UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Gil Ramos Rivera (1925-1996)

https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/biographies/BMD-0-10-F.html

Born on September 5,1925 to Segundo and Paula, Gil Ramos-Rivera was the second youngest of five children. Ramos-Rivera grew up with his family in the area of Cayey in Puerto Rico.

The US gained control of Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War in 1898. Then the federal government's Jones Act granted American citizenship to all residents of Puerto Rico starting in 1917. After gaining American citizenship, large numbers of Puerto Ricans, including Ramos-Rivera's father, served in the US military, many serving in World War I.

Cayey became home to a US Naval facility, the El Cayey Naval Radio Station, and an Army post called Henry Barracks. By 1920, the base served as the home of the Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment, which became known as the Borinqueneers. Puerto Rican troops aided US interventions in Central America and the Caribbean during the Banana Wars. According to a 1930 Census, Segundo Ramos was stationed as a soldier at Henry Barracks. In May of 1937, Ramos-Rivera's father, Segundo, retired from the military as a first lieutenant. After his retirement, Gil and his family continued living in Cayey, in the city of Monte Llano.

Following his father, Gil enlisted in the US Army on October 10, 1950, around the same time the Korean War began. After North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, the United Nations led many countries in support of the South Koreans. The US military provided the majority of soldiers, military equipment, and supplies. With growing need for troops, the Army placed English speaking Puerto Ricans like Ramos-Rivera in non-Puerto Rican units. Eventually, an agreement between North Korea and South Korea stopped the fighting in 1953. In all, a total of over 43,000 Puerto Ricans like Ramos-Rivera served in the Korean War.

Ramos-Rivera continued his service in the Vietnam War. The North Vietnamese Communists fought against the anti-Communist South Vietnamese supported by the United States. By 1969, American forces reached over 543,000 soldiers in Vietnam. Over 48,000 Puerto Ricans served in Vietnam.

Just as he had in Korea, Ramos-Rivera experienced fierce battle conditions in Vietnam. Many infantry troops moved in a single file line. On one occasion during his tour in 1969-1970, a unit came under heavy fire by the North Vietnamese Army. Sergeant First Class Ramos-Rivera, and his unit, helped protect the 15th Medical Battalion attached to the Airmobile 1st Cavalry Division who went to help treat the injured, putting themselves in danger. Fortunately, no members of the medical company were injured and they received a Valorous Unit Award in 1970.

While we are not sure when, Gil Ramos-Rivera received a Purple Heart during his Army career. The Purple Heart is awarded to soldiers wounded or killed in combat. The purple and

gold medal has a portrait of President Washington on it. After reaching twenty years of service, Ramos-Rivera retired from the Army on November 1, 1970.

After his retirement, Ramos-Rivera eventually moved to Florida. From the end of World War II in 1945 through the 1980s, large numbers of Puerto Ricans migrated to the US mainland for better opportunities. Ramos-Rivera settled in Orlando where he lived for the rest of his life. On March 17, 1996, Ramos-Rivera passed away at the age of seventy. Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, FL placed a memorial headstone in section MD, site 10, in honor of Ramos-Rivera and his service to this country.

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