

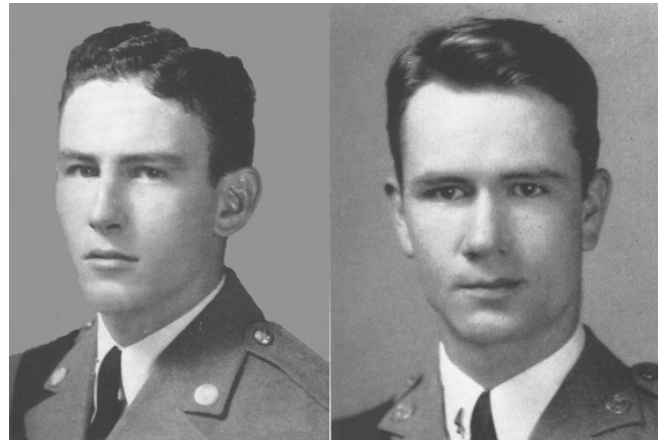
Staggering Figures; Staggering Sacrifices

The figure is staggering: the Army Air Forces averaged 1,170 aircraft accidents per month during World War II—*not including* losses from combat.

At its peak strength, the Army Air Forces consisted of 2.6 million people and nearly 80,000 aircraft, ranging from simple, single engine trainers to the complex state-of-the-art four-engine B-29 Superfortress. The urgent need for airplanes, fuel, ammunition and above all pilots and crews meant that training regimens were kept to a minimum. Capable flyers were needed to fight the enemy—not punch holes in the skies over the United States. As a result, accident rates were high, very high compared to modern tolerances. The workhorse heavy bombers, the B-17 Flying Fortress and the B-24 Liberator, averaged 30 and 35 accidents per 100,000 flight hours compared to modern Air Force accident rates of less than 2.

Clemson classmates Clifford Gormley and Daniel Pope were two victims of one such accident.

Gormley and Pope were members of Clemson's Class of 1939 and were both islanders: Gormley was a Rhode Island Yankee; Pope hailed from Edisto. "CJ" Gormley was a textile chemistry major and a member of Phi Psi honorary society. He was a cadet second lieutenant as a senior and was a member of the rifle team. Pope was a cadet captain and company commander. He majored in agricultural engineering and served as president of ASAE and business manager of the *Agrarian*, the student publication of the School of Agriculture. He was a member of the Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior Platoons and Tiger Brotherhood.



Gormley, left, and Pope

Following graduation, Gormley returned to Rhode Island, where he enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in the Army Air Corps. He trained to become a pilot and received his wings at Maxwell Field, Alabama in June, 1940. He was released from the service, but recalled to active duty in July 1941 as the Army embarked on its rapid, pre-war expansion. Gormley was assigned to the Air Corps Advanced Flying School. Following service in the states and overseas he was assigned to the Smyrna Air Army Airfield, where he became a pilot instructor.

Pope enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in December, 1940, and was accepted by the Air Force for pilot training. Army Air Forces pilot training was evolving by this time as the service's leaders developed equipment, airfields, training doctrine and cadre to prepare an ever-growing number of pilots and air crewmen for the looming conflict. Flight training was divided into stages, the first being pre-flight, which was a six-week "boot camp" focused on physical fitness and basic military training. Cadets were taught the mechanics and physics of flight and required to pass refresher courses in mathematics and physics. They were evaluated for 10 hours in a flight simulator and then performed a one-hour dual flight with a pilot-instructor. Those who passed were given Cadet Wings and promoted to Primary Pilot Training. Here, cadets were taught basic flight using two-seat training aircraft. Successful cadets would finish this stage with 60-65 hours of training and would be sent to Basic Pilot Training. Formation, cross country and night flying were taught in this phase using single-engine training aircraft. Seventy more flight hours would be accumulated before the cadet moved up to Advanced Pilot Training. Here, cadets would receive an additional 75-80 flight hours in either advanced single-engine aircraft or, for those going into bombers or transports, twin-

engine trainers. In the final phase, Transition Pilot Training, pilots would get two months of flying in either operational fighters or bombers based on their anticipated combat assignments.

Two weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Army authorized the construction of a bomber training base at Smyrna, 25 miles southeast of Nashville, Tennessee. By the middle of 1943, the Army Air Forces' 660th School Squadron (Special) was conducting transition training for pilots who would soon fly the B-24 Liberator heavy bomber in combat theaters.

On the morning of Wednesday June 16, a B-24 training flight was scheduled with Captain CJ Gormley as the pilot instructor and his classmate Captain Daniel Pope as student pilot. By this point in his training, Pope would have earned his pilot's wings. His mission that late spring morning was to continue his familiarization with the B-24D, the type of aircraft he might soon be flying into combat.



As the aircraft clawed its way into the air, something went wrong. Gormley, Pope and the other three members of the flight crew were killed in the crash and the airplane was destroyed. This accident was a one event among more than 2,000 aircraft accidents recorded by the Army Air Forces that single month. That staggering figure includes no combat accidents and is restricted to mishaps occurring only in the United States.

Gormley's remains were returned to Cranston, Rhode Island where he was buried on June 23 with full military honors in the family plot in the Cranston Cemetery. He earned the American Defense Service Medal and the World War II Victory Medal. He was survived by his wife, Maxine, formerly of Fitchburg, Massachusetts and his brother, John H. Gormley, Jr. of Cranston.

Pope's body was returned to his parents, and he was buried in the Presbyterian Church Cemetery on Edisto Island. He received the World War II Victory Medal and the Purple Heart. He was survived by his wife, Dorothy, who returned to her home in Alabama following his death.

According to the Army Air Forces, more than 14,900 personnel and 13,873 airplanes were lost inside the continental United States during World War II. Among them were classmates CJ Gormley and Daniel Pope whose sacrifice is no less meaningful for having occurred in training.