

## Two Bronze Stars

It didn't take long. Less than two months after John Thomson Ford, IV collected his diploma on the stage of the Outdoor Theater on May 24, 1943, he enlisted in the Army. Ford, who earned a degree in agricultural economics, was from Abingdon, Maryland. At Clemson, he was a cadet first lieutenant serving as the executive officer of Company I, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. Ford was excellent at drill as evidenced by his selection to the Junior and then Senior Platoons. He was a member of the Animal Husbandry Club and the Agricultural Economics Club. Ford was also a member of the Keystone Club and the Canterbury Club.



After enlisting in Baltimore, Maryland on July 22, Ford was assigned to the 407<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. The division had been organized the previous September at Camp Maxey, Texas and was filling out its ranks and training for eventual deployment overseas.

That deployment came in September 1944 when the division landed at Cherbourg, France. After a brief period of training at Valognes, the division moved up to the border between the Netherlands and Germany.

Cold, wet weather made campaigning difficult in late fall. Frequent cloud cover limited the effectiveness of Allied air power. Nonetheless, the 102<sup>nd</sup> entered combat on October 26 and on November 3 the division took responsibility for the sector between Wurn and Waurichen, a front about six miles wide and about the same distance inside Germany. In late November, the division attacked to close with the Roer River, reaching the villages of Welz, Flossdorf, and Linnich on the west bank. Then the Germans intervened.

On December 16, sixty miles to the south, the Germans launched their great winter offensive which would become known as the Battle of the Bulge. Allied commanders pulled units from north and south of the expanding bulge to form counterattack forces. While these units were redeployed, the 102<sup>nd</sup>'s orientation changed to the defensive, covering the sector of the front from Wurm to Barmen. While the battle raged to the south, the 102<sup>nd</sup> prepared for river-crossing operations once it could resume the offensive.

That resumption came on February 23, 1945, when the 102<sup>nd</sup> attacked and established a bridgehead across the Roer. Over the ten days that followed, the division battled to the west bank of the Rhine River at Krefeld. During this operation, Ford was wounded for the second time. He died



from these wounds on February 26. Ford was awarded the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster. In addition, his gallantry in combat earned two awards of the Bronze Star. First Lieutenant Ford was buried in the American Military Cemetery, Margraten, Netherlands.

