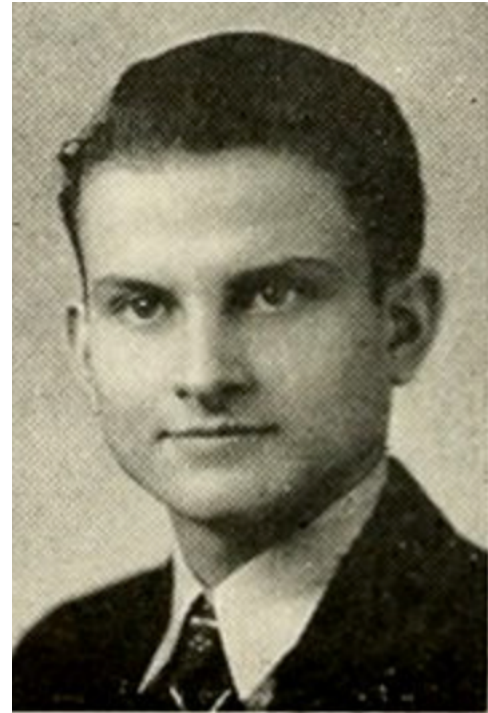


Conflict and Confusion

We know precious little about Malcolm Brodie Edens, a member of Clemson's Class of 1947. The 1939 Taps lists him as a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Regiment of the Corps of Cadets, but no picture identified as Edens is included in the annual. Edens was among that large group of Clemson cadets whose educations were interrupted by World War II. In Edens's case, the interruption was voluntary. Following stints at Presbyterian College and then Clemson, Edens dropped out of school in October 1941, even before the United States was dragged into the war. Conflicting accounts of Edens's history pop up at this point. Although his home was in Pumpkintown in Pickens County, one account shows Edens enlisting in Miami, Florida while another places his enlistment at Fort McPherson, Georgia. Regardless of the location, Edens volunteered for the Army Air Force and was accepted into the aviation cadet program.



Edens would eventually be assigned to the 503rd Fighter Squadron flying escort and strafing missions from RAF Fowlmere just south of Cambridge, England. On November 26, 1944, while piloting a P-51 Mustang fighter, Captain Edens shot down two German FW-190s in aerial combat southeast of Dümmer Lake, near Hanover, Germany. Edens would survive the battle and the war. He returned to Clemson and resumed his studies, graduating with a degree in dairy science on June 8, 1947.

The Korean War erupted with a surprise attack by Communist North Korean forces in June 1950. Edens had made the transition from the Army Air Force to the Air Force and was assigned to the 18th Fighter Bomber Wing. Here again, Edens's record becomes confused. Rather than flying above the battlefield, Edens was fighting on it, serving as a forward air controller alongside Army ground forces along with radio operator Sergeant Philip Tilch. In late November, the unit Edens and Tilch were supporting was in danger of being overrun by North Korean troops. The two evaded the enemy until their capture on November 30. Without food or water, Edens and Tilch were forced to march fifteen miles north in frigid weather. Suffering from severely frostbitten hands and feet, Edens was no longer able to walk. His captors left him in a roadside hut along with ten other prisoners.



18th Wing Insignia

Post-war debriefings from repatriated prisoners offer conflicting details of Edens's fate. Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Brown, also a prisoner of war, said that he had been told that Edens died from malnutrition and gangrene in February 1951 near Kunry. Captain William McTaggart, Jr., was

told that Edens died earlier, on December 22. Major Roy Gamling reported that he last saw Edens on December 10 or 11 and that Edens was in such poor condition and excruciating pain that he did not believe he could long survive.

In 1951, a newly captured US officer arrived in the prisoner of war camp holding First Lieutenant William Funchess, Clemson Class of 1948. The officer asked if there were any prisoners there from Clemson. He told Funchess that Edens had died on the march north and that he had removed the class ring from Edens's finger with the intent of eventually returning the ring to Edens's family. "With sincere apologies," Funchess recalled, "this POW officer explained that a Communist soldier had confiscated the ring, and it was probably lost forever somewhere in North Korea or China." As was Malcolm Edens.

Subsequently promoted, Major Edens was never reported by the North Koreans as a prisoner of war and his remains were never recovered. He remains one of the 7,841 Korean veterans still missing in action.

Over the course of two wars, Major Edens was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Air Medal with 8 Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart, Prisoner of War Medal, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, and Republic of Korea War Service Medal. He is memorialized at the Courts of the Missing, National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii and at the Oolenoy Baptist Church Cemetery in Pumpkintown.

