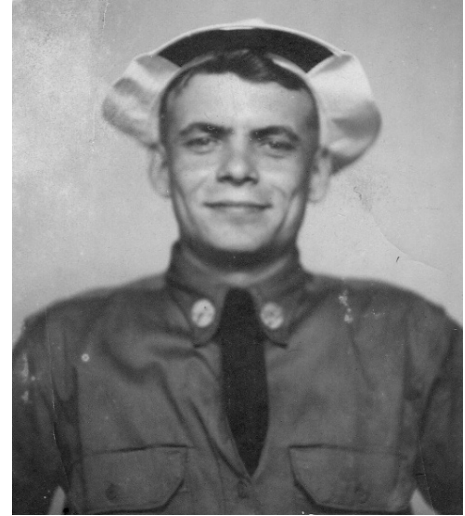


## The Veteran Returns

The Clemson College of 1946 was a much different institution than the one familiar to cadets from the pre-war years. The size of the student body was one noticeable difference. In 1941-42, the last academic year to begin before World War II ensnared America, enrollment had been 2,349 cadets. By the start of the 1946-47 school year, enrollment had swelled to 3,550. More than half of the students that year were veterans, men who had fought and won the great conflict and arrived on campus armed with worldly experience and the GI Bill. Among these was Charles Mann McMillan, Jr. of Mullins.



By the time he enrolled at Clemson, McMillan had already been to war as a member of the 786<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron. The squadron was based at Attlebridge, England and flew strategic bombing missions against targets in Germany, including Berlin. McMillan had been the flight engineer and top turret gunner on a B-24J heavy bomber nicknamed *This Above All*.

The arrival on campus of so many veterans caused college administrators, led by Dr. Franklin Poole, to rethink the requirement for student participation in military training. In consideration of the preferences of the returning servicemen, Clemson dropped mandatory military participation for veterans. Even so, McMillan, an agricultural engineering major, may have opted to participate in ROTC classes, for not long after his graduation from Clemson on January 29, 1949, he would be back in uniform as an Army second lieutenant. McMillan was assigned to the 14<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion, part of the Army's post-war occupation forces on Honshu, the largest and most populous of the Japanese home islands.



*McMillan, second from left front row, was a veteran of World War II when he enrolled at Clemson.*

At dawn on June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. The South Koreans, overwhelmed by the larger numbers and better weapons of the invaders, began a long retreat down the Korean peninsula. Having drastically reduced its military forces after World War II, the United States looked to its occupation forces in nearby Japan for troops that could be committed to shore up its South Korean ally. President Truman ordered General Douglas

MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan, to provide air cover and matériel to South Korea. MacArthur also began moving US troops from Japan to South Korea.

McMillan's 14<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion arrived in Korea on July 18 as South Korean forces continued to trade space for time to allow more US and United Nations forces to reach the fighting. By the beginning of August, US and South Korean forces had established a position behind the Nakdong River from which the United Nations command was determined to hold. A 140-mile perimeter around the southeastern port of Pusan would serve as a base within which to build up the manpower, weapons, and supplies necessary to take the offensive.

On August 11-12, Second Lieutenant McMillan and his platoon of engineers were defending a roadblock along the Yangsan-Miryang Road about twenty miles north of Pusan. The position was subject to sporadic enemy fire throughout the night. On the afternoon of the 12th, the enemy opened up with machine guns, rifles, and grenades. According to the citation for his Silver Star medal, McMillan and his platoon were "completely surrounded by numerically superior enemy forces. The position soon became untenable and Lieutenant McMillan gave the order to withdraw, voluntarily remaining behind to protect the withdrawal of his men. At this time Lieutenant McMillan was wounded by an enemy grenade, but despite his wound he remained in his position directing fire on the advancing enemy. During this action Lieutenant McMillan was killed." The tenacity and valor of McMillan and many others enabled United Nations forces to hold the Pusan Perimeter and eventually resume the offensive.

Second Lieutenant McMillan was awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart. He was survived by his wife, Louise, their daughter Myra, his parents, a sister, and a brother. He is buried in the McMillan Cemetery in Mullins.

In the mid 1980s, the 14th Engineers constructed a dirt airstrip for C-130 aircraft at Camp Roberts, California and named the field after McMillan. It is now paved and active in supporting aerial drone operations.

