

## Marked for High Rank

On a campus where military bearing and aptitude were prized, Howard Carlisle Copeland was one of the outstanding cadets in the Class of 1944. Copeland came to Clemson in 1940 from the village of Hinton in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. A mechanical engineering major, he was active in campus organizations ranging from the Glee Club, which he served as president, to Alpha Chi Psi, a social fraternity. As a rising junior, he was selected for membership in Tiger Brotherhood, the campus honor fraternity. He served on the regimental headquarters staff of the Pershing Rifles. As a junior, he was appointed as the Cadet Brigade's sergeant major, the highest-ranking position for a junior cadet. His appointment marked Copeland for high rank during his senior year—but the war intervened. Rather than return for that senior year, Copeland was ordered to active duty as the War Department stripped American campuses for young men to fill the manpower needs of a global conflict.



*The 1942-43 Cadet Brigade commander and his staff. Copeland, far left, and cadet colonel Walker Gardiner, center, would both lose their lives during World War II.*

Copeland volunteered for the Army Air Force and was accepted into its flight training program. As he progressed through the phases of training, he was designated as a bomber pilot and eventually was trained to fly the B-24 Liberator, one of the Army Air Force's workhorse heavy bombers. Once Copeland and his crew completed operational training in their new bomber, they were dispatched to England by one of the established air routes.



Portugal, ostensibly one of Europe's handful of neutrals during World War II, had allowed German warships to refuel at its Azores Islands harbors in the mid-Atlantic. As the fortunes of the war turned towards the Allies, the Portuguese government in 1943 agreed to lease Azores air bases to the British. These bases opened a new Mid-Atlantic air route for US aircraft flying from the States to airbases in England.

In February 1945, Second Lieutenant Copeland's bomber and crew left the United States and, flying the Mid-Atlantic air route, headed for Kindley Field on the island of Bermuda. At Kindley, Copeland and his crew refueled, took on a shipment of spare parts, and loaded up on K-rations for the next leg of their trip, 2200 miles over the Atlantic to the Azores.

At 0220 on February 6, 1945, Copeland and crew lifted off from Kindley Field—but something went quickly wrong. Second Lieutenant Russel Danielson was the aircraft's navigator. He was on the flight deck behind Copeland and copilot William Chaffee during the takeoff. "The ship was heavily loaded," Danielson reported to accident investigators. "I think the pilot was trying to climb too fast... I heard a lot of screaming. The engines sounded OK. I tried to brace myself but there was too much loose stuff such as K-rations and spare parts." The plane crashed into Castle Harbor, the large body of water on the south side of the airfield. Danielson believed that Copeland was killed on impact when the bomber struck the water.

Second Lieutenant Howard Carlisle Copeland was survived by his parents and two brothers. He is memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing of the East Coast Memorial in New York and at Greenlawn Memorial in Spartanburg.

