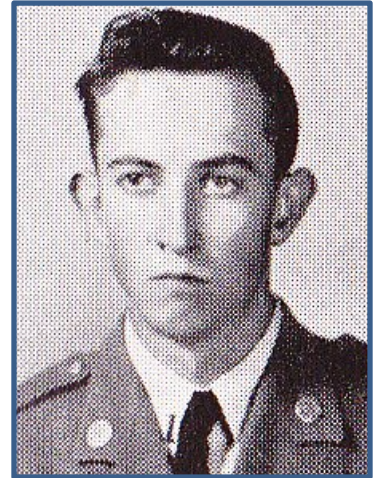


## In the Darkest Month, Hendrix Answered the Call

George Bell Hendrix volunteered for military service the month after Pearl Harbor was attacked. Hendrix, from Lexington, was only a year old when his mother died. He was “reared” by his aunt Minnie and graduated from Lexington High School.

Hendrix attended Clemson for the 1938-39 academic year, but did not return. He entered the “mercantile business” and was also associated with the Palmetto Life Insurance Company.

Hendrix completed his Air Corps training and by the summer of 1943 was on his way overseas. He was assigned to the 414<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 97<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group which was operating in the Mediterranean Theater as part of the Twelfth Air Force. Headquartered at Depienne Airfield, a former German Luftwaffe base in northern Tunisia, the 414<sup>th</sup> flew missions against enemy shipping in the Mediterranean and targeted airfields, docks, harbors and railroad marshalling yards in North Africa, southern France, Sardinia, Sicily and Italy as part of the Allies’ strategy to disrupt Axis supply lines to German forces in North Africa. The squadron also bombed in preparation for and later in support of the invasions of Sicily and Italy.



In late August 1943, the squadron was flying missions preparatory to the upcoming invasion of Italy. Preparing for such a mission involved extensive planning by the operations staff, briefing the crews and readying the aircraft. The 414<sup>th</sup> flew the B-17 Flying Fortress, an aircraft revered by its crews for its durability and flying characteristics. The B-17 could carry 4,500 pounds of bombs or more depending on the range to the target. Before each mission, those bombs, along with the aircraft’s machine guns and ammunition, had to be loaded aboard. In addition, sufficient fuel to feed the four 1200 horsepower engines had to be pumped into the wing tanks.

On Thursday, August 26, 1943, during the loading process for one of the squadron aircraft, Sergeant Hendrix and five of his comrades were killed when the B-17 they were loading with bombs exploded.

Hendrix was survived by his father, H. C. Hendrix; four brothers, one of whom was serving in the Pacific; and three sisters. Following the war, his remains were returned to Lexington for a private committal service conducted from St. Peter’s Lutheran Church.



George Bell Hendrix answered the call to duty during one of

his country's darkest months and he made the ultimate sacrifice just as the tide of battle was turning in its favor.