Robert W. Gerlach

November 29, 1896 - February 17, 1993

Evelyn Bell Gerlach

May 17, 1901 - February 17, 1988

World War I
Early Life

Robert Gerlach was born on November 29, 1896 in the town of Rhine, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin to German immigrants Henry and Anna Gerlach. He had four siblings: sisters Elsie (1893) and Leta (ca. 1900), and brothers John (ca. 1906) and George (ca. 1909). Robert’s grandfather, William, emigrated from Germany in 1851. His arrival coincided with the first and smallest of four major waves of German immigration to Wisconsin in the nineteenth century. Most came from southwestern Germany as farmers who had suffered from crop blight or fled following political upheaval. William Gerlach was among the first of what became, by the 1890s, four million German Americans in Wisconsin or about 35 percent of the state’s population.

Military Service

When the United States entered the First World War, Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1917 that required all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one to register for the draft. To register, Robert reported his birth year as 1895, shown here in his draft registration card. He entered the Army on May 28, 1918 and trained at Camp Grant in Illinois until being released from service as a private on November 27, 1918.

Post Service Life

Gerlach’s wife, Evelyn Bell Rehm, was born on May 17, 1901 in Sheboygan to Herman – also a German immigrant – and Emma Rehm. Robert and Evelyn met around 1923 in Kohler, Wisconsin. Robert’s older sister, Elsie, threw a dinner party in December of that year, her brother and Evelyn attended. This event may have played a role in the formation of their relationship. By May 21, 1926, they had married, shown here in the local newspaper announcement. Nearly nine months later, on March 5, 1927, Evelyn gave birth to their
daughter, Joy Evelyn Gerlach. Robert worked as a photo engraver in Sheboygan to support his family.

By 1940, the Gerlachs lived in Sheboygan, where the average monthly rent in 1940 was thirty dollars. Robert worked forty hours a week as a laborer earning $1,400 that year. He earned above the average salary of $956 a year for men. Meanwhile, Evelyn took care of their daughter and their home.

In April 1942, shortly after the United States’ entry into World War II, the federal government instituted the Fourth Registration, known as the “Old Man’s Draft,” which measured the industrial capacity of the US male citizens between the ages of forty-five and sixty-four. Robert registered for this draft. He did not serve in the military in the Second World War, but he contributed to the war effort by donating money to the Sheboygan Citizens War Fund.

In their later lives, Robert and Evelyn lived in multiple states. In the early 1950s, they moved to Des Moines, Iowa, where they lived well into the early 1970s. In Des Moines, Robert continued his work as a photo engraver. They moved down to Citrus, Florida sometime in the 1980s where Evelyn died on February 17, 1988, at the age of eighty-six. They had been married for over sixty years. Two years later, in July 1990, their daughter Joy died at the age of sixty-three in Alachua, Florida. Both Evelyn and Joy, thanks to their father’s military service, were eligible to be buried at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. Following their deaths, Robert moved back to Wisconsin where he lived out the remainder of his days in Waupaca until his death on February 17, 1993 at the age of ninety-six. He was subsequently interred at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell on March 5, 1993, joining his wife and daughter.
Endnotes


3 “1900 United States Census.”


17 “Additional Donations to War Fund Listed,” The Sheboygan Press, July 8, 1942, page 5, Ancestry.com


**REGISTRATION CARD**—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERIAL NUMBER</th>
<th>1. NAME</th>
<th>ORDER NUMBER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U 2207</td>
<td>Robert</td>
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<td>William</td>
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<td>Gerlach</td>
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</tbody>
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2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)

1601 Alexander Ct, Sheboygan, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS

SAME

[Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word "Same"]

4. TELEPHONE

499.6

5. AGE IN YEARS

45

6. PLACE OF BIRTH

Sheboygan Co, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

(Town or city) (County) (State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS

Mrs. Evelyn Gerlach (wife), 1601 Alexander Ct, Sheboygan

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS

Kohler Co, Kohler, Wisconsin

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS

SAME

(Number and street or R.F.D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1
(Revised 4-1-42) (over)

16-21639-2 Robert Gerlach
(Registrant's signature)
REGISTRATION CARD

No. 32

Name in full: Robert Von Gerlach

Age in years: 21

Date of issue: November 29, 1895

Race or color: White

City, State: Chicago, Ill.

Date of birth: November 29, 1895

Color of hair: Brown

Eye color: Brown

Occupation: Laborer

Place of birth: Town, Rhine, Wis., U.S.A.

Height: 5'8

Color of eye: Brown

Marital status: Single

Address: 721, northwest 5th Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Signature: Robert Von Gerlach

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

City or county: Chicago

State: Illinois

Date of registration: June 8, 1917

Registrar: J. J. Thom

Veterans Legacy Program Curricular Materials: Robert Gerlach

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