5	Noball	Military Installation N.W. France	12 500lb Demolition
1/27/1944		Test Hop	Delivered Two Crews elsewhere	~~~~~
1/28/1944		Practice	~~~~~	~~~~~
1/29/1944	6	Frankfort	Rail Center Industries Whole City	10 500lb Demolition
1/30/1944	7	Brunswick	City	10 500lb Demolition
2/3/1944	8	Wilhelmshaven	City-All Military Installations	42 Incendiaries (100lb)
2/4/1944	9	Frankfort	City	42 Incendiaries (100lb)
2/6/1944	10	Airfield	N.E. of Paris	10 500lb Demolition
2/20/1944	11	Rostock	10 500lb Demolition	10Hrs30Mins Flying Time
2/21/1944	12	Brunswick	Damn if I Know	Rough
2/24/1944	13	Rostock		42 Incendiaries (100lb)
2/25/1944	14	Regensburg	Aircraft & Ball Bearing Plant (ME110)	10 500lb Demolition
2/29/1944	15	Brunswick	City	10 500lb Demolition
3/6/1944	16	Berlin	City	Shot Down

were buried as well. Frankfurt was devastated and no transportation was available in the whole city. We were evacuated by being marched to the outskirts of the city where we boarded a train. During the march, German civilians tried to attack us with clubs and knives, but the Luftwaffe soldiers held them off by using the butts of their rifles. The journey ended at Sagan, near the Polish border and Stalag Luft III. We arrived about a week after an incident where a number of British POWs were shot in an escape attempt through a tunnel they had built to the edge of the woods from inside the compound. That incident, which was later made into the movie, "The Great Escape," resulted in a change of camp commandant, and the new commandant told the senior British officer, Massey, that 41 of the escapees had been shot while resisting arrest. Massey asked the commandant, "How many of our men were wounded?" He did not reply. Later it was discovered that the Gestapo had murdered 50.

We were issued six-foot burlap bags. Bales of straw were dumped on the ground for us to stuff the bags for mattresses, and we were given six boards to prepare our bunks for our incarceration. It must have been standard practice at all camps. We were the first group to arrive at that camp in six months and were not the last. As more POWs were brought in, it was necessary to build and open a West Compound and assign Senior Officers to staff it.

Kriege craftsmanship was a real testimony to fertile young minds. Tin cans that brought us Klim (powdered milk) and other foods in Red Cross parcels were fashioned into everything from baking pans to slide rules and even a pendulum clock that worked and kept very good time. Wool sweaters that didn't fit were unraveled and crocheted into sox and caps using a crochet hook formed from a toothbrush handle. Life in the camp was what you made of it, and in an effort to stay in shape, a roommate and I would run around the compound on a daily basis till we could go no further. This really prepared us for what was to come later, and made it possible to come through in satisfactory shape.

In the evening of January 27, 1945, with the Russian making advances of about 20 miles a day and their presence within 45 miles of

Sagan, the Germans decided to evacuate the camp. Colonel Charles Goodrich, Senior American Officer of the South Compound, issued the order to prepare to move out in a half-hour. Frantically, the backpacks we had prepared beforehand from pants, shirts and other material, were filled with food and clothing and blanket rolls were strapped over the packs for the march.

The South Compound, which I was in, was the first to leave, at 10 p.m. that Saturday night. The snow lay deep, it was cold, and a biting wind blew out of the East. Most of the guards walking alongside us were the home guard and elderly. As the march progressed, many of the Kriegies began lightening their load and discarding some of the articles that proved too heavy to carry. The idle life in the prison camp had left them unfit for the endurance of a long forced march with full pack. Packs were lightened at each halt of five minutes every two hours. During one stop, as the night and the march began to take their toll, I dropped into a snow bank, very exhausted and sleepy. After a short while I began to feel very comfortable and soon realized that I would freeze to death if I remained there. Hypothermia was beginning to set in and as long as I kept in motion, I could overcome the cold. The Kriegies would yell to keep moving when the halts got too long.

The march was also taking its toll on the guards. The road we were traveling was an Autobahn and raised above the terrain, sloping on both sides and offering no shelter from the biting wind. There were instances when some of the guards who were walking alongside on the edge of the road would slip and fall down the embankment. A couple of Kreigies would scramble down and help the guard, saying to him "Come on pop, let us help you," and one would take his rifle and carry it for him as they helped him along.

At ten o'clock on Sunday, the column arrived in a little village of Gros Grostein where we remained standing until being led to some of the barns where we were expected to get a little rest. I crawled up into the loft and buried myself in the hay and soon fell asleep from exhaustion. The farm workers were mostly foreign labor from conquered nations and willing to offer any help they could give us. If

we hoped to survive and not get rid of the rations we carried on our backs, there had to be an easier way. We scrounged and found some boards and built some sleds to carry our packs.

At four o'clock that afternoon, the order to march was given once again. Those of us, who had grouped together, took turns pulling the sled we'd made, which made it easier to march without backpacks. It began to snow harder and harder. The wind stiffened and fatigue grew. Many were becoming lame and blistered. The marchers began to break up and fall back, and back further to the end of the column becoming stragglers. The march began to exhaust our guards, and they too threw away items from their packs and became stragglers. The whole line faltered and was strung out for miles, POWs helping their buddies until it was all they could do to help themselves.

Escape was out of mind. The Germans themselves were so weary they did not care about our escape. They were dropping behind and falling on the road like their prisoners. It was not uncommon to see a prisoner aiding a German guard to hobble along, even carrying his rifle.

At this point when we were in a small town, Colonel Goodrich implored the German March Commandant to put us up because we could go no further. "Only three more kilometers," the Commandant replied, "and I will have you in nice warm quarters." We could do three kilometers in an hour and a half and then have a warm place in to sleep. But three kilometers stretched into 12 to Muskau. There our group was led up a hill to factories that had been bombed. As the Kriegies scrambled to find resting areas in the confines of the bombed building, I sat on the sled and refused to go any further. At the end of the lane, I could see lights that offered hope of a better area to rest. As more POWs arrived in the yard, the Commandant waved for us to follow him towards the building with the lights. When we got there, the large door was opened and we were told to go inside. I scrambled to the far wall where I saw heating radiators and just flopped down, took my shoes off and was asleep by the time I hit the floor.

The two American doctors and their first aid assistants worked all the next day, Monday, January 29, 1945, with their meager supplies,

cleansing and bandaging bloody feet. The Commandant ordered the march to resume Monday morning and Colonel Goodrich protested, telling him that no one was in any condition to move. The Commandant agreed that his men were in no condition to force us to march either. The following morning, unable to put my shoes on because my feet were frozen and swollen, I asked the guard to let me go back to where I had left the sled with my clothing and slippers. I walked back barefooted in the snow and retrieved my belongings where I'd left them, 100 yards down the lane. Four hundred men were unable to go further when the march resumed a day later. The trek to Muskau was 61 kilometers in 26 hours for those marching at the head of the column.

Those of us, who were capable, marched 18 kilometers to Schonheide, where we were put up in barns for the night. The following day was a short march of 9 kilometers to Spremburg, where we slept in warehouses on a Wehrmacht military post. Our total marching distance was 92 kilometers accomplished over a period of four days.

At Spremburg, South and Center camp took a train for Moosburg; Stalag VII A. The train trip was made from Spremburg by boxcar (40 hommes et 8 cheveaux). These were cars used during World War I and at that time were meant to carry 40 men and 8 horses. We were crowded 60 to 80 men per boxcar, taking three to five days for the trip. There was not enough room in the boxcars for more than half of the men to lie down at one time. On the train trip, more men came down with the flu and more than 40 percent contracted and suffered from dysentery. When we reached Frankfurt, an air raid was in progress, and we feared we were an inviting target while the raid was in progress. During one of the stops along a deserted railroad bed where we were allowed to relieve ourselves, word was passed to us that two men from each car should attempt an escape. Although about 40 POWs were turned loose as the train headed toward Moosburg, all were recaptured by the time we reached Stalag VII A.

Stalag VII A was fast bulging at the seams with all the incoming POWs from camps that were evacuated, and many of us volunteered

to erect a circus tent in a vacant area of the camp and move into it instead of the crowded barracks that were unhealthy. The tent was raised on a slight incline, and during the night, a heavy rainstorm sent water flowing down the incline and into the tent where we slept on the ground covered with hay and blankets. Everyone scrambled outside to dig a trench around the perimeter of the tent to divert the rain from the tent.

On the morning of April 29, 1945, a P-51 Mustang passed over the camp at a very low altitude and barrel-rolled as it went by. It must have been the signal for the approaching military forces to begin attacking the area, because an artillery duel began with heavy artillery criss-crossing over the camp for over an hour until General George Patton's Third Army tanks rolled into the camp and liberated us.

Many of the POWs did not bother to wait for transportation out of Germany, and struck off on their own to get back. Army trucks were sent to an airfield to await C-47s bringing in supplies, and transported us. As each one arrived, we would unload the supplies and men would climb aboard for the return trip to France and Camp Lucky Strike for processing.

In the repatriation process at Camp Lucky Strike, each of us was issued clothing, our records were updated, our back pay processed. We were examined by doctors and assigned transportation back to the United States by convoy from the port of Le Havre on the hospital ship *SS Lejeune*. When we arrived at Staten Island, we were transported to Fort Dix where we were sent home for a 10-day leave before proceeding to Atlantic City to be either reassigned or discharged. I selected to be discharged for the time being.

In 1949, I was persuaded to further my military activity as a reservist, earning the 50 credits to satisfy the equivalent for a year of service. By the year 1968, with points and active duty two weeks a year, I accumulated enough years of duty (20) to qualify for retirement and pension when reaching 60 years of age with the rank of Major USAF RET.

After getting out of the service in 1945 I married the former Helen K. Dunaj and in January of 1946, was hired by the Bristol County Water Department and was blessed with a baby girl named Catherine Suzanne on May 5, 1947. Two years later, a boy named Stanley Joseph was born on April 26, 1949.

In April 1968, I left the employ of BCWD after 22 years to start up a new water treatment plant nearing completion for the Town of Somerset. The plant was put on line on July 8, 1968 and I became Plant Manager and Superintendent until I retired in August 1986. In May 1987, I was elected Water Commissioner for my first three-year term. In May 2002, I began my sixth term in office after running unopposed on the ballot as Water and Sewer Commissioner.

In 2005, I declined to run again and my term expired with the May 9th election with two candidates running for my position bringing my career as a commissioner since 1987.

In 2004 after Congress passed a bill whereby I could recover my military pension that I lost to pay for the disability compensation from the Veteran's Administration (VA), I submitted documentation to the Air Force Command that entitled me to receive both the pension and the VA disability. One criteria was at least 10 percent disability plus the Purple Heart award. After the department of the Air Force reviewed my military records, it was determined that I had never received the Purple Heart award for injuries incurred after our aircraft was shot down by enemy action.

On 10 May 2004, I received a Special Order from the Department of the Air Force awarding me the Purple Heart. With this documentation I was able to receive CRSC (combat related special compensation), tax exempted military pension as well as my disability from the VA.

Joseph M. Gosselin
Major USAF Ret.

RETURN TO GERMANY 2000

Our flight was scheduled to depart for Zurich, Switzerland on Oct. 16, on Swissair from Boston at 6:50 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Two passengers who had signed in did not show. Their baggage had to be located and unloaded before takeoff and consequently takeoff was achieved at 7:30 p.m. Altitude when reached attained 35,000 feet; outside temperature was -65 degrees Centigrade; ground speed 685 MPH. Flight time approximate, 6 hours 10 minutes, ETA 7:42 a.m. Time difference between Eastern Time and Zurich, Switzerland is 6 hours later. Landed at 7:42 a.m., 1:42 a.m. EST.

After going through customs, a girl holding a "Travel Design" sign greeted us and guided us to other guests at the baggage carousel where two porters collected all baggage with yellow name tags and took them to our motor coach waiting for us. Motor coach with tour guide took us to the town of ARBON on the shore of Lake Constance and Hotel Seegarten.

Wednesday, wakeup 6:15 a.m., breakfast 7:00 a.m. and leave ARBON, Switzerland at 8:00 a.m. We stopped for lunch in Augsburg, had sausage and sauerkraut, and proceeded north to Donauworth for coffee break. Continued north and arrived in Rothenburg at 4:00 p.m., a very scenic old city with arched entrance and wall surrounding the whole city. Many curio shops and narrow cobblestone streets.

Thursday, left Rothenburg 8:00 a.m. for Nurnberg and visited the Great Parade Street where Hitler addressed the great mass of people from high on a podium that had a large Swastika on top. It was demolished when troops liberated the city. We had lunch in the center of the city and reached Hotel Bayerisher in the city of Erlangen, north of Nurnberg at 3:00 p.m..

Friday, at 9:00 a.m. we were bused to the southern part of Nurnberg and spent the morning touring the shopping center and lunched there. At 1:30 p.m. we were bussed to the Kaiserburg Castle and

The local German newspaper, Mooseburger Zeitung, welcomed our group with an article and photo of us at the Stalag Memorial Monument.



visited the Ooppelkapelle Museum. On the way back to our hotel in Erlangen, we toured an old brewery that made beer according to the old process, and sampled light and dark beers named Scotty and Stork. On top of the two high chimneys were two nests that were placed for storks to nest there. Arrived back to hotel at 5:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, left hotel at 8:00 a.m. and traveled about three miles before my son, Stanley, realized he did not have his passport. The bus returned to the hotel, and after searching through our room and back out to the bus to look through his luggage to no avail, we decided to go on and deal with it later. At our next stop, he decided to search his luggage, and found his passport in the back pocket of the pants he wore the night before. We stopped in a picturesque small town square of Neustadt and had coffee and applestrudel at 10:00 a.m.

When we reached the border of Moosburg, the bus stopped and let us take pictures under the road sign because most of the POWs had passed there on their march to Stalag VII A in Moosburg, from camps around Nurnberg. We stopped in the center of town and proceeded on our own to find a restaurant of our choice. WE chose a menu of potato soup and wine. At the town square, we met with the journalist of the *Moosburg Journal* who had written about the liberation of Stalag VII A on April 29, 1945 by Patton's 14th Armor. He accompanied us to the site of where the camp was located, and took a picture of our group near a memorial fountain honoring the Stalag VII A camp. We were guided to building 6A which is the only remaining building standing from that camp. Proceeded on to Hotel Kaiserhof in Landshut. At dinner that evening, we were presented a stein with

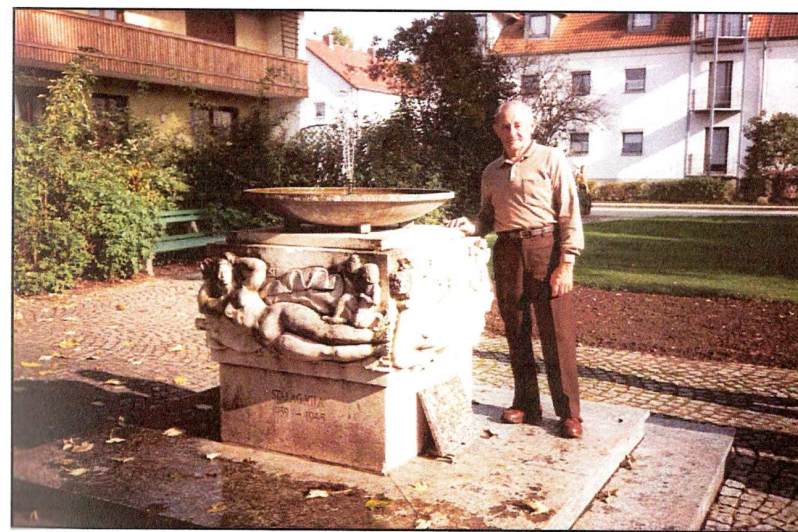
a picture of the camp, and writing in German about friendship and remembrance. This was a gift of the newspaper.

Sunday, we visited the Dachau Concentration Camp, viewed a movie on the atrocities and walked to the end of the camp where the crematorium is located. That afternoon we were taken to Munchen (Munich), had lunch at the Haufbrough Beer Hall and walked around the city sight seeing till 4:30 then back to hotel and dinner at seven.

Monday, bussed to the border of Bavaria and Austria to the town of Berghausen, and visited the Fortress above town and had a tour of the ancient museum. Went on to Salzburg and Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten. Spent afternoon on walking tour throughout city. Area around where movie, "The Sound of Music" was made, shops and outdoor food stands, rode cable car to castle area above town with view of all area around Salzburg. First hotel we stayed at that had no dining facility and had dinner at a restaurant two blocks away.

Tuesday, left Salzburg and drove to Berchtesgaden to board special busses that took us the last three miles up steep winding road to a parking area and entrance of a tunnel in side of the mountain. Walked through tunnel for over 100 feet and entered a large elevator, constructed of brass and capable of carrying at least 30 passengers, that took us 300 feet up to the EAGLE'S NEST, Hitler's building where he entertained. Beautiful view of country from that mountain top. After coming back down to Berchtesgaden we visited the site where Hitler's home was located. This area was completely demolished to remove all trace of it, but Eagle's Nest was left intact at the request of the local mayor, and converted into a restaurant souvenir area. Ellis Gibson, who runs Travel Design agency, was in the unit that came up that road in Berchtesgaden during the war, was familiar with the terrain, and described the Hitler home and the hotel next door. He knew the woman that owns it. The hotel was built by her grandfather and when the Nazi ca.m.e into power, they confiscated the property and converted it to living quarters for the SS.

After the liberation of Germany in June 1945, she insisted that Germany return the property to her. It was the only property



Monument to Stalag VII A, Moosburg, Germany, October 2000

returned to heirs of previous owner in that area. It had been damaged, but restored to original condition. As we were walking up the hill from where Hitler's home was, we saw this woman walking her dog in the back of her hotel, and Gib called up to her by her name and she recognized him, saying she would talk to him when we reached the hotel. She agreed to let us in through the kitchen into the hallway of the hotel to view her collection of pictures of all the high ranking Nazi and German officials, and written documents of that era. We were instructed not to go into any other rooms and not to take any pictures. It was an impressive collection.

When I left for the trip, I brought along a lot of new dollar coins that I gave as gratuities for services rendered. Those people had never seen any of the new dollar coins and were very thankful for them. Gib introduced the woman to me and asked me if I had any more of the coins to give her one. He told her what they were and she thanked me. She then went into her home and returned with a postcard of the hotel for each one of us. She said that at the end of the year she would have someone operate the hotel for her, and not wanting to impose on me, asked if she could have another one to give to the new operator. I asked her if there was an address where we

could write to her in appreciation of allowing us to visit her collection. She went into her home and returned with a small postcard with her name and address, and said that anyone sending her a Christmas card, she would send a nice picture.

After we returned to the bus we were told that we had to leave the area because someone had found a bomb on the road we had walked up to the hotel, and everyone was being evacuated from that area. It was a reminder of 55 years in the past, and it capped the end of our travel as we returned to where we started from in ARBON and the Hotel Seegarten on the shore of Lake Constance in Switzerland. At dinner that night everyone expressed their feelings about our travel and the people we lived with as a family for that period of time. A few tears were shed by most as each expressed their feelings.

Wednesday, bags out at 5:30 a.m., breakfast 6:00 a.m.; leave for Zurich 6:30 a.m., board plane and arrive in Boston 1:30 p.m. and back to reality from what now seems like a dream into the past.

BACK TO THE PLACE OF IMPRISONMENT

Reunion of former American Air Force soldiers on trip to Europe and Stalag

This day, a little traveling company arrived here in 'Three Rose' City by a Swiss bus with twenty tourists, It was an occasion for American citizens of different regions of the United States to have a short visit to Moosburg where once existed the Prison Camp Stalag VIIA.

Among the guests were former prisoners who called themselves "Kriegies". In the Second World War they were all part of Bomber Squadrons shot down over Germany, France and Italy. All participated in the grueling march from what is Sagan, Poland today to the camp in Moosburg in the winter of 1945.

To the men of more than 80 years old, the memory of the place of confinement came to life most of all when they got a real view of the barracks on Suden Strasse with Martin Brun. This local historian and stalag expert explained in short phrases the different dates of the existing camp from 1930 to 1945 when the troops of General Patton liberated it.

Before this, a picture was taken at the well-kept layout of the Stalag Memorial Monument of the whole group. The familiar Ellis Gibson was the organizer of this European tour. They want to return next year. The group came from the Swiss town of Arbon on the shore of Lake Constance and stayed several days in Landshut.

From there they went sightseeing in Rothenburg on the Tauber, Nurnberg and Salzburg, Austria before their journey home.

With the party were several wives and sons of war. All were touched by the warm welcome in Moosburg. They were especially happy with the Fifty Years of Jubilee writing commemorating this occasion on beer steins which Martin Brun gave on behalf of the city.

As reprinted from the German newspaper Mooseburger Zeitung

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330-5020

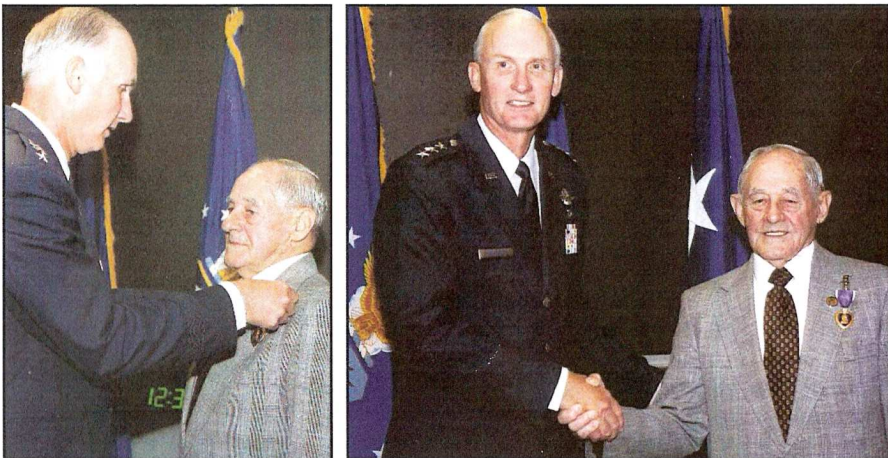
SPECIAL ORDER
G-156

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT, SECOND LIEUTENANT JOSEPH M. GOSSELIN, 015-14-1361, IS AWARDED THE PURPLE HEART FOR WOUNDS INCURRED ON 6 MARCH 1944, IN ACTION AGAINST AN ENEMY OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

JOSEPH M. MARCHINO II Colonel, USAF
Chief, SAF Awards and decorations Board
Table 3.1

DISTRIBUTION
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From left, Lt. Gen. Charles Clark II, Cathy Sengel, daughter; Clare Gosselin, daughter-in-law; Sadie Gosselin, granddaughter; Sam Gosselin, grandson; Joseph Gosselin, Max Gosselin, grandson; Stanley Gosselin, son; Thad Sengel, grandson.

