

Great Depression, Greater Sacrifice

Ralph Cleveland Glanton came to Clemson College in 1933 from Grantville, Georgia. It was a difficult time in the South. The agricultural economy was reeling from drought and the effects of the Great Depression. Unemployment in the United States peaked that year at 24.75%. Many families, like the Glantons, put their hopes in education.

Glanton progressed through the ranks of the cadet corps, serving as a sergeant and then first lieutenant in his junior and senior years. In the summer between these two years, he attended ROTC Camp at Fort McClellan, Alabama. An agricultural engineering major, Glanton was a member of ASAE, the Georgia Cracker Club and the Intramural Governing Board.



When America was finally pulled into the war, Glanton wound up in the 1st Armored Division, aptly named for it was the first American armored division to see combat during the war when it landed in North Africa in November 1942. The division arrived in Italy in November of 1943 and bivouacked at Capua, thirty miles north of Naples.

The fighting in Italy was fearful. As fall gave way to winter, the weather turned miserable. Freezing rain, sleet and snow turned the ground into muck and forced supplies to be ferried forward by mule train or on the backs of the soldiers themselves. And then there were the Germans to contend with. The Germans held the high ground, a fortified front known as the Bernhardt Line which ran west from Monte Cassino and which controlled access to the Liri Valley, the pathway to the northwest and Rome. With Prussian precision, the defenders had cut down trees to clear interlocking fields of fire and had registered artillery targets for quick action.

By the end of December, as soldiers shivered in their foxholes and vehicles, the 1st Armored Division was readied for an attack. Press correspondents described an attack against the entrenched German positions as “suicidal.” Nonetheless, on January 4, 1944, elements of the division attacked the heavily defended Mount Porchia in the early evening darkness. Fighting was vicious and casualties were high. Not until late morning on January 7 was the crest of the mountain finally taken. Even then, defenders had to beat back a German counterattack at 0100 hours on January 8. As the western slopes of the mountain were being cleared on January 9, First Lieutenant Ralph Glanton was killed.



Glanton was awarded the Silver Star for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy. He was survived by his wife and son and by his mother, brother and three sisters. After the war, Glanton's remains were returned to the United States. He is buried in Hillview East Cemetery, LaGrange, Georgia.

