

**WORLD WAR II-KOREAN WAR MEMORIES PROJECT**

**GIFT OF  
NORMAN A. BLACK  
MAJOR, USAF (RET)**

**Date Received: 10 August 2001**

**Date Acknowledged: 10 August 2001**

**GIFT: - His World War II story, "My Most Unforgettable Character - 1st Lt. Glen L. McSparran" - (483rd Bomb Group - Northern Italy - May 24, 1944)**

## MY MOST UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTER

1<sup>st</sup>. Lt. Glen L. McSparran

May 24, 1944

TARGET: Avisio Viaduct, Northern Italy  
Heavy Bomber B-17G #065--"Rigor Mortis"  
817<sup>th</sup> Bomb. Squad -483<sup>rd</sup> Bomb. Group.

Approaching the target we were attacked by a group of German ME-109s and FW-190s. We were flying in "coffin corner", the position most vulnerable to enemy fighters, lowest left side aircraft of a 28-plane group bombing formation of four 7-plane squadrons.

By the time friendly P-38s drove off the enemy we had sustained considerable damage to plane and crew. The belly-turret gunner was killed instantly when struck in the chest by a 20mm enemy cannon shell and was blown out of the turret. As wounded waist gunner Shortridge was shooting down an enemy fighter, the other waist gunner Stout suffered massive head wounds and lost consciousness. Radio-gunner LaFlamme, after taking shell fragments in the arm, shoulder and back, put out a fire in the radio room. McSparran knew the oxygen system was out aft of the bomb bay and that the hydraulic system was out. (No brakes). He did not know that one wing main spar had been broken and the other damaged, the right tire was flat and that the wing flaps were not going to operate properly on landing.

He got a heading home from the Navigator and for some time we had a P-38 escort sitting on our right wing. Because of extensive aircraft damage and injured aboard we were directed to Foggia Main Airport where hospital facilities were available.

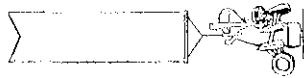
Without brakes, McSparran knew he would have to ground loop while avoiding other parked aircraft on landing. With help from co-pilot Millet, and engineer-gunner Jackson he corrected a tail wheel unlocking problem caused by the flat tire and executed a several-turn ground loop. Later inspection of #065 showed additional damage to bomb bay, nose, left and right wings, tail, waist and radio room.

Waist gunner Shortridge's shoulder wound was treated and radio-gunner LaFlamme spent nine days in the hospital. Waist gunner Stout died five days later from his injuries. The crew attended his burial service in Bari, Italy.

On July 18, 1944, as 14 more aircraft of this B-17 Heavy Bomber group were being shot down on a mission to Memmingen, Germany, the Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Wing, 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force, General Lawrence, was decorating Sgts Shortridge and LaFlamme with Silver Stars and Lt. Glen L. McSparran with the Distinguished Flying Cross for his outstanding performance in returning a seriously damaged and crippled plane to home base and effecting a superb landing without further injury to crew or damage to aircraft and or ground facilities. He retired with the rank of Colonel after serving more than thirty years with the Air Force.

I was the Bombardier on "Rigor Mortis" that day and witnessed the actions of my most unforgettable character who calmly performed his duties of aircraft commander.

NORMAN A. BLACK  
Maj. USAF (Ret.)



2045 Vera Lane  
Escondido, CA. 92026-1634

Feb. 7, 1999

The American Legion Magazine  
700 N. Pennsylvania Street  
P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, IN. 46206  
Personal Memories

Sirs:

The enclosed is my Personal Memory letter for your consideration. It is only one day in the life of a heavy bomber crew member during his WWII tour of duty in the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Italy.

The "character" I wrote about probably would consider this mission just another day of doing his job and the recounting of it "much ado about nothing".

I have enclosed pictures and material to be used at your discretion. They, or the mission account, whether or not selected, need not be returned.

The Legion magazine is much appreciated here, by me and my family. Particularly the "letter" section.

Very truly yours,

NORMAN A. BLACK

**Bland, Joellen**

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**From:** Norm Black [jnblack@surfside.net]

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 08, 2001 2:38 PM

**To:** bland

**Subject:** G. C. Marshall Found. WWII story

Have short story re WWII B-17 bombing mission out of 15th AF in Italy, 1944. Submitted to American Legion Mag., rejected for lack of space earlier. Norm Black TROA Mem. #1342180

8/10/01

**Bland, Joellen**

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**From:** Bland, Joellen  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 09, 2001 12:06 PM  
**To:** 'Norm Black'  
**Subject:** RE: G. C. Marshall Found. WWII story

Mr. Black - I would be very interested in seeing your story for our Memories Project. If you would like additional information about the project or the George C. Marshall Foundation, please give me your mailing address and I will forward same to you promptly. Thank you for contacting us. - Joellen Bland, Director, World War II-Korean War Memories Project

8/10/01

**Bland, Joellen**

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**From:** Norm Black [jnblack@surfside.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 09, 2001 7:22 PM  
**To:** Bland, Joellen  
**Subject:** Re: G. C. Marshall Found. WWII story

Ms. Bland---Attached is a copy of my letter to American Legion Magazine as cover to a bombing mission story (also attached).

As I mentioned earlier, A/L Mag did not publish for lack of space but I couldn't help but notice that their "regret" letter was dated April 24, 1999, exactly 55 years later, to the day.

I wish you much success with the "Memories" project. Our WWII 483rd Bomb Group Assn. has arranged for a permanent site for our archives at Warner Robins Air Base in Georgia where you may find dozens of "memories" compiled by our late archivist, Jacob Grimm who sadly, passed away recently.

My present address (different than in attachment) is: 13311 Del Monte Drive, Seal Beach, CA. 90740-4529

Norman A. Black

Maj. USAF (Ret.)

10 August 2001

Major Norman A. Black USAF (Ret)  
13311 Del Monte Drive  
Seal Beach, California 90740-4529

Dear Major Black:

I am pleased to acknowledge receipt by e-mail of your World War II story, "My Most Unforgettable Character - 1st Lt. Glen L. McSparran," which will be entered into our World War II-Korean War Memories Project files.

Your story is a valuable addition to our project, and we appreciate your willingness to send it to us.

Would you please complete the enclosed forms and return them to me for inclusion in your file?

Thank you very much for sharing your personal memories with us for the benefit of future generations through the Marshall Foundation Research Center.

Sincerely,

Joellen K. Bland (Mrs.)  
Director, Memories Project  
540-463-7103, Ext. 235  
blandjk@vmi.edu

cc: Albert J. Beveridge, III, President

GEORGE C. MARSHALL FOUNDATION "MEMORIES PROJECT"

DONOR INFORMATION

(Please Attach to the "Memories" You Send Us)

Name NORMAN A. BLACK Telephone (562) 493-5652  
Address 13311 Del Monte Dr. 32-H E-Mail nblack@surfside.net  
Seal Beach CA 90740-4529 Gender M

Veteran of WW II  Korea \_\_\_\_\_ Civilian Service \_\_\_\_\_  
Army \_\_\_\_\_ Navy \_\_\_\_\_ Marine Corps \_\_\_\_\_ Air Corps/Force  Coast Guard \_\_\_\_\_  
Service/Civilian Branch \_\_\_\_\_

WWII Theater(s) of Operation ETO ITALY 483<sup>rd</sup> B/G (H)

Description of "Memories" Given: (Story, Diary, Letters, Photographs, Etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Story - Pilot G.L. McSPARRAN, ITALY, MAY 1944  
Told by N.A. Black - Bombardier on that flight

Date and Place of Birth 11 JUNE 1919

Education Level upon Service Entry H/S Grad.

Occupation Before Service FINISHER - WOOLEN MILL

Service Starting Date 5 JAN. 1942 Discharge Date 2 MAR. 1968 (AFRES.)

Highest Rank Achieved Major

Units Served With & Dates: 483<sup>rd</sup> Bomb. Gp (H) 1944  
WING STAFF MAINT. OFF. AFRESERVE

Decorations/Honors AIR MEDAL w/CLUSTERS - PRES. UNIT CIT. (2)

Occupation After Service AFRESERVE - Newspaper publish.

Living Service Buddies, whom we might contact: (Name, Address, Telephone)  
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Living Relative(s), whom we might contact: (Name, Address, Telephone)  
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn about the Marshall Foundation's World War II-Korean War  
Memories Project? TROA

(See Reverse Side)