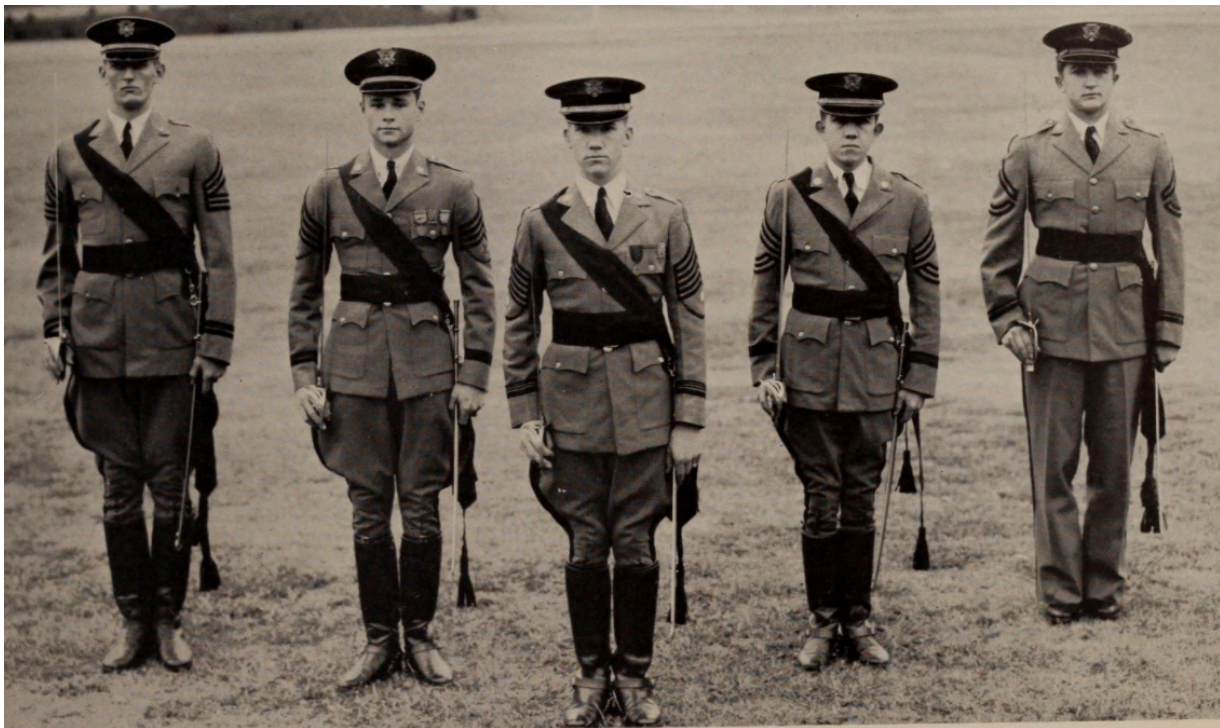


Courage and Determination

“You feel small in the presence of dead men,” wrote columnist Ernie Pyle in one of his poignant dispatches from Italy, “and you don’t ask silly questions.” Pyle was embedded with the 36th Infantry Division during its miserable late autumn campaign against German defensive lines in the rugged ridges north of San Pietro. Captain Lewis Samuel Horton, Jr. of Pageland was the commander of Company C, in the division’s 143rd Infantry Regiment.

Horton was a vocational agricultural education major and a member of Clemson’s Class of 1940. He built a successful record as a cadet, rising through the ranks each year and serving as a lieutenant colonel and commander of the 2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment as a senior. Well respected by his classmates, Horton was elected to the Senior Council which served as liaison between the cadets and college administration and occasionally was called upon to impose discipline upon wayward cadets. He was the leader of the Senior Platoon, was a member of Scabbard and Blade, the honorary military society, and attended ROTC summer training at Fort McClellan, Alabama.



Horton, center, with his battalion staff, which included future Distinguished Alumni Banks McFadden Class of 1940, left, and Roy Pearce, Class of 1941, right.

Horton’s achievements extended beyond the military aspects of campus life. He served as president of the Chesterfield-Clemson Club and was a member of the Palmetto Literary Society, the Grange, Dairy Club, and the First Sergeants Club. He served as a manager for the basketball team and as a

commencement marshal. Following graduation, Horton journeyed north and attended the United States Military Academy at West Point for six months. He entered active duty as an Army second lieutenant in February 1941.

Training assignments took Horton from Georgia to Missouri, Alabama to Florida and then to the Carolina Maneuvers. Horton's 36th Infantry Division arrived in French North Africa in April 1943 and took up duties guarding German and Italian troops who surrendered during the Tunisian Campaign. The 36th did not participate in the invasion of Sicily, but Fifth Army commander General Mark Clark picked it to spearhead Allied landings at Salerno, Italy in September. The 36th became the first American ground combat unit to fight on the European continent.

The 36th fought well but suffered heavy losses against the German defenders and was pulled from the front lines to rest and receive replacements. In mid-November, the division returned to the front lines and captured the village of San Pietro despite continued strong enemy resistance and worsening weather.

Captain Horton had now taken command of Company C of the 143rd Infantry Regiment. The rugged terrain and the German's fortified Bernhardt defensive line placed a premium on high ground. Horton's battalion was assigned to capture Hill 1205 and then proceed toward San Vittore. On December 9, between defending Hill 1205 from determined German counterattacks, Captain Horton led his platoon leaders on a reconnaissance to identify vantage points from which to continue their attacks. Horton described his plan of attack, pointing out the key terrain features and each platoon's role. As he did so, he was killed by sniper fire. Despite the loss of its commander, Company C was able to execute Horton's plan and capture its objectives. The battalion's after-action report praised Horton's "leadership marked by courage and determination."

Despite the bitter weather and mounting losses, the soldiers continued to fight and continued to push the Germans—ever so slowly—farther north. "The mystery to me," Pyle wrote, "is that there is anybody at all, no matter how strong, who can keep his spirit from breaking in the midst of battle."

Captain Lewis Samuel Horton, Jr. was survived by his parents, four brothers, and four sisters. He was awarded the Purple Heart, Presidential Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, American Defense Service Medal with Foreign Service Clasp, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 3 Bronze Service Stars, and World War II Victory Medal. He was buried in the Sicily-Rome American Military Cemetery and is memorialized at First Baptist Church in Pageland.



See also *Brave Men* by Ernie Pyle, Henry Holt and Company, 1944.