Police Station Dedication Speech - 10-6-2026 – Steven McGraw

My family and I are honored and humbled to be here representing Uncle Frank.

Being here feels a bit surreal. 54 years ago, my mom, my sister, Sue, my brothers, Terry, Emmett, Kevin and I walked through the lobby doors. I went to Notre Dame; my junior year I was an exchange student at the University of Innsbruck. They came over to visit me. We rented a van and toured. Of course we had to come to McGraw Kasern. So, 54 years ago, we were in the lobby. I went up to the counter, a young soldier asked "How can I help you?". I said proudly, "My name is Steven McGraw, my uncle is Francis X. McGraw". He said "How can I help you?". I said, slowly, "My name is Steven McGraw, my uncle is Francis X. McGraw. He said "How can I help you?". This time I looked him straight in the eye and said "bathroom bitte". He was totally unimpressed. So, after using the facilities we did a self-tour. One thing we found amusing was all the trash barrels on the grounds had stenciled on their sides, "Keep McGraw Clean". One of our favorite photos is Emmett holding Kevin, who was four, over a barrel about to toss him in.

My Uncle Tom told me a story that I think showed Uncle Frank's character even at a young age. My dad, Uncle Tom, and a few of their grade school buddies were playing baseball. A dozen high school kids, teenagers came by and told them to get them to get off the field because they wanted it. Standing no chance against the older guys, they walked away. Heading home, they ran into Frank and told him what happened. He immediately walked to the field. He picked up a baseball bat, walked over to third base and threw it up on a garage roof. He stood in front of the garage, bat in hand, daring anyone to try and get it. Outnumbered ten to one, they were five years older than him. He stood his ground. They weighted their options. They walked away.

My Mom framed all of Uncle Frank's medals and they hung in our den for my entire life. Friends would say, "it must be so inspirational". I'd answer, yes and no. Yes, in high school if I knew I was going to have an unusually difficult day, before I left, I'd go into the den and I'd stare at the medals for a full 20 to 30 seconds and then say to myself. "Grow a pair you pansy ass". So yes, it was inspirational, but "No", it's also intimidating, how do you live up to that.

The citation reads Private First Class Francis X. McGraw. I'm sure some of you have wondered "private"? Why was he never promoted? He was in the Big Red One which was decimated. He fought in Africa; he fought in Italy. He stormed the beach at Normandy. He should have been a general! When we donated Uncle Frank's medals to the Smithsonian. Frank Blazich, the director, asked the same question. He said, look, I want to feature your Uncle Frank in an exhibit called "The Price of Freedom" but I can't do that if something negative is going to come out. Did your Uncle Frank strike an officer, did he go AWOL? Why was he never promoted? I had asked my father the same question many years before. My father said Uncle Frank told him he didn't want to make a career of the military. He said, "I was brought over here to fight and I'll fight, but I will never order another man to his death. When the war is over, I want to go home, I want to start a family and I want to hang out with my brothers". He never had a chance to do that. We never got to know him.
And that's "The Price of Freedom".

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