

Coalition Warfare

The outbreak of war created uncertainty on the Clemson campus. Most cadets recognized that they would soon be called upon to fight, but as the 1942-43 academic year started, no one was sure exactly how or when. Many cadets, including Albert Roy Branyon of Honea Path, reported to the commandant's office to enroll in the Enlisted Reserve. The Enlisted Reserve kept young men on campuses all across the country by deferring their draft status—at least for the time being.

Branyon was a vocational agricultural education major and a member of the Class of 1944. As he began his junior—and final year—on campus, he was serving as a cadet sergeant in Company M, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Regiment.



Upon completion of 1943's spring semester, the Clemson campus was cleared of most cadets. Graduating seniors who had completed ROTC reported for officers candidate schools [OCS]. Juniors and underclassmen were ordered to basic training. Those who performed well were offered a chance to attend OCS and earn the gold bars of a second lieutenant. Branyon accepted the challenge and was commissioned into the infantry.



American Soldiers of the 75th Division, 2nd Battalion, 289th Infantry Regiment March Along the Snow-Covered Road on Their Way To Cut Off the St. Vith-Houffalize Road In Belgium.

Lieutenant Branyon was assigned to the 289th Infantry Regiment, part of the 75th Infantry Division. The 75th had been activated at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri in the spring of 1943. In January 1944, it moved to the Louisiana maneuver area for large-scale exercises in preparation for deployment to a combat theater. In November, the division embarked from New York for England, arriving there on the 22nd.

The 75th crossed the English Channel and landed in France on December 13. It was intended to reinforce the Ninth Army of General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group. As the division traveled from France north to the

Netherlands, the Germans unleashed their Ardennes offensive which soon became known as the Battle of the Bulge—and that changed all plans. Now, the 75th was pushed farther north and attached to Field Marshall Montgomery's 21st Army Group on the north shoulder of the bulge. Within these armies were subordinate corps and over the following weeks, the 75th Infantry Division served under the command of VII Corps, XVIII Airborne Corps, then VII Corps again before falling back under XVIII Airborne Corps for a second time. The changing assignments reflected the fluidity of the raging battle and the Allied High Command's flexible response.

In late December, the 75th was one of several divisions constituting First Army's counter-attacking force assaulting the northern flank of the German salient in the Allied lines. As Allied forces slowly pushed the Germans back toward their pre-attack positions, the 75th continued to move back and forth among commands. In January, the division fought under the Sixth Army, then the Seventh Army although the division was attached to the First French Army. In mid-February, as the Allies began to regain the battlefield initiative and push into Germany, the 75th went back to the 12th Army Group where it had started, but was soon attached to the British Second Army. The 75th's history is a testimony to the effectiveness of the Allies' coalition warfare.

On February 21, 1945, the 75th relieved the British 6th Airborne Division on a 24-mile sector near Panningen, Holland, taking up positions along the west bank of the Maas River. Although the division's mission at this point was mainly defensive, reconnaissance patrols were sent across the river nightly to gain intelligence and capture German prisoners. On February 26, First Lieutenant Branyon was killed in action.

Albert Roy Branyon was awarded the Purple Heart and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. He was survived by his parents, two sisters, and two brothers. Branyon was buried in the American Military Cemetery, Margraten, Netherlands and is memorialized at the Eastview Cemetery in Honea Path.

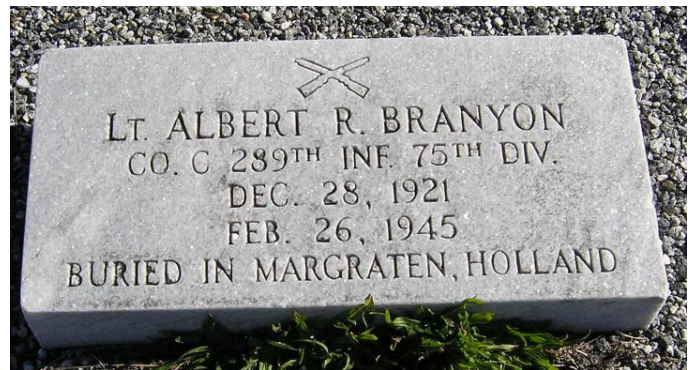


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