

Light Bomber

The heavy bombers of the 8th Air Force got most of the publicity. Theirs were the missions penetrating deep into Germany and sowing destruction in the heart of the Third Reich, but light bombers were also taking the fight to the enemy. Henry Green Muldrow, Jr. of Bishopville was a crew member on board a 9th Air Force A-26 Invader.

Muldrow was an agricultural economics major and a member of Clemson's Class of 1938. While on campus, he was a member of the Lee County Club. He did not participate in ROTC as an upperclassman and spent his final year at Clemson as a senior private assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Regiment.

After graduation, Muldrow went to work in the construction machinery business. He married the former Louise Griffin. In March 1941, Muldrow enlisted in the Army Air Corps at Fort Jackson. Selected for aerial gunnery school, Muldrow headed to Hondo, Texas for training. He was then assigned to an operational unit based at Lowry Field, Florida where he honed his gunnery skills. By the time Muldrow went overseas in March 1944, Louise was expecting the couple's first child.

Muldrow was assigned to the 409th Bomb Group (Light) based at Little Walden, England. The 409th flew A-26 light bombers, an improved version of the A-20 Havoc. The Invader was outfitted with more powerful 2,000 horsepower engines and a laminar flow wing for better performance. These improvements allowed the A-26 to carry more armaments and a bomb load of up to 6,000 pounds.



Those bombs were often dropped on targets that the higher-flying heavy bombers had trouble hitting with precision. The 409th frequently flew its missions at 10,000 feet and bombed coastal defenses, V-1 and V-2 rocket launch sites, and enemy airfields in France in preparation for the D-Day invasion. During the Battle of Normandy, the 409th supported ground forces by attacking gun batteries, rail lines, and bridges. During Operation Cobra, the Allies' breakout from Normandy, the group attacked enemy troop concentrations, anti-aircraft guns, and supply depots.



Unlike the heavy bombers which remained in England for the duration of the war in Europe, the light bombers moved forward with the ground forces. In September 1944, the 409th established a new base of operations at Bretigny, France. In February 1945, it moved again, this time to Couvron, northwest of Reims.

On February 22, Sergeant Muldrow was assigned as the armorer/gunner on an A-26 piloted by Second Lieutenant William Wahl. It was Muldrow's fifteenth mission. The target for the mission was a German war production facility near Kamen, Germany. Just a minute after Muldrow's aircraft released its bombs and while still in the target area, the Invader was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire. Lieutenant Wahl pulled his stricken airplane out of formation to the left with parts of his engine cowling flying off and his left engine smoking. By the time the airplane vanished into the clouds, both engines were smoking. No parachutes were seen to exit the plane. The aircraft crashed near Unna, just to the west of Dortmund. Wahl, Muldrow, and Sergeant William Price, the other gunner, were killed.

Muldrow and his comrades were buried by the Germans. After the war, their bodies were recovered and Sergeant Muldrow was reinterred in the Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium. He is also memorialized in the United Methodist Church Cemetery in Bishopville. Henry Green Muldrow, Jr. was awarded the Purple Heart and the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters. He was survived by his wife, Louise, and their daughter Virginia who was born after he went overseas.

