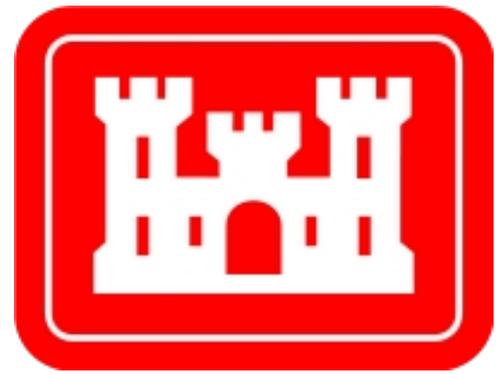


Private Raymond Keith Lanier
Utah
853rd Engineer Battalion
Aviation



853rd Engineer Battalion Aviation

Raymond Keith Lanier, a son of Robert Henry Lanier and Henrietta Crystal Brown Lanier, was born June 23, 1924 in Salt Lake City. He attended North Summit High School and the University of Utah for a year. He was a skilled motor vehicle mechanic and repairmen. He enlisted on January 7, 1943. He was assigned to the 853rd Engineer Battalion Aviation. He received training at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, Dyersburg, Tennessee, and Mobile Alabama.

Aviation battalions were trained to build heavy duty air bases in forward areas along with related facilities. Their equipment would include tractors, bulldozers, scrapers, and other equipment necessary to meet the construction needs in any type of environment.

After his training, the 853rd Battalion was ordered to North Africa. After a short period of time, it was ordered to go to India via the Suez Canal. He boarded the HMT Rohna, a troop transfer ship, with the 332nd fighter Control Squadron, 31st Signal Construction Battalion, 444th Portable Surgical Hospital, 2 AAF Fillers, 1 Ground Fillers, and one infantry ASF fillers.

As the convoy moved toward the Suez Canal, it was attacked by German aircraft. Some of the air craft were fitted with radio-controlled glide-bombs that carried a 500 kg explosive war head and were propelled by a rocket motor. The Rohna was hit by a Henschel HS 239A radio-guided glide bomb which caused heavy damage to it and resulted in the loss of 1,180 dead, some 1,050 were U.S. troops. It was the largest loss of troops being transported by sea in World War II. The number of troops lost was held secret for many years and was not released until the military was forced to release the records.

Private First Class Lanier was listed as missing. The date of his death is listed as November 26, 1943. At the time of his death, he was survived by his parents; three brothers; Ralph Henry, Eugene Brown and William Selmar; and one sister, Ruth Mae. He was preceded in death by two brothers; Robert Francis and Ralph Henry.

He is memorialized in the North African American Cemetery in Carthage, Tunisia.