UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Joseph Knight (Feb. 14,1921-Aug. 19, 1945)

https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/biographies/sanc/BD-0-144-F.html

Joseph Knight was born on February 14, 1921 in Jupiter, FL. His mother had been previously married; Joseph had five older half-siblings. By 1930, at the age of nine, his parents divorced and he and his mother and siblings had moved to Fort Lauderdale, FL where his mother worked in the farming industry to support the family. As an African American family, they had limited job opportunities.

The Great Depression brought many economic challenges to the family and in 1935 they moved again to Daytona Beach, FL to find work. There, his mother Anna worked as a laundress, his older sister Thelma as a maid, and his older brother Vincent as a laborer. This allowed fourteen-year-old Joseph to remain in school.

By 1937, sixteen-year-old Joseph had joined the workforce to help the family. His jobs included greeting movie patrons at the Daytona Beach Theater and making deliveries for a retail drugstore in town.

On February 16, 1942, two months after the US entered World War II, twenty-one-year-old Joseph registered for the draft in Daytona Beach. Joseph then moved north to Mercer County, NJ in search of better employment opportunities. He joined the US Army on November 20, 1943 in Camden, NJ. Many Black soldiers believed that serving in the military overseas would improve the quality of life at home for all African Americans.

During the war, the military restricted Black soldiers to segregated and mainly non-combat. After completing basic training, Joseph Knight served in the 3187th Quartermaster Service Company, attached to the 3rd US Army. On December 31, 1943 the men of the 3187th received orders to depart for the United Kingdom. Once in the UK, they prepared to participate in the Allied invasion of Europe.

After D-Day on June 6, 1944 and through May 1945, the Quartermaster Corps companies supported the Allies by transporting supplies, ammunition, food, gasoline, and water to combat soldiers on the front lines as they pushed German forces out of France and Belgium and into Germany. They faced dangerous conditions including regular attacks from German planes.

After the German surrender on May 8,1945, the 3187th remained in Germany helping to rebuild. On August 19, 1945, Joseph Knight suddenly passed away. He was twenty-four years old.

Joseph was initially buried in the St. Avold-Metz Cemetery in eastern France, now known as the Lorraine American Cemetery. Following the request of his family, the military returned Private Joseph Knight's body to the US and he was reinterred (buried) in St. Augustine National Cemetery on February 4, 1949, close to his family in Daytona Beach. He now rests among his fellow Veterans in Section D, Site 144.

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