

PFC Michael D. Geise
AEHC featured person for the week of Feb 28, 2021

Private First Class Michael David Geise
August 22, 1948 – March 4, 1968

Killed in Action this week in 1968, PFC Michael D. Geise is buried in our cemetery's Section 5, Lot 110, Space 11.

Summary of our research: Michael David Geise was born on August 22, 1948 in Wisconsin. His mother, Doris Leanna (Averitt) married James Allen Geise of Rush County in 1958. James A. Geise adopted Michael and his two siblings Kathleen and John.

The Averitt family came to Indiana through Kentucky. Carroll Stanton Averitt was born in 1889 in Kentucky to Frank and Mildred (Garrett). The Averitt family moved to central Indiana around 1900. Carroll S. Averitt married Icy (VanMeter) from Lafayette, Indiana in 1912. Icy (VanMeter) was born in Indiana in 1897 to James Garfield VanMeter and Fleeta (Harrington). VanMeter family came to Indiana from Illinois prior to 1880. Fleeta (Harrington) and her parents were reportedly all born in Indiana. Carroll Stanton and Icy (VanMeter) Averitt's daughter, Doris Leanna (Michael's mother), was born in 1922.

The Geise family is a well-known name in Rush County. Grover Cleveland "Cleve" Geise was born in 1885. His parents were Henry and Frances (Breitenbach) Geise. Henry Geise was born in Pennsylvania in 1848. Henry and his family moved to Rush County around 1859. Frances (Breitenbach) was born in Fayette County, Indiana in 1854. Her parents, George and Kathleen Breitenbach, were both born in Germany and settled in Fayette County. Both are buried in Union Cemetery in Fayette County. Henry and Frances Geise are also buried in Union Cemetery.

Grover Cleveland "Cleve" Geise married Alma (Sampson) in 1907. Alma (Sampson) was born in 1888 in Rush County to Horatio Greeley and Angeline (Brown) Sampson. Horatio Sampson's family came to Rush County around 1827. Horatio and Angeline Sampson are buried in Hurst Cemetery in Homer.

James A. Geise was born in 1926 and was the youngest son of Grover Cleveland "Cleve" and Alma (Sampson) Geise. Alma (Sampson) Geise passed away in 1934. Cleve married a widow, Mattie (Binford) Publow, in 1943. Cleve passed away in 1968. Cleve and Alma (Sampson) Geise are buried in Arlington East Hill

Cemetery. Mattie (Binford) Publow Geise died in 1981 and is buried by her first husband, John Publow, in Walnut Ridge Cemetery near Carthage.

Michael David Geise was a 1966 graduate of Carthage High School. He had been a student manager, then player for the basketball team. He also played baseball and participated in track. Michael had been voted “Best Actor” both his Junior and Senior years for his roles in the respective class plays. Michael worked at Danner Brothers Company Store in Rushville prior to joining the military. Michael joined the US Army in August 1967. He did his basic training at Fort Campbell, Kentucky and his advanced infantry training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. After a short visit back to Rush County, he left on February 4, 1968 for Vietnam. He served with Company A, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division.

On March 4, 1968, PFC Michael David Geise was killed in action during an enemy ambush in Gia Dinh, South Vietnam, about 22 miles north of Saigon. He was awarded the Purple Heart. Michael was returned to Rush County and was buried with full military honors in Arlington East Hill Cemetery. In his obituary, Michael was survived by his parents, brother John Geise, sister Kathleen (Geise) Davis, grandparents Cleve and Mattie Geise, and grandmother Icy (VanMeter) Averitt Chance.

At the time of his death, the newspapers were stating that Michael was the third Rush County casualty of the Vietnam War. The first was PFC Bobby Dale Smith, killed in action July 1967. The second listed soldier, Spec. William A. Harter, killed in action February 1968, graduated from Mays and due to living in Knightstown was eventually placed on the Henry County casualty roll. There was a third casualty attributed to Rush County, when Spec. James Keith Merrell of Milroy was killed in action in January 1969.

Michael’s parents - James A. Geise, who served from 1953-1955 in the US Army, passed away in 1977 and Doris Leanna (Averitt) Geise Jackson passed away in 2008. They are both buried in Arlington East Hill Cemetery near Michael.

October 2020, Arlington East Hill Cemetery’s Veterans and First Responders Honor Park was dedicated. PFC Michael D. Geise has a brick on our Walk of Honor and his name was placed on the Killed in Action panel of the “All Gave Some, Some Gave All” podium.

We will continue to honor PFC Michael D. Geise and PFC James A. Geise for their and their family’s service and sacrifice for our Community and Country.

(sources: Ancestry, Find-a-Grave, Newspaper archives, and Arlington East Hill Cemetery records)

More information about our cemetery and its history can be found at www.arlingtoneasthillcemetery.com

