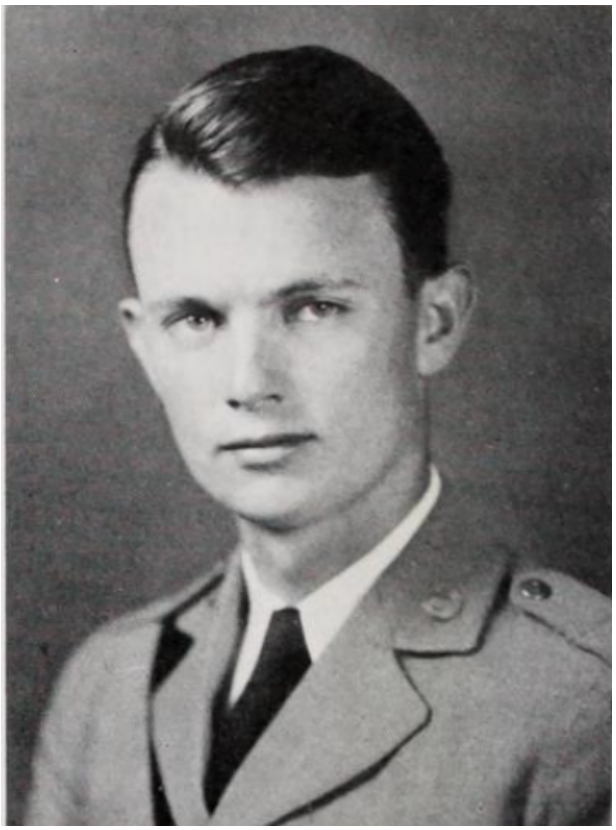
Decorated Combat Leader



Bedford Hayne Forrest was not a typical Clemson cadet. A four-year private in the cadet corps, Forrest nonetheless attended ROTC summer camp at Fort McClellan, Alabama. This career private would go on to achieve an impressive combat record during World War II.

Forrest was from Saluda and was an agronomy major. He belonged to the Saluda County and Agronomy Clubs. He was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion of the Cadet Regiment.

Forrest graduated on May 31, 1932 with a reserve commission in the Army. He took a position as an agronomist with the soil conservation service in High Point, North Carolina.

As the United States embarked on a military expansion in anticipation of war, Forrest was called to active duty in February 1941. After serving in various training positions during the United States' early years of the conflict, Forrest was ordered to the Army's Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in January 1944. The following month, he headed overseas with the 69th Tank Battalion of the 6th Armored Division.

Forrest's 6th Armored Division landed across Normandy's Utah Beach on July 19 and was committed to the battle to seal off the base of the Cotentin Peninsula, at the northern tip of which sat the critical port of Cherbourg. On August 6, Forrest was seriously wounded in action. For his gallantry, he was awarded the Bronze Star in addition to the Purple Heart.

Despite his wound, Forrest soon returned to his battalion. The 6th Armored, considered by General George Patton to be one of the two best division in his Third Army, helped drive the Germans eastward toward their own border. Plagued by supply and in particular fuel shortages, the Allied advance slowed as autumn deepened. By November, the 6th was punching at the Germans in the rugged Vosges Mountains to the south of Strasbourg, France.

On November 26, Lieutenant Colonel Forrest was in command of Task Force Forrest, a tank, infantry, and combat engineer formation attacking northeastward through rugged forests south of Puttelange. Forrest's mission was to seize the road junction on the north edge of the woods leading to the town of Hostehaut. Attacking with two tank-led columns near the town of St. Jean-Rohrbach, Forrest guided his task force forward in the early morning dawn. Light resistance was easily overcome, but the columns then encountered enemy roadblocks. Unable to bypass the obstacles due to the thick woods, the task force began to take a pounding from German mortar and artillery fire. With the tanks unable to maneuver and the infantry unable to

advance without tank support, Forrest began to direct a withdrawal. Despite the enemy's advantage of fighting from prepared defensive positions supported by indirect fire, casualties for Task Force Forrest were light: 14 wounded, two missing, and only one killed. That one was Lieutenant Colonel Forrest, who was struck down by a mortar burst as he stood in the turret of his tank issuing orders. According to a history of the division, Major General Robert Grow, its commander, was stunned by the news of Forrest's death as he considered him one of the division's best tank commanders. Forrest was awarded the Silver Star for his heroism in combat.

In addition to the Purple Heart, Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster, and Silver Star, Lieutenant Colonel Forrest was posthumously awarded the Legion of Merit. He was buried at the Lorraine American Cemetery in St. Avold, France. He is also memorialized at the Emory United Methodist Church Cemetery in Saluda.

Bedford Hayne Forrest was survived by his mother, sister, half-sister, and two half-brothers. He was described by the local newspaper as "a young man of strong character…unswerving in his ideas of right and integrity with a high regard for duty."