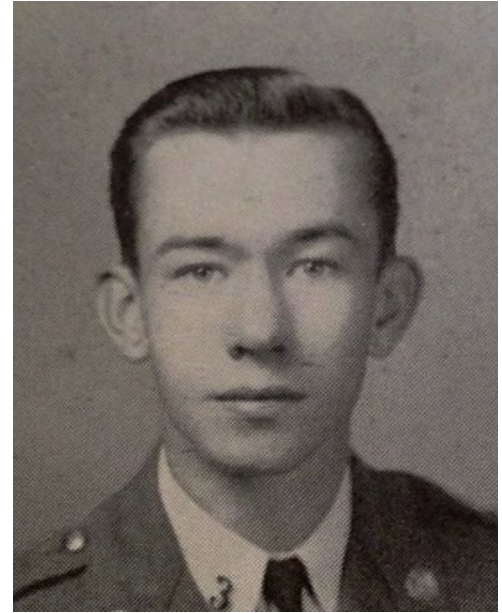


Perseverance, Service, and Sacrifice

Zach Hagan McCord enrolled in Clemson College in September 1940. War was raging in Europe and the Far East; President Roosevelt was running for an unprecedented third term in office. McCord, from the small town of Hodges in Greenwood County planned to become a doctor and majored in pre-medicine.

McCord left Clemson in the spring of 1943. He later enrolled at the Medical College of South Carolina, earning a medical degree on June 5, 1947. Based on that degree, McCord was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree by Clemson three days later. A Naval Reserve officer, Lieutenant McCord was called to active duty in 1951 during the Korean War.



Like McCord, the destroyer USS *Hobson* was from South Carolina, having been launched at the Charleston Navy Yard just three months before the Pearl Harbor attack. During World War II, the *Hobson* took part in the North Africa landings, escorted convoys to Europe and supported the Normandy invasion on D-Day. Transferred to the Pacific during the winter of 1945, the *Hobson* was damaged by a kamikaze attack off Okinawa that April.

Seven years later, Lieutenant McCord was assigned as a medical officer aboard the *Hobson* as it prepared to participate in exercises in the North Atlantic. The *Hobson* was one of the escorting destroyers for the fleet carrier USS *Wasp*. The *Hobson's* commanding officer had been aboard for only five weeks, during which the ship had been underway for just seven days. On April 26, 1952, the *Hobson* was engaged in nighttime flight operations in anticipation of deployment to Korea. When the *Wasp* maneuvered into the wind to recover its aircraft, all of its escorting vessels likewise had to maneuver to maintain their proper places in the formation relative to the big carrier. Here, the *Hobson's* skipper committed a tragic error. Instead of passing to the rear of the large carrier, the captain ordered a series of turns that caused the smaller destroyer to cross ahead of *Wasp*. Officer of the deck, Lt. William Hoefler became so concerned by the captain's orders that he objected and then walked off the bridge of the ship, a breach of naval protocol. When Hoefler realized what was about to happen, he rushed back on to the bridge and shouted, "Prepare for collision!" But Hoefler's warning was too late.

The *Wasp* struck the *Hobson* amidships, rolling the destroyer over and breaking her in two. The *Hobson* and 176 members of her crew, including Lieutenant McCord were lost as the ship sank in less than five minutes.

A Navy Court of Inquiry investigated the disaster. Based on the testimony of Hoefler and two other crewmen on the bridge that night, the court determined that the captain, who was killed in the collision, had “committed a grave error in judgment.”

Zach McCord had persevered to obtain his education, returning to school to earn his medical degree. He served in the Naval Reserve and answered when his country called during time of crisis. While tending to the care of his shipmates, he was lost at sea in a tragic accident. McCord and his lost shipmates are memorialized on the USS *Hobson* Memorial on the Battery in Charleston. Zach McCord’s sacrifice is a painful reminder of the responsibility that comes with freedom—a responsibility borne with distinction by the Heroes on our Scroll of Honor.

