

Young and Responsible

The war broke out right about the time James Laurie Hollingsworth, Jr. and his Class of 1943 comrades arrived on campus. Even so, the fighting in Poland seemed far away and not much of a concern to the 706 young men who had their heads shaved and donned their gray cadet uniforms for their first semester at Clemson in September 1939. Little did they realize that the growing conflagration would soon engulf the whole world and lay special claim to their futures.



Hollingsworth, a Florence native, enrolled at Clemson from Greenwood, where he had moved in 1937. He was an industrial education student, but we know little of his Clemson career, only that he joined the Army Air Corps during December of his junior year after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in September 1942 and almost immediately found himself flying into harm's way, landing with Allied forces in the November invasion of North Africa.

As a fighter pilot, Hollingsworth fought and helped win the North Africa campaign, driving the Germans and their Italian allies off the continent. Earning promotions, Hollingsworth was transferred into the Transport Command, remaining there until reassigned to fighters in the months leading up to the invasion of Europe.

Captain Hollingsworth was at the controls of his P-38 Lightning fighter on May 23, 1944 acting as operational commander of a flotilla of several squadrons. While leading the flight over the English Channel, Hollingsworth was killed in action.



Hollingsworth had not reached his 23rd birthday at the time of his death. It is easy to forget that military service in general and World War II in particular thrust great responsibility upon very young men. Daily, hourly, sometimes from minute to minute, these young leaders were called upon to make split-second, life-or-death decisions. That they prevailed in a struggle between totalitarianism and democracy attests to the strength of freedom and the ultimate sacrifices of these young men.

Captain Hollingsworth was awarded the Air Medal with two gold stars and the Purple Heart.

Four years after his death, Captain Hollingsworth's remains were returned to South Carolina where he was reinterred with full military honors at Abbeville's Long Cane Cemetery. He was survived by his parents.