

## An Unprecedented Repatriation

Joseph Herschel Brown attended Clemson College from 1931 to 1934, during the worst years of the Great Depression. Brown was a mechanical engineering major from nearby Liberty assigned to Company H of the Cadet Brigade. A member of the Class of 1935, he did not return to campus from what would have been his senior year.

We know little about Brown's post-Clemson life. He joined the Army before the United States became involved in World War II and by August 1942 was serving in the Army Air Force in the Pacific Theater.

Captain Brown died on August 20, 1942, from non-battle causes that remain obscured by the passage of the years. Brown was buried near his Pacific duty station, but that's not the end of his story.

Historian Rick Atkinson writes, "In 1947, the next of kin of 270,000 identifiable American dead buried overseas would submit Quarter-master General Form 345 to choose whether they wanted their soldier brought back to the United States or left interred with comrades abroad. More than 60 percent of the dead worldwide would return home, at an average cost to the government of \$564.50 per body, an unprecedented repatriation that only an affluent, victorious nation could afford."

Brown's body was one of those headed home. He was reinterred in Woodlawn Cemetery in Greenville. The final resting places of approximately 130 Clemson men lost in World War II remain scattered around the globe. More than one-third of Clemson's World War II dead lie buried beneath the green, neatly manicured lawns of American military cemeteries in France, Belgium, Italy, Hawaii, and the Netherlands, the sandy plains of North Africa, or the rolling blue depths of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The remains of 40 of these men have never been accounted for.

See also *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-1945*, by Rick Atkinson, 2013.

