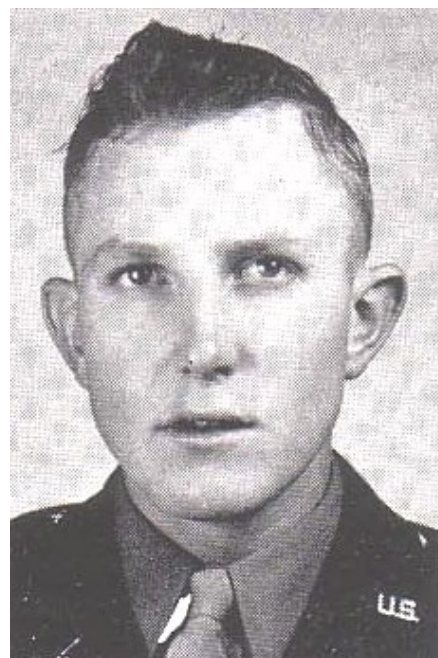


## Rainbow Warrior

Like the other members of his Class of 1944, Henry Milton Laye, Jr., a mechanical engineering major from Seneca, had his collegiate career interrupted by orders from the War Department. All junior cadets and underclassmen were sent to basic training. Those like Henry Laye, who demonstrated military aptitude, were subsequently ordered to officers' candidate schools to become the junior leaders of the still expanding Army. Henry Laye would soon be assigned to one of the Army's storied divisions, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry.

In 1917, an Army major named Douglas MacArthur suggested the creation of a new division composed of National Guard units from several states. The resulting organization, MacArthur explained, would "stretch over the whole country like a rainbow." The new division, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, became known as the "Rainbow Division." When the 42<sup>nd</sup> was reactivated for service in World War II, Army officials honored its legacy by filling its ranks with men from all forty-eight states. Henry Laye was one of the South Carolinians assigned to the Rainbow Division's 232<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment.



The division trained for its eventual combat deployment at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. The division arrived at Marseille, France on December 8-9, 1944 and was under the command of General Alexander Patch's 7<sup>th</sup> Army. On Christmas Eve, the division relieved the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, entering combat in the vicinity of Strasbourg, the French city resting on the west bank of the Rhine River directly across from Germany. Most of the action at that moment was farther north, where what would become known as the Battle of the Bulge was raging. Before long, the desperate Germans, formerly masters of Europe but now reeling from the Anglo-American offensive in the west and the Soviet onslaught from the east, would attempt yet another counter-offensive, Operation Northwind.



By early January, Laye's 232<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment was stretched to the limit, defending a front thirty-three miles long. On January 5, as French troops were moving into the line to relieve the cold, weary Americans in Strasbourg, the Germans attacked. Enemy infantry and armor, ferried across the Rhine, overwhelmed the thinly held American lines resulting in the capture of more than eleven hundred American soldiers. Aggressive counterattacks and assistance from the neighboring 314<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment eventually repulsed the German attack.

Ten days later, the elements of the 232<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, including Laye's platoon from K Company, were occupying French towns on the west bank of the Rhine River when Germans from the 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute Division attacked. In three days of attacks and counterattacks in the cold, snowy villages and woodlands along the river, the Germans were driven off, but the regiment took many casualties, including Laye.

Second Lieutenant Laye was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. He was buried in the Ardennes American Military Cemetery in Belgium.

