

## Francis Thomas McCann

Born: March 8, 1924  
Hometown: Johnson City, NY  
Class: 1944  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet  
Date / Place of death: March 2, 1943 / 62-10N, 28-25W  
Date / Place of burial: March 2, 1943 / Lost at Sea –  
62-10 N, 28-25 W

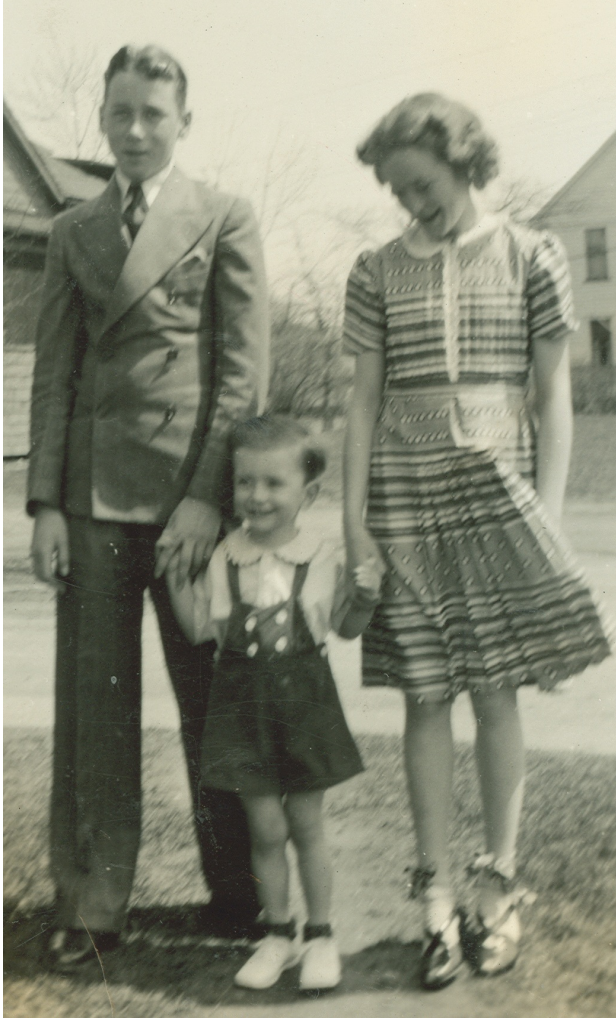


Age: 18

Francis T. McCann signed on aboard the SS Meriwether Lewis as Engine Cadet on January 25, 1943 at New York, NY, replacing Walter E. Johnson. He joined Randall Bourell (Deck), Alan Clarke (Deck) and Daniel Maher (Engine) who had made the previous voyage to Casablanca, French Morocco. On February 18, 1943 the Meriwether Lewis with its four Kings Point cadets sailed from New York as part of convoy HX-227 bound for the United Kingdom and then to Murmansk, Russia. The ship was loaded with a cargo of vehicle tires, ammunition, and according to some references, a deck cargo of PT Boats.

According to German Navy records, the Meriwether Lewis was identified as a straggler from a convoy, and unsuccessfully attacked, by U-759 in the early morning of March 2. The submarine was unable to re-attack the Meriwether Lewis due to problems with its engines, but it was able to contact U-634 and lead it to the straggler. The U-634 fired four torpedoes at the Meriwether Lewis, hitting it with one of them. The damage was apparently sufficient to stop the ship, but did not sink it. The submarine hit the Meriwether Lewis with two more torpedoes, the last of which detonated the ship's ammunition cargo. Although there was plenty of time to abandon ship, the USCGC Ingham (WPG 35) found only a 30-mile line of floating tires during its two day long search for the SS Meriwether Lewis and crew. Thus, the ship's entire crew of 44, including four Kings Point Cadets, and 28 members of the Naval Armed Guard perished in the sinking.

Cadet-Midshipman Francis T. McCann was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.



**The McCann Siblings (l. to r.) Francis,  
Joseph and Mary Lou**

Francis T. McCann was the oldest of Thomas V. McCann and Helen G. McCann's two sons and daughter. Although he had been a coal miner when Francis was born, by 1930 the family had moved from Pennsylvania to Johnson City, NY. There Thomas McCann worked in a shoe factory while Helen was a Registered Nurse. Francis' sister, Mary Lou was just two years younger, while his brother Joseph was much younger.

Although called Francis by his parents, he was known as "Nippy" to his friends due to his resemblance to a comic strip character whose hair was similarly parted in the middle. As a boy, Nippy was a fan of the 1930's St. Louis Cardinals (the "Gas House Gang"), and the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. When he was home for Christmas 1942, just before joining the Meriwether Lewis, Francis "Nippy" McCann became engaged to his childhood sweetheart.

Joseph McCann recalls,

"I do remember, like it was yesterday when he came to my room to say goodbye. He had my Mother give him a pair of baby shoes to take for good luck."