

HISTORY TOPIC of the WEEK

Who was Sgt. Paul Prosper Ramoneda?

If you attended Airman Leadership School at Travis AFB you already have some knowledge base regarding Sgt Paul P. Ramoneda. ALS is named in his honor. He was born March 14, 1924 in Los Angeles CA to Francis and Irene Ramoneda, seven siblings called him brother and undoubtedly thousands of others in the armed forces may have used the term “brother” to mean “brother from another mother” at some point in his life or after he lost his life on 5 Aug 1950.

Ramoneda was a WW II decorated Marine before joining the AF in 1949. It was O dark 30 (around 11pm) when he and 3 other airmen on duty witnessed a B-29 cartwheel past their work center, the Base Bake Shop. The four airmen raced toward the B-29 and began to extricate 8 men out of the nose section of the burning wreckage. The entire time .50 caliber ammunition and flares were cooking off while the heat from the blaze was for certain intolerable.

It was made evident to the rescuers that the imminent danger for those on the ground put them at greater risk to their own lives and they began to fall back. While visible sounds of suffering and cries for help were coming from the plane, Ramoneda could do nothing but answer the call. He wrapped his apron around his head and headed back into the burning flames. As he raced back to the plane I imagine his only thought was “just one more” and as he arrived at the plane...it blew up.

Ramoneda served with honor during WW II but his heroism on the night of 5 Aug 1950 was not the spontaneous reflex that yields unexpected bravery in the heat of combat. He was at the crash site for maybe 10 minutes, fully aware of the fire, and heard the certainty of painful injury in his attempt to save the lives of men he didn't know. For those things his act had the greater mark of character and of valor. He was posthumously awarded the Soldiers medal and Cheney Award. He was the kind of “brother” we all want to have in a situation such as this. We honor him, we revere his actions and deed because we know his heart served others.

For more on this historic B-29 Crash that took place here on Travis AFB 71 years ago stop in for a Lunch and Learn at the Travis AFB Museum on 6 Aug 2021, 12pm (30 minutes tops.) Bring your lunch for a time to learn.

