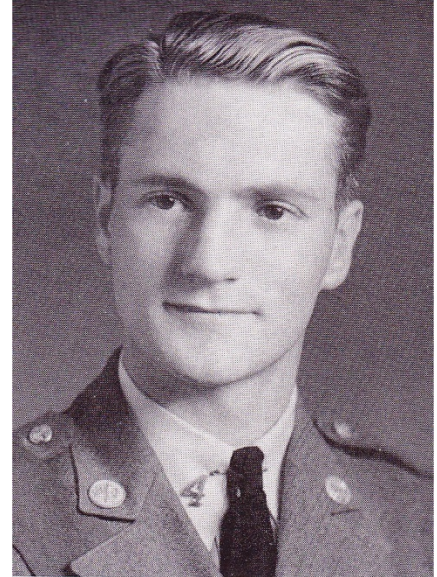


## Four Diamonds

Kennon Smith Breazeale of Pendleton initially enrolled in Clemson College in 1934. He was assigned to Company G of the Cadet Regiment and played basketball as a freshman. It appears that Breazeale returned for his sophomore year, but did not complete it. He left Clemson and enlisted in the Marine Corps. Assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, Breazeale was stationed in Shanghai and tasked with the protection of American citizens and their property following Japan's 1937 invasion of China.



In the fall of 1939, Breazeale returned to Clemson, once more taking up a spot in the sophomore class. An animal husbandry major, Breazeale was a member of the Animal Husbandry Club and Blue Key. No doubt, his experiences in the Marines enhanced his military proficiency and he excelled as a cadet. He



was selected for membership in Scabbard and Blade, the military honor fraternity and was commander of the Senior Platoon. After completing ROTC summer training at Clemson in 1941, Breazeale was appointed a cadet colonel, wearing the four diamonds of Clemson's Cadet Brigade commander. An honor military graduate, Breazeale was awarded his diploma on May 25, 1942. Then, it was back to the military, this time the Army.

Breazeale's initial training took place at Camp Wolters, Texas. He was then sent to Fort Benning, Georgia for infantry officer training. Next, his orders were to return to a familiar spot: the Clemson campus. Second Lieutenant Breazeale was assigned as a member of his alma mater's ROTC cadre, helping prepare cadets for the wartime challenges they were shortly to face.

Breazeale was soon ordered overseas. On December 12, 1944, he joined the veteran 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division holding the southern shoulder of the First Army's front line near the German border with Luxembourg. Three days later, amidst the fog and snow, the Germans launched their winter offensive to the north. The 4<sup>th</sup> fought to contain the southern flank of the German salient. In miserable conditions, Breazeale and his comrades battled through the Christmas season to absorb, then halt, then reverse the German attack.

In late January 1945, as the Germans fell back from their failed offensive, Breazeale's 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment moved into Belgium. A week later, it had crossed into Germany as it advanced on the city of Prüm. On February 10, First Lieutenant Breazeale was killed in action. For his gallantry in the face of the enemy, he was awarded the Silver Star.



Kennon Smith Breazeale was also awarded the Purple Heart. He was survived by his wife, Elsie, and their nine-month-old son, Kennon. Elsie later remarried and served as secretary to several Clemson presidents. Kennon Smith Breazeale's body was returned home and buried in the family plot at Lebanon Baptist Church near Pendleton.

