

Fighter

Lauren Dwight Dreisbach, Jr. of Columbia was a fighter. A general science major and member of the Class of 1941, Dreisbach was a pugilist on Clemson's intercollegiate boxing team. Under the guidance of Coach Bob Jones, the Tiger punchers captured the Southern Conference championship in 1939-40 with Dreisbach boxing in the 145 pound class. Dreisbach was a member of the Block "C" Club and Sigma Epsilon fraternity. In the Cadet Brigade, during his junior year, he served as the sergeant major of the 2nd Battalion of 2nd Regiment. He was also a member of the Junior Staff club composed of cadet staff sergeants.



Perhaps anticipating American entry into the growing war overseas, Dreisbach left Clemson and enlisted as an aviation cadet in the Army



Air Corps in 1940. He took basic flight training at Randolph Field and received his second lieutenant's commission and his pilot's wings at Kelly Field, both near San Antonio, Texas. Second Lieutenant Dreisbach was designated as a fighter pilot.

Dreisbach met and married Anndel Nairn of Phoenix, Arizona. Their son was born in 1942.

With American entry into the war, the pace of growth in the Army Air Force accelerated. Captain Dreisbach was appointed commander of the 17th Army Air Force Training Detachment at Twenty-Nine Palms, California. While instructing fledgling Army flyers there in March 1942, Dreisbach survived a mid-air collision in a PT-17 Stearman Kaydet used for primary flight training. Dreisbach applied for overseas duty and trained in the twin-engine P-38 Lightning fighter.

Mid-1944 found Dreisbach once again in the States, once more assigned to a Texas air base. The 72nd Fighter Wing was responsible for single-engine fighter training in the Midwest. Both operational unit training and fighter pilot replacement training fell under its auspices. The twenty-four year old Major Dreisbach was based at the 72nd's airfield at Dalhart in the northwest corner of the Texas panhandle.



On June 6, as Allied forces were storming the beaches in Normandy, Dreisbach checked out a P-40N Warhawk fighter for a routine daytime air-to-ground gunnery flight. At approximately 1130 hours, while making his eighth pass at the target, Dreisbach kept the nimble fighter in its dive beyond the range's foul line. He did not begin to pull out of the dive until just over the target. The belly of his aircraft struck the ground. The plane slid about 200 feet before bouncing into the air and catching fire. It slammed into the ground about one thousand feet beyond that point of initial contact. The force of the impact fractured Dreisbach's skull, killing him immediately.

after her father, was born after his death. He was buried in the Greenwood Memorial Park in Phoenix, Arizona.

