

## Skip Bomber

William Robinson Chapman came to Clemson with the intention of becoming a doctor. A pre-med major from Greenville, Chapman was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Chapman and a graduate of Greenville High School. During his two years on campus, Chapman participated in Alpha Phi Omega, the national service fraternity. At the end of his sophomore year, Chapman joined most of Clemson's cadets in bidding the campus "goodbye" for the duration of the war.

Chapman entered the Army Air Force in September 1943. He trained as an air crewman and became a radio operator. After completing his training in the States, Chapman shipped out for the Pacific Theater.

By 1944, the Allies had begun to push the Japanese back toward their home islands. Great battles had already been won—and more were to come.

Chapman was assigned to the 405<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 38<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, part of the Fifth Air Force supporting General Douglas MacArthur's island-hopping return to the Philippines. Nicknamed the "Green Dragons," the 405<sup>th</sup> flew B-25 Mitchell medium bombers. Chapman's squadron provided close air support to US ground forces during the liberation of the Philippines. Later, it began a bombing campaign against industries and airfields on Japanese-occupied Formosa and attacked shipping along the southeast China coast, including along its rivers. Flying abreast, B-25s would strafe enemy ships from low altitudes and utilize skip-bombing tactics, approaching their targets at low angles and skipping bombs along the water's surface much like one would skim a stone.

During the summer of 1945, flying from airfields on Lingayen, the group attacked oil production facilities in Borneo. After the conquest of Okinawa, the 38<sup>th</sup> relocated to Yontan air base from which it began attacks on industries and transportation targets in Japan on July 25.



*A 405th Bomb Squadron B-25 skips its bombs across the water. Note the bomb at the bottom of the picture.*

With the conclusion of hostilities, the 38<sup>th</sup> deployed to Fukuoka on the north shore of the Japanese island of Kyushu as part of the occupation forces. On December 26, 1945, Chapman was a member of the crew of a B-25 dispatched on a routine training mission. Chapman was killed when the plane crashed.

He was survived by his parents. His body was returned to Greenville where he was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.



Photo courtesy 38<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association, <https://www.sunsetters38bg.com/index.php/gallery/search>