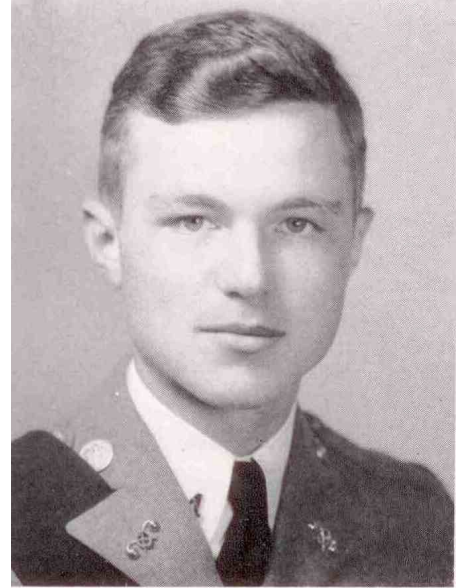


CBI Airman

Most histories of World War II focus on the European and Pacific theaters of war. The major events, particularly from the American perspective, occurred in these theaters, but Clemson men also served on the far side of the globe in the more distant China-Burma-India theater. Max Montague Nichols, Jr. of Savannah, Georgia was an Army Air Force bombardier flying missions from an air base in China.

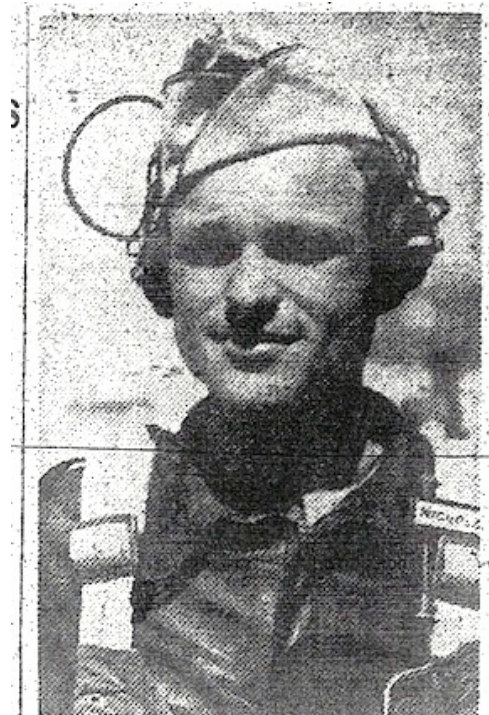
Monty Nichols was a member of Clemson's Class of 1939. He was an honors student majoring in chemistry and was selected as a member of Athanon, the honorary chemical fraternity. He was also a member of Phi Kappa Phi, the national society promoting scholarship, the Savannah-Clemson Club, and Tiger Brotherhood. Unlike most of his classmates who reported to Fort McClellan, Alabama for ROTC summer camp, Nichols trained at the Chemical Warfare School at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland where he qualified as an expert on the firing range.



M. M. NICHOLS, JR.

Following graduation, Nichols accepted a job with the Southern Cotton Oil Company in New Orleans. As the United States drifted closer to war, Nichols was called to active duty with the Army's Chemical Warfare Corps. He later volunteered for the Army Air Corps and trained to become a bombardier. Nichols's training carried him into the American west with posts in Texas, Utah, Idaho, and Arizona. During the course of his stateside training, Nichols became engaged to a young lady from Denver, but was soon on his way overseas. Nichols was assigned to the 373rd Bomb Squadron which began its movement overseas in February 1943. Flying new B-24 Liberator bombers, the 373rd departed from Morrison Field at Palm Beach, Florida on the first leg of its long journey to the battle front. From Florida, the squadron flew through Central and South America before turning northeast for the Azores Islands in the Atlantic Ocean. From there, the fliers continued to Central Africa, Arabia, and finally India.

Once in their theater of operations, Nichols and his comrades began flying missions over the Hump, the air route from India across the Himalaya Mountains and into China. Their first task was to ferry gasoline, bombs, spare parts, and the equipment and supplies needed to mount operations against the Japanese. From its base at Yangtai, about 33 miles from Kunming in southern China, the 373rd began flying combat missions against airfields, docks, oil and coal facilities, and fuel dumps in Japanese-occupied China and French Indochina. The 373rd



also targeted enemy shipping in the East China Sea, Formosa Straits, South China Sea, and Gulf of Tonkin.

On December 1, 1943, First Lieutenant Nichols was the bombardier on a B-24 dispatched to bomb the docks at Rangoon, Burma. Nichols's aircraft was shot down with the loss of its entire crew. The bodies were recovered and initially buried in the American Military Cemetery in Barrackpore, India. In 1950, they were returned to the United States and interred as a group in the National Cemetery at Louisville, Kentucky.

First Lieutenant Nichols was posthumously awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart. In a letter to Nichols's family, General Claire Chennault, commander of the 373rd's parent organization the 14th Air Force, wrote, "He was a fine soldier and a true American."

Max Montague Nichols, Jr. was survived by his parents, a sister, and two brothers, one a captain in the Army and the other a junior at Clemson.

