

Across France

By the autumn of 1944, the western Allies had pushed the Germans out of France, out of Belgium, and out of Luxembourg. Attacking on a broad front, the multinational forces under the command of General Dwight Eisenhower had reached the fortified German border. They had also reached the end of their supply lines. Moving food, ammunition, fuel, and the other necessities of war across the nearly 500 miles between the port of Cherbourg and the front lines had proven to be an overwhelming challenge for the Services of Supply. As a result, the hell-bent pace of the Allies' summer advance had ground to a halt, leaving many young Americans like Roy Harold Barnard, Jr. staring across the battle lines but unable to take advantage of the Allies' superior armored and mechanized mobility.



Barnard was a mechanical engineering major from Orlando, Florida. The attack on Pearl Harbor that brought America into World War II occurred near the end of the first semester of Barnard's sophomore year. As a junior, Barnard was appointed a cadet sergeant and assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Regiment. He was a member of The Strawberry Leaf, an organization devoted to the forensic activities of debate, oratory, and impromptu speaking. In September of his junior—and last—year on campus, Barnard signed up for the Enlisted Reserve Corps. The ERC was designed to keep young men in college so they could develop the special skills and knowledge needed for the war effort. Men in the ERC would not be immediately drafted. As the United States began to suffer battle casualties, the ERC deferments were soon curtailed. Barnard, like most of his classmates and the underclassmen at Clemson, left campus at the end of the 1943 academic year and headed for active duty.

After completing basic training, Barnard was assigned to Company E, 318th Infantry Regiment, 80th Infantry Division. The “Blue Ridge” Division had originally been composed of draftees from the mountain states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia and had been ordered to federal service in July of 1942. The 80th trained in Tennessee, Kansas, and Arizona before shipping overseas in July 1944.

The 80th landed across Utah Beach on August 5 and quickly became a workhorse of General George Patton's Third Army. It played a key role in the American breakout from the Normandy beachhead, helped trap retreating German forces in the Falaise Pocket, and took part in the dash across France that carried Third Army to the borders of the Third Reich.

As a cold, wet autumn descended across northwest Europe, the 80th continued to push forward, advancing to the east of St. Avold, France and reaching to within five miles of Saarbrücken, Germany. Private First Class Barnard was killed in action on



December 4, just two days short of his twenty-second birthday. In 239 days of combat, the 80th Infantry Division would suffer 180% casualties.

Roy Harold Barnard, Jr. was awarded the Purple Heart. After the war, his remains were returned to Orlando and buried in the Greenwood Cemetery.

