



Rubel V. Archuleta

SEP 16, 1914 - SEP 11, 2010



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Rubel "Archie" Archuleta During World War II there were very few Hispanic fighter pilots, but this seemed to present an opportunity and a challenge for a local boy from northern New Mexico to serve his country. Rubel "Archie" Archuleta was born Sept. 16, 1914, on the family homestead in Pajarito, NM, near the banks of the Rio Grande and close to the Black Mesa. He was the fourth of eight children born to Locadio Archuleta and Zenaida Vigil Archuleta, and he was raised near the family farm, El Monte, in his father's family home. His father was gone much of the year, working in mines in Colorado and in fact died in a mining accident when Archie was 11 years old. Zenaida was left to raise the children and head the home and farm. The older brothers worked the farm, spending the summer there and bringing produce home to sell each fall. As a young child, Archie was educated at home. His father valued education and was adamant that his children receive a formal education. He built a schoolroom attached to the family home and the state provided a teacher. Archie, his siblings and other children from the community attended grade school there. Archie later attended Santa Cruz High School, graduating in 1934. He attended New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and graduated with a bachelor's degree in education in 1941. After graduation Archie taught school for a brief time, but soon enlisted in the Army Air Corps, following a dream to fly airplanes that he had had since he was a young boy. He attended pilot training in Texas and in November 1941, was commissioned a second lieutenant and was stationed in California where he served on antisubmarine patrol off the U.S. West Coast. In 1943 with the escalation of World War II, he was sent to fight in the Pacific. Among the aircraft types he flew during the war were the P-39 Airacobra, the P-40 Warhawk and the P-51 Mustang. Archie flew 210 combat missions in the Asia-Pacific theater. For combat service in the Pacific theater as a fighter pilot, he was awarded the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak-leaf cluster and the Air Medal with three oak-leaf clusters.



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The Silver Star was awarded for a spectacular display of courage and gallantry on Dec. 26, 1944, on Mindoro Island in the Philippines. A Japanese naval task force of a heavy cruiser and at least 6 destroyers was discovered approaching the newly established American base on Mindoro Island. Although his P-40 squadron, the 110th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron was not suited for night attacks and was not trained for night flying, Archie led his squadron to repel the attack. The Japanese force was driven off by his and other units. After returning from the war, Archie continued his career in the military. He had numerous assignments over his 28-year career, and the family lived in several states including an assignment to Japan. Archie and his wife Noema had three children: Tom, born in 1947; Ann, born in 1948; and Sylvia born in 1950. He is survived by one sibling, Locadia "Luckie" Gonzales, his three children, nine grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. After his retirement from the Air Force, Archie was employed by the Delaware Commission for the Blind for 10 years before retiring again and moving to Florida. Noema died in November 2004 in Spring Hill, Fl. Archie was 95 years old and resided in Spring Hill until his death on Sept. 11th. Family who visited regarded him with great pride, respect and love. They would often sit together with him and look through picture albums while he reminisced about the past. He remembered the name of every man he fought with during the war. As he reminisced he would smile as he commented about each comrade, pointing to them in old, faded pictures. You might hear him say something like, "That's old Smitty-you better believe he was a good man and a damned good pilot!" Thus a young boy, who was raised on the land his Archuleta ancestors settled on and who dreamed of flying, found his opportunity during a time when his country needed him most. Rubel "Archie" Archuleta has brought honor and dignity not only to his family but to all of us. Reflections from Ann Ecker, daughter A visitation is scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 19, 2010, from 10:00AM until 12:00PM with a Funeral service at 12 noon at Grace Memorial Gardens & Funeral Home, Hudson, Fl. Interment with military honors is scheduled for Monday, Sept 20, 2010, 10:00AM at Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell, Fl. In lieu of flowers, family requests donations to Hospice.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Rubel by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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