UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Michael Angel Freije, Sr. (1913-1944)

https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/biographies/sanc/BD-0-100-F.html

Michael Angel Freije was born Miguel Angel Freije in San Juan, PR on July 22, 1913. In March 1917, when Miguel was three years old, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act into law which extended US Citizenship to Puerto Ricans like Miguel.

In 1933, when he was twenty years old, Miguel married Amelia Del Valle. They had a son, Miguel Jr., the following year, and a daughter Nilda, in 1937. By 1940, Miguel Sr. and Amelia divorced, and Miguel moved to the mainland United States, settling in Jacksonville, FL.

In October 1940 he registered for the draft in Jacksonville, under the name of Michael Angel Freije. Despite the citizenship granted to Puerto Ricans, many chose to adopt new anglicized names after moving to the continental US in order to blend in more. Though he registered for the draft in 1940, the US military did not immediately select him for service, so Michael attended college and worked as a skilled pattern and model maker. In 1942, he married Helen Spears.

Although the US entered World War II in December 1941, the Army called Michael to service on March 28, 1944. He enlisted at Fort McPherson, near Atlanta, GA. After his initial training, Michael joined Company L, 101st Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division. In August 1944, Michael and his division deployed to France, landing in the port of Cherbourg in Normandy.

Once in France, Michael's Division assisted Allied forces during the Lorraine Campaign in eastern France to drive out German forces. The infantrymen fought house-to-house sustaining high casualties due to repeated German counter-attacks. Sadly, Michael made the ultimate sacrifice during this fighting. In early December, fragments from an artillery shell struck and injured Michael in his chest. Though he received medical attention at a nearby Army hospital, Michael A Freije died of his wounds on December 2, 1944 fighting to liberate France's Moselle region.

Initially, the Army interred his remains in the Limey-Toul Cemetery in eastern France, located about eighty miles from where he died. In May 1946, Michael's widow Helen decided to bring her husband's remains home. Michael Angel Freije now rests among his fellow Veterans in the St. Augustine National Cemetery, Section D, Plot 100.

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