

From Blue to Gold

Mrs. Broadus Connell must have felt both pride and anxiety. Four of her five sons were serving in the armed forces. That gave her the right to display Blue Stars in the window of her home in Camden.

One of the stars represented the Connell's son Ivey, a twenty-three-year-old first lieutenant assigned to the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Ivey, a member of the Class of 1943, had attended Clemson from 1939 to 1940 and had studied vocational agricultural education. He entered military service with the National Guard and by September 1943 was a mortar platoon leader in the Army's first paratrooper division, the famous "All American" 82nd Airborne.



The 82nd had been activated in March 1942 at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana under the command of Major General Omar Bradley. In August, the division, now commanded by Matthew Ridgway, was designated "airborne." In the spring of 1943, the 82nd was sent overseas, landing in North Africa. The division's first combat jump was into Sicily as part of the invasion force on July 9, 1943. Once Sicily was secured, American forces under the command of General Mark Clark prepared for the invasion of Italy.

Clark's Fifth Army landed at Salerno on September 9 and began a desperate battle to secure a beachhead against determined German defenders. On September 13, clinging tenaciously to a shortened perimeter, Clark called on the 82nd for a night drop. One of the division's regiments jumped that night. Ivey Connell's 505th followed the next night. By the end of the day, the beachhead was declared secure.

Connell's regiment was involved in reconnaissance actions from early morning on October 5 as the various companies sent out patrols to ascertain enemy strength and positions. By afternoon, companies from the Second Battalion were in contact with the enemy. Connell's 81 mm mortar platoon was providing fire support.

Connell shifted his platoon to a position from which to provide more effective covering fire for a parachute infantry company attempting to withdraw. He established an observation post from which he could direct fire. He was killed when an enemy mortar shell landed on his position.



According to the citation for his Silver Star decoration, Connell's "courageous action contributed to the successful withdrawal of our forces and is a credit to the services."



Connell was survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Broadus Connell; his brother Norman, then also a first lieutenant with the paratroopers in Italy; brother Stephen, a corporal with the paratroop forces in England; brother Roddy, a sergeant with a tank destroyer unit in Alabama; one other brother and two sisters. With Ivey's death, one of the family's Blue Stars was replaced with a Gold one. In addition to the Silver Star, Ivey was awarded the Purple Heart. After the war, his body was returned to Camden where it was buried in the Wateree Baptist Church Cemetery.

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