

Richard I Bong Veterans Historical Center

Finding aid for

Joseph Gomer Collection

Date range: 1941-2013

Bulk dates: 1942-1945

Finding Aid created by Autumn Wolter, 2022

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Creator: Joseph Gomer

Extent: 1 box (half of a linear foot)

Abstract: Includes military records, newspaper articles, magazine articles, student essays, certificates, college letters, CDs, plaques, and booklets that belonged to Joseph Gomer

Call number: Range B, Unit 2, Shelf A

Language: The material is in English

Acquisition Information: These records came to the Center from Scott Lyons in February 2018

Access Restrictions: The record group is open to research.

Copyright: Copyright belongs to the Richard I Bong Veterans Historical Center.

Cite as: [item], folder, box, Joseph Gomer papers, Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical Center.

History: Joseph Gomer was born on July 20, 1920 in Iowa Falls, Iowa. He grew up without experiencing the racism and segregation that impacted the rest of the country, though he was one of the few black people in his town. He graduated from Iowa Falls High School in 1938, being the only black person in his class. He attended Ellsworth Community College for two years, so that he could join the Civilian Pilot Training Program in 1940 to fulfill his dream of flying. With his flight experience, he joined the Army Air Corps as a Second Lieutenant in 1942. He was sent to Tuskegee, Alabama, being the only base that trains black pilots in the country at that time. He was among the first to be trained in Tuskegee, starting the group that would become known as the Tuskegee Airmen, or the 332nd Fighter Group. The Tuskegee Airmen consisted of the 99th, 100th, 301st, 202nd Fighter Squadrons, and later the 477th Composite Group. Gomer started in the 301st Fighter Squadron. Gomer earned his wings in May 1943, and was sent to the European front in Ramitrella, Italy. He flew the P-47 at first, but he would gain experience in numerous planes including the P-39 and P-51. The Tuskegee Airmen were mainly responsible for escorting bombers flying over Germany and ships around the European coasts, which they completed without losing any bomber or ship. He completed 68 sorties before being brought back to the States towards the end of the war.

He remained in the service, and witnessed the integration of segregated units into the rest of the military in 1948. He served in the States, learning how to fly a helicopter and receiving maintenance training. During the Korean War, he served in Japan as a Wing Technical Inspector with the 315th Air Division. He maintained mostly C-119s and C-47s. For the remainder of his service after the Korean War, Gomer served stateside as a maintenance officer rather than a pilot. Gomer served in the military for 22 years, retiring in 1964 as a Major.

He moved with his wife and two daughters to Minnesota when he was officially a civilian again. Gomer got a job in the United States Forestry Service as a local personnel officer. He worked there until retirement in 1985. For his service, he earned a Superior Services Award from the Secretary of Agriculture. In retirement, Gomer spoke at schools, events, and had interviews about his time as a Tuskegee Airmen, describing his fight against racism in America. Gomer passed away on October 10, 2013.

Scope and Content: The Joseph Gomer Collection consists of newspaper clipping, awards, student essays, mission summaries, and DVDS describing his time in the military, the honors he won for his service, and the legacy he left.

The *correspondence* series ranges from 1998-2010 and includes correspondence from Ellsworth Community College and Simpson College to Joseph Gomer in relation to awards and degrees he was to be presented with; from John D. Shaw about his artwork of the Tuskegee Airmen

The *newspaper clippings* series contains a wide range of articles on Joseph Gomer and the Tuskegee Airmen from across the Midwest

Subjects:

- World War II
- Army Air Forces
- European Theater of Operations
- Tuskegee Airmen
- P-50 Mustang
- American Racism
- Segregation

Record Box Series

BOX 1

Folder #	Description
1	Newspaper and Magazine Articles
2	Mission summaries and records (non-military)

- 3 College recognitions and Government proclamations, DVD of Simpson College award ceremony
- 4 Scholarship awards, statue information, and resumé
- 5 Tuskegee Airmen Obituaries

LOOSE CONTENTS

NAACP plaque in recognition of military service

Biographies of World War II pilots from the Northland

Booklet from John D. Shaw about the Tuskegee Airmen and his art

Stories of World War II veterans after their service was over

High School research project book on the Tuskegee Airmen

Compact Discs

“World of Aviation” interview of Joseph Gomer

TCB Entertainment Interview of Joseph Gomer

Northland's News Center segment on Joseph Gomer