

## The two burials of the sailor Peter Paul Parisena Mendionde

El Diario.es

Pierre "Peter" Paul Parisena Mendionde was born on March 3, 1925 in the French town of Bordeaux, to Navarrese parents. The father, Jean "John" Santiago Parisena Maya, a veteran of the French Army in the Great War, was born in Banca in 1902, and mother Catherine Mendionde Antchagno was born in Urepel in 1905. The exact date of emigration for the father is unknown. It is known that at least three of his brothers (José, Francisco and Juan) also made the United States their new home. Francisco "Frank" and José "Joe" were born in Elbete, Navarra, in 1886 and 1897, respectively. José arrived in the country in 1920 and obtained a small hotel in the California town of Susanville in the 1930s.

Peter and his mother arrived in the United States in 1929 in the midst of a financial and socioeconomic crisis. At the end of that same year they were joined by his uncle Dominique "Domingo" Mendionde, just 17 years old. Born in Urepel in 1912, he lived in southern California for most of his life, where he devoted himself to raising sheep. Domingo passed away in Chino, California at age 77. In 1930 Peter and his mother resided at the pension of their uncle Joseph in Susanville. The following year, Catherine had her second and last child, John, born in this northeast California city.

Catherine and John would end up divorcing, and between 1935 and 1940, the children lived with their father in Westwood, California, where he works for a sawmill. Beginning in 1940, the children moved in with the mother and her now-new husband in Reno, Nevada. According to Peter's son Gary Parisena, "My grandmother ran the Star Hotel for many years on the Second Street between Lake and Center in Reno. My family is Basque and they cared for Basque families"(1).

Peter was in his senior year of high school in Susanville when he enlisted in the Navy on November 20, 1943, in Sacramento, California. He was dispatched to the Farragut Naval Training Station in Idaho, and from there was assigned to the escort aircraft carrier USS Makassar Strait, where he served as a gunner from April 27, 1944 until the end of the war. On board the aircraft carrier was the Basque-American Raymond Jay Garteiz (born in Ogden, Utah, in 1922) pilot of Squadron 97. From September to October 1944, the Makassar Strait had the mission of transporting replacement aircraft to Hawaii and the Admiralty Islands, located in the north of New Guinea, in the southern Pacific Ocean. From April to May 1945, the USS Makassar Strait engaged in combat, participating in cover fire during the Okinawa invasion. Peter had the opportunity to demonstrate her skill as a gunner, and Raymond had adventures in bombardment flights over the island. Replaced by the escort aircraft carrier USS Shipple Bay, received the Makassar Strait's Squadron 97. Peter's aircraft carrier headed for the Mariana Islands, Pacific Northwest, where it became a training center. Finally, she carried out repatriation work for soldiers.

Peter returned to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on July 29, 1945, and from there was sent to the Naval Base in San Diego, California. Unfortunately, his father had died two months earlier, on May 29, in Susanville. (The mother died in 1979 in Reno). Peter was graduated with honors on December 9, 1945 with the rank of second-class sailor. "He never discussed the war with his family or friends, he never disclosed the name of his aircraft carrier or his general experiences. He told a couple of generic stories, but said he saw some horrible things, "confesses his son Gary (2).

After the war, Peter returned to Reno where he worked in metallurgy for a time. He married and had two sons. Peter passed away on July 24, 1988 in Reno, at the age of 63. He and his wife had divorced and the family had grown apart. Inexplicably, Peter was never buried and his unclaimed remains were kept by a local morgue. His brother John died five years later in Olympia, Washington. He had fought in the Korean War with the First Marine Corps Brigade, being wounded in Seoul in 1950. He received the Purple Heart. The Parisian family, father and children, had taken part in three of the most important conflicts in the first half of the 20th century.

On April 12, 2019, 31 years after Peter's death, he and 14 other veterans, whose remains were not claimed at the time of his death, were finally buried, with full military honors, in the columbarium of the Memorial Cemetery of Northern Nevada Veterans at Fernley. "Five members of the Nevada Army National Guard and seven sailors from the Fallon Naval Air Station, along with members of the Nevada Veterans Coalition moved the urns to the columbarium. Gary Parisena received a folded American flag on behalf of his father and the other 14 veterans (3). Rest in peace.

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If you want to collaborate with "Echoes of Two Wars" send us an original article on any aspect of the SGM or the Civil War and the Basque or Navarre participation at the following email: [sanchobeurko@gmail.com](mailto:sanchobeurko@gmail.com)

The articles selected for publication will receive a signed copy of "Basque Combatants in World War II".

(1, 2, 3) Steve Ranson interview with Gary Parisena on April 18, 2019. "Final farewell for Nevada World War II veteran." Lahontan Valley News for The State.

### LABELS

Fighting Basques Echoes of Two Wars 1936-1945

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### Photo notes:

Photo 1: Photograph of the Parisena-Mendionde family in the early 1930s. From left to right Catherine Mendionde, little John, John Parisena and Peter. Catherine's brother Dominique Mendionde is standing. (Courtesy of Domingo Mendionde's grandson, Mitch Gariador, <http://www.gariador.com/genealogy>).

Photo 2: Family photo of Peter Parisena, in his army uniform, with his mother Catherine Mendionde and brother John Parisena during World War II (Reno Gazette Journal, April 22, 2019).

Photo 3: Official photograph of the crew of the USS Makassar Strait dated October 6, 1945 (NavSource Naval History, <https://www.navsource.org/archives/03/0309102.jpg>).

Photo 4: "Proud Patriot" thus reads the inscription on the tombstone of Peter Parisena where his remains finally rest at the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Fernley.