On May 11, 1943, the 7th U.S. Infantry Division landed on the island of Attu, Alaska, to reclaim it from the Japanese Imperial Army. Among these soldiers was a nineteen-year-old man named Sidney B. Viele Jr. Born on November 23, 1923, in Glen Falls, New York, Sidney was 5’ 11,” weighed 152 pounds, and had a dark complexion, brown hair, and blue eyes according to his draft card. After moving to Stoughton, Massachusetts, Viele enlisted in June 1942, joining the 7th Infantry bayonet unit. Unfortunately, on May 29 of the following year, Sidney tragically died fighting in the Battle of Engineer Hill at Attu. However, his sacrifice was not in vain. Sidney B. Viele and the 7th U.S. Infantry Division were fundamental to the Battle of Attu and the United States’s Alaskan war effort. Viele sacrificed his life to win the

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critical conflict of Engineer Hill, weakening Japanese military forces and allowing for advancements toward major naval victory.

Beginning on May 11, 1943, Sidney’s 7th Infantry spent two weeks working their way across Attu to reclaim it from the June 1942 Japanese invasion. The Japanese attacked in small groups, and the over-waist-deep snow, below-freezing temperatures, and high casualties left the 7th Infantry with only 800 able-bodied men by the time they occupied the three key hills of Chichagof Valley (Fish Hook, Buffalo, and Engineer) on the evening of May 28. However, at three-thirty the following morning, a thousand Japanese soldiers charged toward Engineer Hill in what Japanese radio described as a “gallant offensive,” smashing through American infantry units and destroying communication devices. Japanese Colonel Yamasaki hoped to break through the hill and reach Massacre Bay, claiming American supplies and waiting for reinforcements. But Sidney’s 7th Infantry fought bravely and, after many casualties, emerged victorious in defeating

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Yamasaki and ending the Battle of Attu. Engineer Hill was the bloodiest engagement at Attu: 549 Americans died, including Sidney B. Viele. Nonetheless, Viele and his unit succeeded. One newspaper from May 30 reported that the “enemy force was annihilated” and sighted the victory as “the first American soil to be regained by our forces in this war after seizure by the enemy,” marking it as a critical turning point in the U.S.’s efforts in its Aleutian campaign. Furthermore, their loss at Attu forced the Japanese to redistribute their forces in the Pacific, allowing the U.S. to make significant gains in the Solomon Islands. Ultimately, Sidney B. Viele Jr’s death represented a major U.S. Alaskan victory and a true feat of bravery. He was a hero not to be forgotten.

Image Descriptions

3. A sign memorializing the conflict of Engineer Hill in Attu.

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13National Archives at St. Louis, *Draft Registration Cards*.
14PVT Sidney Viele Jr.
15Hupp, *Engineer Hill*.
Primary Sources


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