



CSM (Ret) Manuel Aponte Sandoval

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Manuel Aponte Sandoval was born in Orocovis, Puerto Rico to the late Cayetano Aponte and Maria Sandoval. He served the United States Army for 30 years, enlisting with the 65th Infantry Regiment in November, 1950, and participating in his first combat tour with the “Borinqueneers” in the Korean War. Manuel quickly rose the enlistment ranks, attaining the rank of Sergeant Major shortly after he returned from his tour in Vietnam in 1968. He served in numerous Infantry units in Korea, Germany, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

It was during his tour with the 8th Infantry Division in Baumholder, Germany, where he met and shortly thereafter married the beloved Pilar Hornero. During their 52-year marriage, they were blessed with the births of their two sons, Manuel Jr in 1960, and Ricardo in 1967. Manuel retired from the Army in Fort Benning, Georgia in November 1980, and moved to Florida for the remainder of his life.

Manuel was the consummate military man. But while it may have seemed that his priority was to the superiors, peers, and subordinates in his many Army units, deep down he dedicated his life to providing for Pilar and their sons. His

love for his family was deep and unquestionable. Manuel touched the lives of many people, both in the military and civilian communities, with his smile and generosity. Those who were blessed to know him experienced his unrelenting sense of humor, willingness to assist, and his love of the Latino music.

Manuel spent the last three years of his life in the Orlando VA Community Living Center. Pilar helped him battle his disabilities almost on a daily basis until he succumbed to them. But with the CLC's staff's support, and Pilar's perseverance, Manuel became a favored son to his extended family and friends at the CLC, and he will be sorely missed by all. May he rest in peace.

There are only two defining forces who have ever offered to die for you. One is Jesus Christ and the other is the American GI. One died for your soul; the other for your freedom. May we never forget either.