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Levittown High Schools Graduate 600

By PAIGE MCATEE

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While the same old “pomp and circumstance” is performed each year, a new set of high school seniors walked on stage to receive their high school diplomas.

The students of Levittown School District moved their tassels to the right to turn over a new leaf into their newest life journey as young adults in two separate commencement ceremonies held at Hofstra University on Saturday, June 21.

General Douglas MacArthur High

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Craig, left, walks outside with Avi for the big reveal.

Levittown Loves Avi

By DANIEL OFFNER

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As nearly any Levittown resident who has wandered the aisles of Center Lane Stationary in the last ten years will tell you, anytime you walk in to the shop you can expect to be greeted with a warm welcome and a big smile from store owner Avi Ghandi.

“Avi is a great guy and we want to show we support him,” said Steve Shaughnessy, a Levittown resident who stops in at least once a week for lottery tickets and snacks.

When Celeste-Hamilton Dennis and her husband Craig eventually left their childhood homes in Long Island for Portland Ore., where they currently reside, they continued

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Veteran Spotlight: Airman Kosierowski

By MARLO JAPPEN

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For 92-year-old veteran Stan Kosierowski of Levittown, the medals and accolades from his service in World War II cannot compare to the lasting scars and memories of abuse he endured as a prisoner of war.

Staring at an old black-and-white photo, Kosierowski proudly pointed to one of ten uniformed men—a 19-year-old boy baring no semblance to his present appearance.

“I wanted to be in the Navy, really, because all my buddies I grew up with were in the Navy,” he said. “I guess I passed too many tests over there so they put me in the Air Force instead.”

Kosierowski said he was living



in Williamsburg, Brooklyn in 1943, when he was drafted into the military.

“I had a lot of fun when I joined the Air Force,” he said. “It was really my first time away from home.”

On his own for the first time, Kosierowski would join a group of boxers so he could “goof off” and avoid the chores that were assigned to other soldiers. After two months, he fought his first match.

Neither knew too much about boxing at the start, agreeing to take it easy on each other. But Kosierowski hit his opponent a little harder, and by the second round, threw a punch that knocked his opponent onto the floor. “We were buddies after that,” he said.

In 1944, Koseirowski and company flew overseas to Budapest, Hungary. A staff sergeant at the time, he sat behind two 50-caliber machine guns in the backseat of the plan,

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which his crew affectionately named "Hellzapoppin" after the Broadway musical.

Kosierowski and his crew destroyed railroads, which the Germans were using to transport supplies. As they turned around to go home, the Germans fired their ACAC guns.

"They put a hole in my wing," Kosierowski said. "You could jump through the wings, that's how big the hole was."

Opening the back door, Kosierowski was shot in the arm by a JU88 German fighter plane, before parachuting to the ground. After a rocky landing, Kosierowski and company were surrounded by the enemy.

Equipped with just a .45 caliber pistol, Kosierowski surrendered. "You got me," he said.

Nazi officers took Kosierowski to a location where he witnessed them brutally beat another American soldier. "Stop it," Kosierowski pleaded. "You got us. Don't keep hitting us anymore. We give up."

Interrogating him about the plane, the Nazi officer put a pistol to his head and demanded he speak. Kosierowski cursed at him without any reservation.

A trolley car then transported Kosierowski to a rat-ridden prison in Budapest, where he stayed in an 8x10 room with a window so high he couldn't reach it. One of the Nazi soldiers hit him across the back of the head with the butt of his rifle, knocking him out cold. He still feels pain in his back to this day.

The imprisoned Americans were eventually shipped to a camp in Berlin, where they slept in straw beds and had no food except for the scraps that the Germans threw at them like dogs.

Out of the 50 men who tried to escape, only one got back to England. The rest were captured and shot as a warning to the Americans to never escape. "We never gave up hope," Kosierowski said.

In Berlin, the POWs passed the time by keeping a vegetable gardens and playing chess. "We tried to exist over there," Kosierowski said. "We did our best to survive."

Because of a botched assassination attempt, one afternoon Hitler ordered the soldiers to shoot the captives as

revenge.

However, the commander of Kosierowski's camp, whom the men called Captain Smiling Jack, refused to take that order.

"He saved us," said Kosierowski. "Otherwise, we would've been dead."

Nine months passed, and he and the other prisoners of war were forced to march in the biting cold of winter. A couple of weeks passed, and the Germans put down their guns because they could not endure the weight.

Bruised and beaten, Kosierowski could not march any further. So, when the opportunity arose, he hid in a hut where he fell asleep.

"I didn't give a damn if the Germans would shoot me or not because that's how tired I was," he said.

When he woke up, medical help was sent to him. Kosierowski's toenails were blackened from frostbite. He lost each of his nails, and they did not grow back until two years later.

Arriving at a new camp, Kosierowski awoke one morning to silence... the Germans had disappeared. After 13 grueling months in captivity, Kosierowski was finally free thanks to the help of some fellow soldiers.

"I couldn't wait to get home," he said.

Kosierowski recalls that the first place he went was a restaurant where he ordered nothing but a bowl of green olives. "I loved green olives," he said. "I didn't have them for so many years."

Returning home, Kosierowski would attend Fordham University under the G.I. Bill, where he studied to become a pharmacist. "I figured I'd be like Louis Pasteur and make compounds that were revolutionary," he said.

In 1950, Kosierowski married and had two children. Seven years later he moved to East Meadow where he would become a member of the American Legion Post #1711 in Levittown. He now attends a monthly club at a VA where he talks with former prisoners of war.

"I don't hate the Germans or Japanese or anybody," Kosierowski said. "I wish everyone was peaceful. We don't need any wars. It was good to be back home with friends, relatives, and my own family and I wish everybody the same thing."

Call For Veterans

All Summer-long, The Levittown Tribune will look to profile a different veteran each week. If you would like to suggest a veteran to profile, please email us at levittown@antonnews.com.

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