

Captain Marion Frederic Ramirez de Arellano

By: Tony (The Marine) Santiago

Captain Marion Frederic Ramirez de Arellano (August 5, 1913-May 15, 1980), born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was a submarine commander in the United States Navy who was the first Hispanic submarine commanding officer. He was awarded two Silver Star Medals, the Legion of Merit, and a Bronze Star Medal for his actions against the Japanese Imperial Navy during World War II.

Early years

Ramirez de Arellano was born in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. When he was just a child, his parents moved for a short period of time to Athens, Georgia where he began grade school. The family soon returned to the island and both his parents found employment as professors at the University of Puerto Rico. Ramirez de Arellano continued his education in Puerto Rico and after he graduated from high school, he attended the University of Puerto Rico for two years.



Captain Marion Frederic Ramirez de Arellano

U.S. Naval Academy

In 1931, he was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy by Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. who served as Governor of Puerto Rico from 1929 to 1932. Ramirez de Arellano excelled in sports in the Academy, earning varsity letters in soccer, tennis, and gymnastics. He also won the Society of the Cincinnati prize for highest standing in the course for the Department of Languages. He graduated from the Academy in 1935

Upon his graduation, he was commissioned an Ensign and assigned to the USS Ranger, the first ship of the United States Navy to be designed and built from the keel up as an aircraft carrier. He served aboard as Gunnery Officer from 1935 to 1937. From 1937 to 1938, he attended Submarine School at Groton, Connecticut.

World War II



USS Balao, October 25, 1944

In 1938, Ramirez de Arellano was assigned as Division Officer of the USS Pickerel, a Porpoise-class submarine. The Pickerel was training near the Philippines when on December 8, 1941 the islands were attacked by Japan. The Pickerel was ordered to patrol the coast of the islands and on her second war patrol she sank the Kanko Maru, a Japanese vessel, in the Gulf of Davao off Mindanao. He participated in five war patrols with the Pickerel and led the effort to rescue five Navy pilots and one enlisted gunner off Wake Island. He also contributed to the sinking of two Japanese freighters and damaging a third. For his actions, he was awarded a Silver Star Medal and a Legion of Merit Medal.

After a brief stint at the Navy Yard on Mare Island, he was reassigned to the USS Skate, a Balao class submarine. He participated in the Skates first three war patrols and was awarded a second Silver Star Medal for his contributions in the sinking the Japanese light cruiser Agano, on his third patrol. The Agano had survived a previous torpedo attack by submarine USS Scamp.

In April 1944, Ramirez de Arellano as named Commanding Officer of the USS Balao, thus becoming the first Hispanic submarine commander. He participated in his ship's war patrols 5, 6 and 7. On July 5, 1944, Ramirez de Arellano led the rescue of three downed Navy pilots in the Palau area. On December 4, 1944, the Balao departed from Pearl Harbor to patrol in the Yellow Sea. The Balao engaged and sunk the Japanese cargo ship Daigo Maru on January 8, 1945. Ramirez de Arellano was awarded a Bronze Star Medal with Combat V and a Letter of Commendation.

In February 1945, Ramirez de Arellano worked with submarine relief crews in Submarine Division 202 and he served as Commander of Submarine Division 16.

Post-World War II

In May 1946, Ramirez de Arellano was named Commanding Officer of Submarine Base, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. With the exception of his other two ship commands, the USS Lindenwald (1952-1954) and of the USS Thomaston (1954-1955), Ramirez de Arellano held various administrative and teaching positions — among them Assistant to War Plans Officer, Caribbean Sea Frontier, 10th Naval District (1947-1949) and in the Department of Languages, U.S/ Naval Academy (1949-1952). He was War Plans Officer, Joint U.S. Military Group in Madrid, Spain from May 1955 to June 1957 and the Deputy Director of the Inter-American Defense Board in Washington, DC from July 1957 to July 1961. On July 1, 1961, Captain Ramirez de Arellano retired from the Navy.

Personal

Ramirez de Arellano was married to Isabel Judson Mysie with whom he had three sons. He died on May 15, 1980 at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, D.C.

Awards and decorations

Among Ramirez de Arellano's military decorations were the following:
Silver Star Medal with a Gold Star in lieu of a second Silver Star Medal
Bronze Star Medal
Legion of Merit
Navy Distinguished Service Medal
American Defense Service Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
World War II Victory Medal

Badges

Submarine Officers Warfare insignia