

## **FREEDOM ISN'T FREE**

*John Forrest Ashford, Class of '41, gave his life helping to liberate the Philippines in 1945.*

The first day of spring in 1945 arrived much as it always does, but the men of the 126<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment paid it little notice. Their attention was focused on the Japanese defenders battling to retain control of Luzon, the main island of the Philippines and home of its capital Manila. The regiment, part of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, had been fighting on Luzon since late January as part of General Walter Krueger's Sixth Army.

First lieutenant John Forrest Ashford of Georgetown, SC had jumped into New Guinea as an Army paratrooper in 1943 in the first use of American paratroopers in the Pacific theater. He later transferred to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. While at Clemson, Ashford, 'Jack', to his family and friends, had demonstrated military proficiency, serving as a platoon leader in the College's Corp of Cadets.

On Wednesday, March 21, 1945, Ashford was killed by a Japanese grenade. He was awarded the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster and was interred at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.

Lieutenant Ashford's sacrifice is a poignant reminder of the contributions Clemson alumni have made over the years to secure the freedoms we enjoy today.