

MARK SLOAN

US ARMY 1950-1954



Mark Sloan was born in 16-FEB 1932 at Michael Reese Hospital (Closed in 2009) on the west side of Chicago. Mark was an orphan. Mark said, "Being an orphan, I didn't have any home life. I went from orphanage to home, orphanage, to home, orphanage to home. That's how I spent my first eighteen years." When asked, "What made you go into the Army" Mark said, "You're going to die laughing at this. I had gotten in a little trouble. I had just turned eighteen and I was standing in front of a judge. He said, 'I'm going to give you a choice young man.' I said, 'yeah? I didn't say sir, I said yeah.' He said, 'I'll send you to jail for three years, or you'll join the Army.' I said, 'I'll join the Army.' So, I joined the Army. But it was the best thing in the world that happened to me. Joining the Army was an easy choice for me."

From Occupation Army to War

After basic and advanced training, Mark was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division in the Signal Corps. The 25th was performing occupation duty in Japan near the city of Osaka until 1950, when the division was called to fight its second war. The Korean War was fought from 25-JUN 1950 to 27-JUL 1953 and the 25th was called into action and deployed to Korea in July 1950. Among them was private Mark Sloan. Mark was deployed in Korea from nearly start to finish serving in the Signal Corps. He would serve four years in the Army, three of the years in Korea. "I was Signal Corps but since I was low man on the totem pole, I drove a Jeep a lot. Sometimes in the area I was in, whether it was platoon company, or division level, I saw action. I wasn't supposed to in the Signal Corps, but I ended up seeing action."

Tropic Lightning Movements

The 25th was once commanded by General Douglas MacArthur and was nicknamed Tropic Lightning. At that time, the South Korean forces, as well as the US 24th Infantry Division, were falling back toward Pusan to form a defensive perimeter around the city and its essential port facilities. Elements of the division were placed in blocking positions in the Hwanggan-Sangju-Hamchang area, where they were heavily engaged beginning on 24 July. Despite a determined defense, the North Korean advance continued and the 25th was forced to pull back as the Pusan perimeter line solidified.

On 4 August the division was placed on the extreme left of the UN line, guarding the southern approaches to Pusan in the vicinity of Masan. During August and early September, the division repulsed many intense enemy assaults, providing time to build up UN forces in the perimeter.

On 16 September Eighth Army began an offensive to break out of the Pusan perimeter. On 17-SEP 1950, General MacArthur was extremely urgent in his request for the early capture of Kimpo airfield. Once it was secured, it would allow the Fifth Air Force to bring fighters and bombers to fly from South Korea, rather than from Japan to target North Korea targets. After initially slow progress, the 25th Division advanced and captured Chinju on 25 September. The Kimpo airfield was the largest and most important in South Korea. Mark was once at Kimpo Air Base along with the 25th.

Continuing the advance, the division began moving northwest, capturing Kunsan, on the west coast of Korea, on 30 September. The UN front then stretched from coast to coast across the Korean peninsula. In October, as Eighth Army advanced up the peninsula, the 25th Division was employed in mopping-up operations to the rear. The division provided security for the transportation network and cleared out enemy troops bypassed in the rapid advance. Early in November the 25th Division was ordered north and assembled along the 38th Parallel with headquarters at Kaesong. There the 25th continued its campaign against bypassed enemy elements.

On 19 November the 25th Division moved north again, this time back into the front line north of P'yongyang near Anju. The division launched an offensive on 24 November, advancing against increasing resistance for two days. Mark and the 25th division had made their way all the way up to Manchuria (China) and the Yalu River. Mark said, "We were getting ready to go into Manchuria and President Truman and McArthur had a disagreement and we ended back down to the 38th Parallel." Most of Korea had been liberated when Chinese forces joined the fighting in November 1950, forcing the 25th Infantry Division and allied forces south once again.

The Chinese Communists, however, had launched their first major offensive and smashed through the Eighth Army front to the right of the 25th Division, forcing the entire UN line to withdraw.

The 25th division began a series of delaying actions that carried it back to Kaesong by 8 December and behind the Imjin River by the 14th. A Communist attack on New Year's Day 1951 broke through the ROK 1st Division on the right flank of the 25th Division, making the 25th's positions untenable. A new defensive line was established in the vicinity of Ch'onan early in January, after the division fought rearguard actions to allow the evacuation of Seoul.

On 25 January UN forces returned to the offensive. The 25th Division reached the Han River to the southeast of Seoul on 19-20 February. Besides, fighting the North Koreans and the Chinese, the U.S. troops were fighting frigid conditions. When asked if he was cold, Mark laughed and said, "Let's put it this way, the winter uniforms were in the Philippines, and we had the summer uniforms in Korea. Literally, that's what happened to us." The interviewer commented, "That's the Army." Mark said, "Yeah, I wasn't enjoying the Army at the time. I carried socks under each armpit. Tried to change socks on a daily basis, but sometimes you couldn't." The intensely cold and bitter weather made difficult fighting even more fierce. Temperatures dropped to -54° F. One survivor of the battle designed a bumper sticker that read: "Once Upon a Time Hell Froze Over. We Were There."

On 7 March the 25th attacked across the Han and headed north, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. By the end of March, the 25th Division held a line above the Hant'an River south of Ch'orwon, about 35 miles northeast of Seoul. On 22 April the Chinese launched another offensive, again pushing the UN forces back. The 25th Division fell back through successive blocking positions to a line about five miles northeast of Seoul. There the division prepared for another UN offensive, which was launched on 20-MAY 1951. The 25th progressed through a series of planned phase lines, crossed the 38th Parallel, and captured the "Iron Triangle" town of Kumhwa by the middle of June. On 21 June the 25th Division was relieved by the 3rd Infantry Division and placed in reserve near Uijongbu, where it prepared positions along a secondary defensive line and conducted training and rear area security missions.

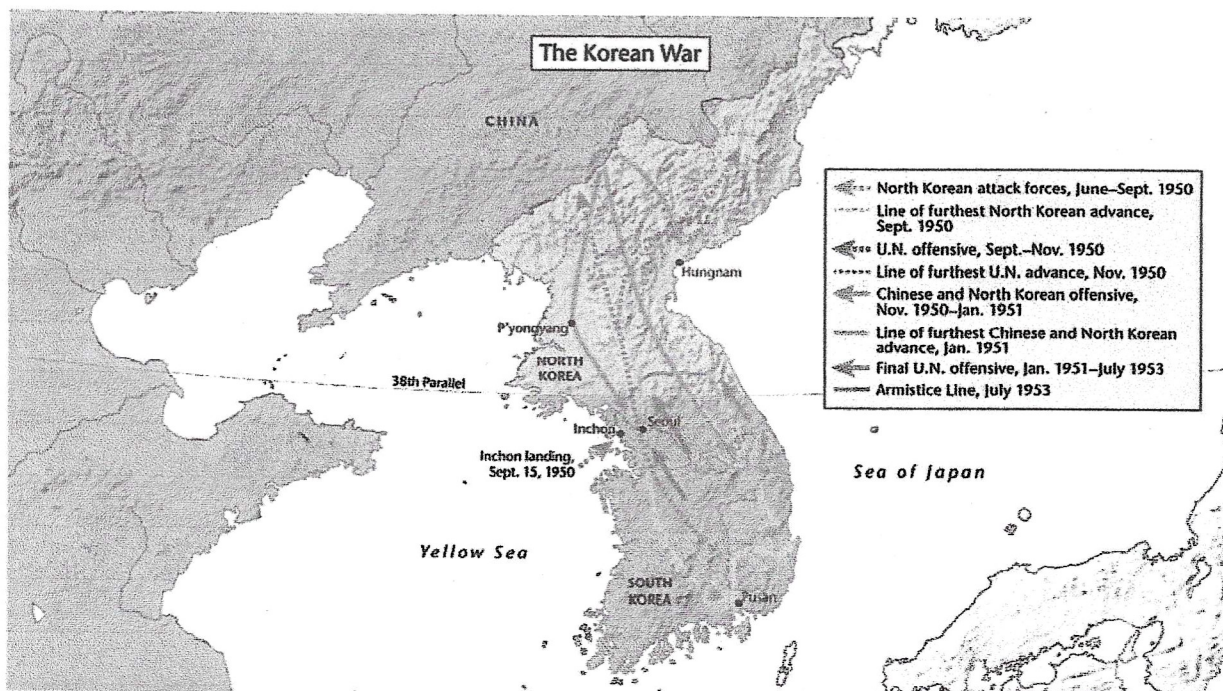
When armistice negotiations began on 10-JUL 1951, the war entered a new stage. The lines became static, with limited objective attacks and probing tank-infantry patrols replacing sweeping offensives. In mid-July the 25th Division returned to the front line, and by the end of the month was in its previous positions in the Ch'orwon-Kumhwa area. The division occupied these positions until mid-December, conducting frequent patrols and several company-sized raids to destroy enemy bunkers. The division also improved its own defensive positions. Artillery bombardments of enemy lines and ambushes of enemy patrols were also common activities.

In mid-December the 2nd Infantry Division relieved the 25th, which then moved into reserve near Kapyong. There the division was engaged in training activities and in maintaining the secondary defensive line. Divisional elements were also provided for front line duties and rear area security missions as needed. On 23-FEB 1952 the 25th Division returned to the front line in the center of the X Corps sector near Mundung-ni

northeast of the Hwach'on Reservoir. The division resumed the front-line routine of patrols, ambushes, artillery exchanges, and bunker maintenance. The division also secured and defended forward outposts beyond the main line of resistance.

On 21-OCT 1952 the 25th Division was relieved by the 40th Infantry Division and returned to reserve positions near Kapyong. Following a brief training period, the 25th was recommitted to the front in the IX Corps sector on 12 November, returning to its old section of the line around Kumhwa. In December boundary adjustments moved the division's zone slightly westward. The division continued aggressive patrolling and ambush operations until the end of January 1953 when it was relieved by the 3d Infantry Division. The 25th Division command post was set up at Yongp'yong and the division began intensive training. Divisional elements, particularly artillery and armor, continued to provide support to front line organizations.

On 5-MAY 1953 the 25th Division returned to the line, this time on the extreme left of the UN front near Munsan-ni. The division sector extended from the Kimpo peninsula northwest of Seoul to an area near Korangp'o-ri above the Imjin River. In the last days of May an enemy assault four battalions strong struck the right of the division sector. Outposts in the area changed hands several times during two costly days of battle, until the division was ordered to relinquish the forward hills to avoid further casualties. On 8 July the 25th was relieved by the 1st Marine Division and went into reserve, where it remained when the armistice became effective on 27-JUL 1953.



Mark fought at the Chosin Reservoir, Pusan, and other smaller hill battles. His unit attacked all the way to the Manchurian (China) border and Yalu River. Mark was fortunate. Most of the men in Charlie Company were gone. He was "slightly wounded" five times. "And because of that, that Purple Heart of mine had a Silver Star. I got hit five times." When the interviewer commented, "I've never heard of that (hit five times)." Mark commented, "There were a lot of us. When you got hurt, you went to the MASH unit (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital), and they put a notation on your record. That's how I got five. My back, my shoulders, my arms, all upper body stuff (wounds). The trouble is, I always got hit when the action was over. Never before! I always got ticked off with that." After one trip to the MASH unit, a doctor asked him, "Weren't you here about two months ago?" "I said, 'Well fix me up, you did a lousy job.' He laughed, sewed me up, and I went back to my outfit. The worst time was when there was only a half dozen of us left. And they made me a sergeant temporarily to go down and get my who new outfit, 275 men at Pusan."

15¢ Coffee

"We're down in Pusan, we had our lunch, and they're unloading the freighters that had our outfit (Replacements) on it. The Gray Ladies (Red Cross) were there charging fifteen cents for a cup of coffee. The guy told me about it cause (sic) I was up having coffee at the mess unit and I came down and I asked one of the Gray Ladies, 'Who is the one in charge of you? She pointed to a lady with grey hair. Here I was, a young punk, wearing sergeant stripes temporarily and I said, 'I understand you are charging fifteen cents for a cup of coffee.' She said, 'Yes we always do.' I said, 'You know there is a mess hall at the top of the hill there?' She said, it doesn't make any difference.' I said, 'Lady, stop serving now.' She said, 'who are you?' I said, 'I am the man in charge of these guys that came off the ship. Either you stop now, or I'll take all the coffee and dump it in the water.' She looked at me and said, 'I'll tell your commanding officer.' I said, 'Be my guest.' I lined up the men, made them come to attention, marched them up the hill and said, there's breakfast, you got thirty minutes and we're on our way. And while I'm there having a third cup of coffee, one of the survivors along with me, said, 'Hey sarge, there's an officer looking for ya'. I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'That captain over there wants to talk to you.' 'Oops!' I said, 'Here's where I get busted guys!' So I went up, gave him my name, rank and serial number, he told me what the Gray Lady said. I said, 'She's right sir.' He said, 'Why?' I said, 'there is six of us left from my outfit. Only six. The guys I took up there are my new outfit. Now if you want to court-martial me, be my guest. I was still ticked! That coffee shouldn't cost nothing!' He said, 'How long you guys been up in the front?' I said, 'A year and a half and it's the first break we've had.' He said, 'What do you need?' I said, 'it's the first time we had a relief.' He said, 'Come back and get a new

outfit.' He said, 'All right sergeant, I'll tell you what I'll do. This never happened. You go back to your outfit and get 'em out of here.' I said, 'Yes sir,' saluted, back up to the hill, got 'em all together, started to march away. As we were marching away, this captain was chewing out that Gray Lady! Thank you, sir! Yes indeed! I was a happy, happy man about that. He was chewing out that Gray Lady for charging us money."

Points

"I got called into my commanding officer. They had started the point system to send guys home. The commanding officer had me sit down and said, 'How long you been here?' I said, 'I don't know, two, three years maybe longer. He said, 'You know how many points you have?' I said, 'No I never paid any attention.' He said, 'You got a hundred and fifty-seven points! What are you doing here?' I said, 'So I got a hundred and fifty-seven points, so what, you still need me.' He said, 'No I don't.' I said, 'What?' He said, 'You got four times more than any guy in this outfit.' I said, 'So?' he said, 'I'm sending you home.' I said, 'What? I'll reup and I can stay.' He said, 'You're going home. Get your laundry together, you've got twenty-four hours, pack up your stuff, you are leaving.' And I said, 'Really?' And he looked at me and said, 'Yeah, you're leaving.' And I left Korea. I came back to the states, got processed, got discharged.

Mark attained the rank of Staff Sergeant in the Army. Mark explained, "The sergeant in the Army was temporary. The reason it was temporary is my company (Charlie) got shot up and there was (sic) only six of us that survived the fighting."

Mark was recognized by the Army as a hero. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal after he rescued three soldiers who were stranded in a mine field with a flat tire. He retraced their Jeep tracks and retrieved each one individually, delivering them all to safety. *(Editor's note: The Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM) is a mid-level award that is granted for consistent acts of heroism or meritorious service.)* Mark was also awarded the Soldiers Commendation Medal, another mid-level United States military decoration presented for sustained acts of heroism or meritorious service. Mark Sloan called the Army the best thing that ever happened to him. Mark, the orphan was the west side of Chicago, became a hero. We owe him a debt of gratitude.



Staff Sergeant Mark Sloan earned the following awards:

- Soldiers Commendation Medal
- Army Commendation Medal
- Purple Heart w/Silver Star
(5 Purple Hearts)
- Good Conduct Medal
- National Defense Service Medal
- Army of Occupation Service Medal
- Korean Service Medal
- United Nations Service Medal
- Combat Infantry Medal

Marksmanship Medals

- Expert
- Bayonet
- Rifle
- Carbine
- Machine Gun
- Tank weapons
- Machine Rifle
- Pistol
- Hand Grenade

Air Force Blues

After his time in the Army, Mark later opted to join the Air Force. "I had to join the Air Force. My buddy and I were in strip city LA. I had a beer, he had a beer, and this guy put his hand on my leg, and I turned around and beat the crap out him. No queer (sic) messes with me. I was six foot tall, weighed 240 pounds at the time. After hitting him a few times, my buddy said, 'Let's get out of here, the MP's are coming.' I said, 'Okay.' I broke three ribs and a jaw. He said, 'You gotta get outta here (sic). You better join the service again because they are looking for ya'. I joined the Air Force because I didn't want to go back into combat again. That was it! That's all there was to it!"

In the Air Force, Mark served as a clerk in the office. The interviewer said, "That sounds a lot easier than Korea, Mark said, "I got tired of being shot at. I didn't have to carry a weapon either." Mark was never deployed in the Air Force, staying stateside. He was sent to Charleston South Carolina and served there until leaving the Air Force. He came up (to St. Louis) a couple of times for school. There was nothing going on at the time. "No wars, no police actions, none of that junk was going on. All peace time stuff." Mark said, "I was a lot more comfortable in the Air Force and when I was going to school in St. Louis was when I met my wife.

A Mailbox on Lindell

"I met Elizabeth at a mailbox on Lindell Avenue in the city (St. Louis). We started talking, and it was dinner time, about six o'clock. I said, 'I was just going to dinner. Want to join

me for dinner?' So we went to a place called Two Cents Plain which is now up in Clayton across from the hospital (*Editor's note: Jack Carl's 2¢ Plain was a thriving delicatessen that began in Gaslight Square where it provided a place for casual meals amid music clubs and high-end restaurants*) and that's where we had our first dinner. Elizabeth had an eleven-year-old daughter at the time. I told her, 'whenever you are ready, I'd be happy to meet her.' A few months later we got married, in 1955. I later legally adopted her daughter. A few months after that, we found a place out in University City. And from there, we moved to Clayton. We stayed out in Clayton for 2-3 years and then we found this place in St. Peters. So, I took my discharge and came back up here." Mark attained the rank of Airman First Class in the Air Force.

Life in Saint Peters

Mark said, there were five display homes in the Spencer Creek subdivision in Saint Peters. Their home was the first built in the subdivision in 1975. Mike showed the museum interviewer the plaque he was awarded by the City of St. Peters and Alderwoman Terri Violet, ward three. She read the proclamation out loud. Mike said, "You know what happened to me? They gave me that plaque and I started crying. I cried the whole time she read that to the audience. And I didn't think about at the time cause I'm still in my chair crying, and all of a sudden people started crowding around me shaking my hand. which surprised the daylights out of me because I didn't figure on something like that happening. I guess I met about 12-15 people. Thanking me for my service. All I was thinking, I was just doing what I was supposed to do. I didn't think nothing of it."

My wife used to tell me...all those years I was turned down by the veteran's organization (American Legion and veterans of Foreign Wars), I still resented it. Even to this day! The wife said, 'will you ever drop the resentment?' I said, 'No and I'll never join them either. If that's the way they want to play, it's fine by me.' And then all of a sudden this happened. The City wanted to talk to me. I even had the Chief of Police here! I'm still miffed at the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars. They would not let Korean War Veterans join because it was a "Police Action."

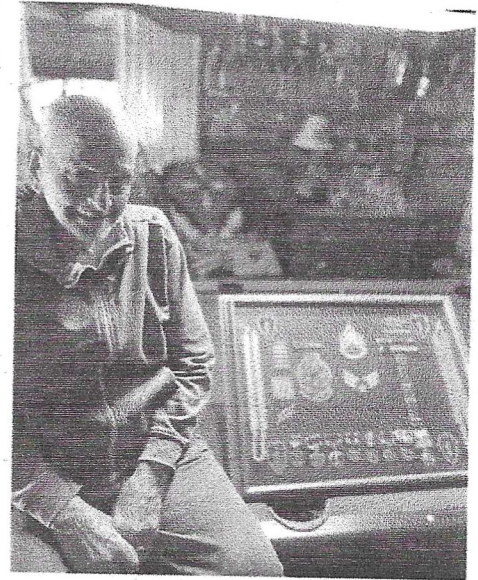
Retirement

Mark and came back to St. Louis and his home in St. Peters and has lived there more than 58 years. After his service, he went to work for a chemical company out of Memphis. "When I reached 65, Elizabeth said, 'Are you going to stay with them?' I said, 'No, time for us.' She said, 'It's always been us.' I temporarily when to work for Wal-Mart, busted up my shoulder, and that was the end of it. I was with them for about twelve years."

Losing the Love of His Life

Mark lost his wife Elizabeth "Liz" on 16-DEC 2020. He lost his adopted daughter Sarah before that. Liz had been a surgical nurse at Mercy Hospital and also an acclaimed painter. They were married for sixty years, and since they had no family left, they dined at Golden Corral on the holidays and anniversaries. Liz always had a way of calming Mark down. Mark said, "Her kiss and a hug calmed me down." Today, Mark says, "When I'm walking around the house, I find I'm talking to her. That was one of the things she told me might happen."

"On my birthday, I go the steakhouse up here on Spencer. On her birthday, I go up to the steakhouse again. And then on our anniversary, which will be sixty years, I go up to the steakhouse again. And the reason for it is, we both liked it, we both enjoyed it, we got good meals there, so that's how we celebrated our birthdays and anniversaries." When Mark leaves to run errands such as in the grocery store, he remembers how much he misses walking along with Elizabeth. "Either her hand was on my arm, or we're holding hands. That I really miss. Because we were that close. All we needed was to be together. That was the best part. I still miss her! I never had that kind of attention. I was a loner. I think they make us better men."



Mark's Honor Flight

Mark went on an Honor Flight (*Editor's note: Mark called this Heavenly for Soldiers*) and they visited the Korean War Memorial in Washington. He teared up looking at the memorial. Today, he cannot remember the names of his friends lost in Korea. But the statues at the memorial all look like his friends. Mark said that he didn't have close friends in Korea because he drove around in a Jeep a lot by himself. When he went on the Honor Flight, there were people lining the path and a family had signs with his name on it. There were four other Korean War Era veterans on the trip, but he was the only combat veteran in the group. "When I saw the statues of the Korean Veterans (Korean War Memorial in Washington D.C), I started crying. I spent a half hour crying. and I couldn't help myself. The guy who was with me was the head of this Honor Flight thing for Soldiers said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I can't take this. I said, the expressions on those faces. They're exactly like mine and everybody else's that were there.' As we were leaving, they have this black marble as you leave the memorial, and after 75 years, 'That sergeant so and so was with us for three days, that's lieutenant so and so, he was with us a couple of hours.

I named about eight or ten guys that I remembered from over 70 years ago. Their name, their rank, and how long they were with us. And you know what, I can't remember their names anymore. I can't remember the names of the guys. the facial expressions were like the guys I knew." The interviewer asked Mark, "Did that make it easier when you didn't know all the guys that were killed?" He said, "Maybe." The interviewer said, "You lost a lot of friends." Mark said, "I didn't have any friends. I was on a Jeep all the time driving between companies so what little friends I had was anybody I transported up to a company or brought back to a company. That was it! All I know it took me twenty years to talk about it with my wife. I wouldn't talk about it. She finally got me to talk about it. We were at Pusan after the initial retreat where they slaughtered everybody and there wasn't many of us left. There was also a couple of hill actions, I don't remember the names."

Greeting Honor Flight Participants

"I was at the airport when the veterans were coming back from one of the Honor Flights. I was standing by the guy who is in charge of the outfit (Honor Flight). He said his uncle was in the Air Force as an F-86 pilot in Korea. I said, 'If you get a chance, I'd like to say thank you.' He said, 'How come?' I said, 'I was in some of the action they got called in or I called it in myself being in the Signal Corps.' So, while I was saying hi to the six or seven veterans there, I got a tap on the shoulder, and I turned around and it was his uncle. We spent about ten minutes there. I never called him in personally, but I did make several phone calls to the jets as to where the enemy was. I said, 'go ahead and bomb the hell out of them because I don't want to get my butt shot off when I go in there.'"

Well Deserved Recognition

"My wife said to me before she passed, 'What are you going to do when I'm gone?' I said, 'eat and look at the tube. Maybe I'll join a veterans committee.' She said, 'I think you should.' And that's what I did. I didn't bother all these years. I was too pissed off at the two veterans' groups. it still sticks in my craw. And the way they said it, you were in a Police action. Excuse me buddy, you try to survive three years (in a Police action)! I came back from it and the wife knew I was hot! I told Elizabeth, 'you know I was in a Police action, not a war?' She said, 'Say no more.' She knew I was hot." When asked, "it didn't feel a whole lot different than a war did it?" Mark said, "No!" When asked, "Do you think the public knows much about Korea and the war?" Mark said, "They don't know crap about Korea."

Mark continued, "Elizabeth was not alive to see all this stuff coming in now (Awards, Proclamations, and Recognition). I don't go to the veteran organizations. I go to the one that goes to the airport when they call me. I found out the City of St. Peters has this

Veterans thing (Veterans Commission) so I went to that in March of last year (2022). So, I joined the St. Peters Veterans Commission. And now, everybody is gone but me. And I don't know why! Elizabeth felt I had something more to say. I walk around our house and am surrounded by memories. Sometimes I look around the room and have a flash of memory." Mark and Elizabeth's hobby was antiques. Each room in their home is adorned with antiques. Mark says, "I remember where we got this, or that. Elizabeth was the closest thing to family I ever had."

When the interviewer offered to pick him up and bring him to the museum, Mark said, "I wish you would. Elizabeth felt I still had things to do."

On 7-NOV 2022 Mark Sloan was awarded a Certificate of Recognition by his Alderwoman Terri Violet of Ward 3.

Certificate of Recognition

WHEREAS, Marvin (Mark) Jack Sloan was born an orphan in 1932; and

WHEREAS, Mark opted to join the United States Army and served in the 25th Infantry Division during the Korean War; and

WHEREAS, the 25th Infantry Division, nicknamed "Tropic Lightning", conducted military operation primarily in the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Mark during his three years in Korea Mark was hit five times earning him five Purple Heart medals; and

WHEREAS, Mark was also served the Army Commendation Medal after he rescued three soldiers who were stranded in a mine field with a flat tire by retracing their Jeep tracks retrieving each one individually, and delivering them all to safety; and

WHEREAS, after serving in the U.S. Army, Mark joined the U.S. Air Force and served for 3.5 years when he met his future wife Elizabeth on Lindell Avenue in St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, longtime resident of St. Peters, Mark Sloan has dedicated his life to our country and community by serving in both the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force and has demonstrated in so many ways his deep love for his country.

NOW THEREFORE, on behalf of city of St. Peters, Mayor Len Pagano, and Aldermen John "Rocky" Reitmeyer, Joyce Townsend, Dr. Gregg Satorious, Judy Bateman, Melissa Reimer, Terri Violet, Patrick Barclay and Nick Trupiano do hereby recognize

Marvin "Mark" Sloan

We owe Mark a debt of gratitude for his passion, dedication and sacrifices he has made in order for to continue to live in freedom.

Signed,

Len Pagano, Mayor