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Dr. Keith

U.S. History - 1

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### Cypriot-American Patriot

Private Telemachos Loukaides Michael lived a short and tragic life. Coming to New York City from Cyprus, Michael was part of a boom that changed America's attitudes toward immigrants, even helping to bring about a nationwide draft during World War II to "Americanize" newcomers. As a Private, Telemachos Michael fought on the Alaskan front against Japanese forces during World War II. Pvt. Michael's identity as an immigrant was intertwined with his tragic fate. In perhaps the ultimate and ironic display of patriotism, Michael fought to his death for a country that considered immigrants like him to be un-American.

Michael was born in Astromeritis, Cyprus on September 20, 1908.<sup>1</sup> From a family of master tailors, Michael was one of five brothers. Michael lived first in London before journeying from Southampton to New York City in 1929.<sup>2</sup> In one way he was lucky to get to America; just five years prior, a nativist U.S. quota system drastically reduced the number of visas available.<sup>3</sup> The Cypriot settled in Woodside, Queens. A member of the Local 6 union, he was a

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<sup>1</sup> The National Archives in Washington, DC, Washington, DC, USA, *Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957*, NAID: T715, Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004*, Record Group: 85, Ancestry.com; Gravestone of Pvt. Telemachos L. Michael, photograph, Find a Grave, August 2, 2008, accessed April 9, 2024, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/3961108/telemachos-l-michael>; Philip Gleason, "Americans All: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity," *The Review of Politics* 43, no. 4 (1981): 485, JSTOR.

<sup>2</sup> *Passenger and Crew Lists*; Elpinicky Pericleous (niece of Pvt. Michael), in discussion with the author, April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> "Americans All," 485.

room-service waiter at Manhattan's Commodore Hotel.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, the common belief that immigrants were not naturally assimilating encouraged their military conscription.<sup>5</sup>

On December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, America declared war.<sup>6</sup> By early June, Japan seized the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska in Alaska, helping to form a defensive line in the Pacific that might force the U.S. to sign a peace treaty.<sup>7</sup> Single Michael registered for the draft on October 16, 1940 and was enlisted on Governor's Island on August 14, 1942. He was a 5'2", 106 pound Private, neither a citizen nor high school-educated.<sup>8</sup> He entered the Army's 7th Division, 17th Infantry in September, 1942, stationed at California's training base Fort Ord.<sup>9</sup> That division left to retake Attu on April 23,



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<sup>4</sup> "How Local 6 Has Grown: News of 10 Years Ago in the Voice," *Hotel & Club Voice*, August 29, 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy J. Perri, "The Evolution of Military Conscription in the United States," *The Independent Review* 17, no. 3 (2013): 436, JSTOR.

<sup>6</sup> "World War II Chronology," *Army History*, no. 20 (1991): 23, JSTOR.

<sup>7</sup> John Haile Cloe, *Attu: The Forgotten Battle* (Anchorage, AK: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Alaska Affiliated Areas, Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, 2017), 21-23, PDF.

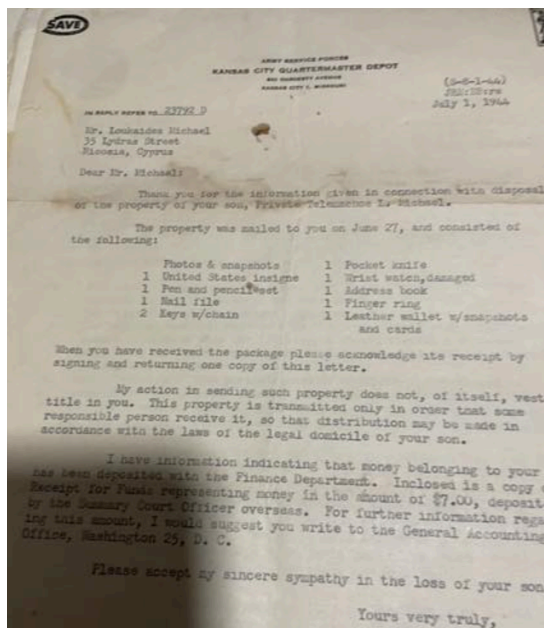
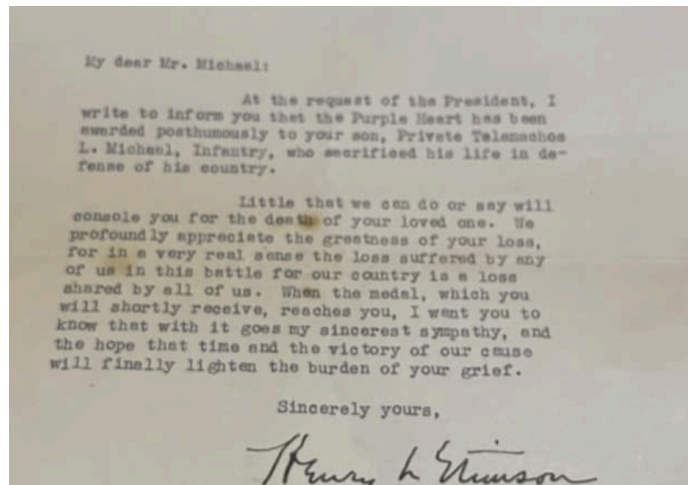
<sup>8</sup> National Archives at St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA, *WWII Draft Registration Cards For New York City, 10/16/1940 - 03/31/1947*, Record Group Title: *Records of the Selective Service System*, Record Group: 147, Ancestry.com; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, USA, *Electronic Army Serial Number Merged File, 1938-1946*, NAID: 1263923, Record Group Title: *Records of the National Archives and Records Administration, 1789-ca. 2007*, Record Group: 64, Box Number: 05122, Reel: 176, Ancestry.com.

<sup>9</sup> "Two Other Local Men Listed as Killed," *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 3, 1943; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, USA, *Register, World War II Dead Interred in American Military Cemeteries on Foreign Soil and World War II and Korea Missing or Lost or Buried at Sea*, Record Group Title: *Records of the Office of the Secretary of Defense*, Record Group: 330, Ancestry.com; Roberta J. Park, "'Happy and Cheerful in This Fine Camp': Sports, Recreation, and the United States Army at Fort Ord and Camp Roberts, 1940 to 1945," *Journal of Sport History* 42, no. 1 (2015): 24, JSTOR.

1943.<sup>10</sup> Shots were fired starting May 11, and Michael was hit at some time during the fighting and died at 34 on May 17th after receiving a transfusion.<sup>11</sup>

Pvt. Michael's life and death are a powerful example of bravery and patriotism. He is remembered by his family in Cyprus, who, upon the author's

request online, provided their correspondence with American officials and key details of his story. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson awarded the soldier a Purple Heart, noting that he



“sacrificed his life in defense of his country.”<sup>12</sup>

Michael's family received his belongings, including a damaged watch, the American flag used in Michael's burial at Holtz Bay Cemetery in Attu (he was reinterred at the Sitka National Cemetery in Sitka, Alaska), and a five-thousand dollar life insurance settlement.<sup>13</sup> Pvt. Michael never became an American citizen, but his heroism lives on.

<sup>10</sup> "Two Other Local Men"; Cloe, *Attu: The Forgotten*, 42.

<sup>11</sup> Gravestone of Pvt. Telemachos L. Michael; Cloe, *Attu: The Forgotten*, 69; National Archives at College Park, College Park, Maryland, USA, *Hospital Admission Card Files, ca. 1970 - ca. 1970*, NAID: 570973, Record Group Name: *Records of the Office of the Surgeon General (Army), 1775-1994*, Record Group: 112, Ancestry.com.

<sup>12</sup> Henry L. Stimson to Loukaides Michael, n.d.

<sup>13</sup> G. H. Galvin to Loukaides Michael, July 1, 1944; The National Archives at St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA, *Interment Control Forms, 1928-1962, AI 2110-B*, NAID: 5833879, Record Group Name: *Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General*, Record Group: 92, Ancestry.com; H. L. McCoy to Mary Michael, April 15, 1945.

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Galvin, G. H. Letter to Loukaides Michael. July 1, 1944.

Gravestone of Pvt. Telemachos L Michael. Photograph. Find a Grave. August 2, 2008. Accessed April 9, 2024. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/3961108/telemachos-l-michael>.

McCoy, H. L. Letter to Mary Michael. April 15, 1945.

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"World War II Chronology." *Army History*, no. 20 (1991): 22-23. JSTOR.

### Included Images:

Pericleous, Elpinicky. Copy of G. H. Galvin's Letter to Loukaides Michael. Photograph. April 7, 2024. Digital file.

———. Copy of Henry L. Stimson's Letter to Loukaides Michael. Photograph. April 7, 2024. Digital file.

———. Copy of Pvt. Telemachos L. Michael's Army Headshot. Photograph. April 6, 2024. Digital file.