

The Story of Joseph Marshall McPhie

My Great-Grandfather, Joseph McPhie, has made a significant impact on my life through his demonstration of selfless service and civic responsibility. I am a bit of a history buff, so when I learned that he served as a bombardier in World War II, I became fascinated with learning his story. To do so, I sat down with my grandparents and asked them to share their favorite stories of him. They had many anecdotes about his surprise gifts and constant pranks. I read newspaper clippings of his stories in the war and other documents he had left behind. To discover the context behind his service, I read several books and watched documentaries on World War II. To learn more, I researched his life on FamilySearch and I made a number of contributions to his family tree. Reading the obituaries and seeing pictures of his service led me to these unique stories that show his utter bravery and valor.

Joseph Marshall McPhie was born September 28th, 1921 in Salt Lake City, Utah to his father, Daniel Murchie McPhie, the son of Scottish immigrants, who worked as a plasterer. Dan's family worked long and backbreaking hours in the coal mines and railroads for very little pay and no education. After his mother died when he was young, Daniel McPhie ran away from home, Ogden Utah, to Salt Lake City, and enlisted in the Navy at just fifteen years old. He later married his wife Mary Brown Marshall and had six children, one of them Joseph McPhie. As a teenager, Joseph McPhie learned to play the bagpipes, playing in the Salt Lake City Pipe Band. During a competition in San Francisco, he won Best-Dressed Scot! When World War II broke out, Joseph joined the Air Force and became a bombardier. He flew a B17 909 in the Frankfurt and Ludwigshafen Bombing runs over Central Europe in 1944 as a member of the 323rd bomber squadron. These runs were designed to target specific oil refineries managed by the Germans. During one of the runs he was flying in formation, approaching heavy anti-aircraft fire, and

watched as each plane in front of him got hit, burst into flames, and crashed to the ground. In that moment, he could have pulled out of formation and turned back but instead, he braced himself for impact and pushed on. As he approached that spot, miraculously, the guns went silent right before they reached him. He carried on, shaken, but managed to deliver his payload and return safely to base. He never knew why the anti-aircraft attack stopped, but he considered it a gift and a blessing. That was not his only miracle. Later he was flying over enemy territory when he heard a loud bang and looked down. Right between his legs was an explosive projectile that had burst through the floor of his aircraft and lodged in a board right below the seat. It had gone between his legs and missed him by millimeters. His bravery to do his duty and fly into gunfire for his country inspires me today to keep striving for the right thing even when it's hard. He went on to fly twenty-eight combat missions and received many honors, including the Distinguished Flying Cross. When World War II finally ended, Joseph McPhie was stationed in Basingbourne, England, and cheerfully celebrated with a large crowd in the Picadilly Circus. He continued to serve in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, retiring as a full Colonel after thirty-two years. He married Ruther Buehner in 1945—a couple of months before World War II officially came to a close on the Eastern Front—and had three children, one of them my grandfather. His service took him into life-threatening situations and away from his wife and children for months and years at a time but he was able to get a college degree, the first in his family. As a veteran, he did not stop serving and became an active community member, serving for fifteen years in missionary work for his church in places such as Scotland, Virginia, and Australia. One of my great-grandfather's greatest joys was playing the bagpipes, in the Utah State Band and for funerals and community events.

Joseph Marshall McPhie's legacy represents the courage and resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity and an unwavering dedication to the ideals of liberty and independence. He serves as a powerful reminder to me that the strength of a nation lies not merely in its military prowess but in the determination of its people. His selfless sacrifices motivate me to take on more of today's challenges as my responsibility. I want to use my skills and resources wisely to contribute to the well-being of others. I play the organ for my church services and will serve a mission in Curitiba, Brazil, speaking Portuguese to share my faith and help people in need. I perform the violin and piano at nursing homes, hoping to uplift, inspire, invigorate, and comfort. I hope that developing these musical skills will help me serve others for many years to come. I have also learned the bagpipes and play at the Highland Games and International Fair, following in his footsteps. I even won 3rd place in the Bagpipe Solo Competition! When I wear the kilt, jacket, bonnet, sporran, and sgian-dubh while playing the bagpipes, I feel proud that I am carrying his legacy forward—a bagpipe-playing well-dressed Scot. The name McPhie can be translated to "son of the people of peace." Though my great-grandfather served in many wars, he was fighting for peace and for the freedom that men like him won for us. I can never be grateful enough.