

## Jolly Roger

William Gene Hatley's arrival on campus coincided with Clemson's transition from military college to Army training center. Hatley came to Clemson for the summer session of 1943 to study engineering, just as most cadets were heading toward active duty training assignments. At the conclusion of the spring semester that year, the War Department ordered most cadets to report for either basic training or, if they had completed the ROTC curriculum, officers' candidate schools. The cadets' places were taken by Army soldiers who arrived to study engineering under the provisions of the Army Specialized Training Program. Hatley's stay on campus would be brief.

According to his great niece Lauren Coggins, Gene Hatley was "the darling of the family," growing up in Albemarle, just east of Charlotte, North Carolina. At age eighteen, on October 8, 1943, Hatley enlisted at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and volunteered for the Army Air Force.

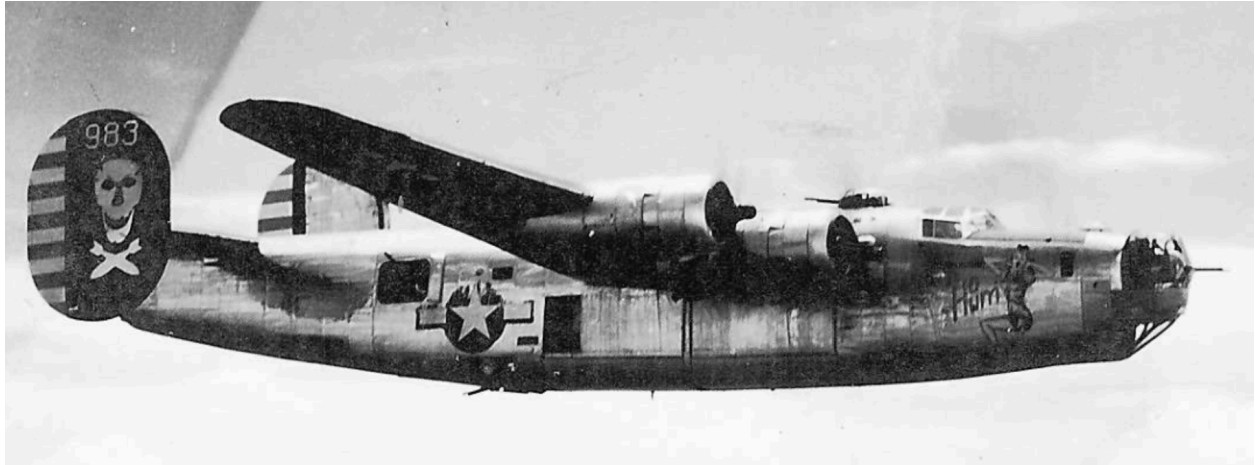


Following basic and advanced training, Hatley shipped out to the Pacific Theater where he was

assigned to the 400<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 90<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, the Jolly Rogers. The Jolly Rogers had deployed overseas in late 1942 and had supported General MacArthur's campaign in New Guinea as part of the Fifth Air Force flying from Dobodura. In February 1944, the Jolly Rogers moved to a new base at Nadzab in northeastern New Guinea. In August, the group moved again, this time to Biak in order to support MacArthur's return to the Philippines. That autumn, the 90<sup>th</sup> began flying longer range missions against oil refineries in Borneo. The group moved to San Jose, Mindoro, in the Philippines in January 1945 to support ground forces battling the Japanese on Luzon. Flying the B-24 Liberator heavy bomber, the 90<sup>th</sup> attacked Japanese industrial targets, railways, airfields, and harbor facilities on the Asian mainland and on the occupied island of Formosa.



*From left, Gene, his mother, father, and his sister Mildred.*



*Hatley's B-24J Ho Hum of the 90th Bomb Group.*

*[<https://www.worldwarphotos.info/gallery/usa/aircrafts-2-3/b24/b-24j-42-109983-ho-hum-90th/>]*

On April 8, 1945, Corporal Hatley was assigned as the tail gunner on a B-24J nicknamed *Ho Hum*. The mission that day was to bomb targets in the vicinity of Shinchin, Formosa. Shortly after takeoff, the aircraft caught fire and then exploded, apparently due to a faulty fuel transfer. Seven of the crew were killed, three others were rescued near Penden Island.

Gene Hatley was survived by his parents and his sister. He was awarded the Purple Heart and the Air Medal. He is memorialized at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial and at the Salem United Methodist Church Cemetery in Albemarle.