



MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

STAFF SGT.

**MARCARIO
GARCIA**

This Month in NCO History — Heroism at Grosshau, Nov. 27, 1944

Pablo Villa

Staff Sgt. Marcario Garcia came from the humblest of beginnings. But in his time with the Army, he provided several moments of grandeur.

Garcia, who was also known as Macario, has a place in history as the first Mexican immigrant to be awarded the nation's highest award for valor. He was bestowed with the Medal of Honor for his actions on Nov. 27, 1944, in Germany during World War II.

While an acting squad leader of B Company, 22nd Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, then-Pvt. Garcia and his platoon were pinned down by machine-gun fire near Grosshau, according to the award citation. Though he was seriously wounded, Garcia refused to retreat and instead crawled forward alone until he reached a position near an enemy machine-gun nest. Garcia hurled grenades and charged the nest, eliminating three enemy fighters and destroying the gun. He rejoined his company when it came under fire from a second gun. Again, Garcia boldly charged the nest alone, destroying the gun, killing three more Germans and capturing four others. Garcia fought on with his unit until the objective was taken and then allowed himself to receive medical treatment.

Garcia was decorated with the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman on Aug. 23, 1945, at a White

House ceremony. It was a momentous occasion that defied the hardscrabble upbringing Garcia had in Texas.

Garcia was born Jan. 2, 1920, in Villa de Castaños, in the Mexican state of Coahuila. He arrived in the United States with his parents, Luciano and Josefa, in October 1923. After spending time near San Antonio, the family moved to Sugar Land in 1935 where it found work on a ranch.

Garcia worked the fields throughout his young life, often missing school and only achieving the equivalent of a third-grade education. On Nov. 11, 1942, Garcia was inducted into the U.S. Army. He was not an American citizen but would later say he felt obligated to do something for his adopted country.

Garcia was part of a tank division led by Gen. George S. Patton that was among the first wave of American Soldiers to make landfall in Normandy in June 1944. Days after his arrival, he was wounded and would spend four months recovering before rejoining his unit a month before his fateful trek through Germany.

In the years after being awarded with the nation's highest honor, Garcia enjoyed several milestone moments. On Jan. 8, 1946, Mexico awarded him with the Meritor Militar, the nation's highest military honor, during a ceremony in Mexico City. Garcia became an



Staff Sgt. Marcario Garcia is decorated with the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman on Aug. 23, 1945, during a ceremony at the White House. (Courtesy photo)

American citizen on June 25, 1947, and earned his high-school diploma in 1951. He married Alicia Reyes on May 18, 1952. The couple had three children. Garcia worked for 25 years as a counselor in the Veterans' Administration.

In later years, Garcia was part of a group of Mexican-Americans who greeted President John F. Kennedy at a Houston gala on Nov. 21, 1963. Kennedy spoke about U.S. and Latin American foreign policy to the group of Hispanic World War II veterans and civil rights advocates gathered at the Rice Hotel. The visit was seen as a momentous occasion for minorities throughout the country. A day later, Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

Garcia died on Dec. 24, 1972, from injuries he sustained in a vehicle accident. He was buried with full military honors at Houston National Cemetery. ■

— Compiled by Pablo Villa

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