

Timberwolf

Howard Tabor of Spartanburg attended Clemson for two years beginning in the fall of 1941. By the end of his first semester, the United States was at war. After completing his sophomore year, Tabor would be too.

Tabor was an agriculture major in Clemson's Class of 1945. After returning to campus for the fall semester of his second year, Tabor joined the Army's Enlisted Reserve Corps which allowed him to stay in school—at least temporarily. That same year, he was appointed a corporal and assigned to Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment in the Cadet Brigade. That was as far as circumstances allowed Tabor to advance. At the end of 1943's spring semester, he was ordered to active duty.



Following his basic training, Tabor was assigned to the 104th Infantry Division. The division had been ordered into active service in September 1942 at Camp Adair, Oregon. Its nickname, "Timberwolf," originated from the division's shoulder patch which featured a howling wolf, representative of the Pacific Northwest where the division was initially formed. Tabor was placed in Company A of the division's 414th Infantry Regiment.

The 104th sailed for Europe on August 27, 1944 and reached France on September 7. The division assembled at Manche and then moved northeast toward combat. The Allies had achieved strategic surprise with the D-Day landings and were then dashing across France toward the German border, but logistics challenges were threatening to halt the broad offensive favored by supreme commander, General Dwight Eisenhower. Allied plans were based on the early capture of Channel ports through which sufficient supplies of fuel, ammunition, equipment, food, and men could sustain the offensive. The problem was that the Germans had wrecked the port of Cherbourg before surrendering it to the Allies and the Germans still controlled the Scheldt Estuary leading to the key Belgian port of Antwerp. The 104th was attached to Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group to help clear the estuary and render Antwerp usable.



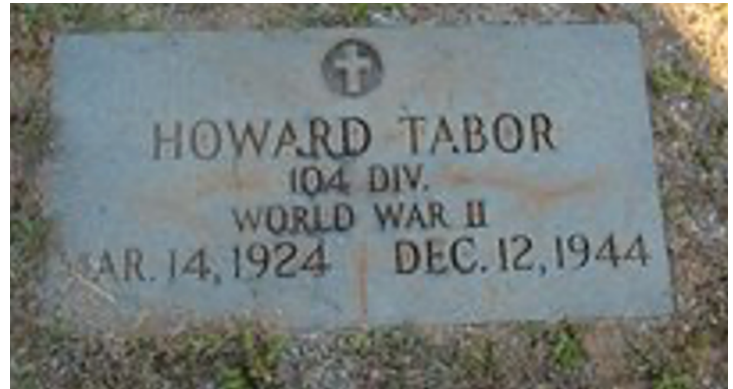
By the beginning of November, the Timberwolves had reached the Meuse River and, fighting side-by-side with British and Canadian allies, had contributed to the collapse of German resistance in the area. The British Royal Navy began sweeping the Scheldt clear of German mines and by early December, Antwerp was finally open to Allied shipping.

In early November, the 104th was reassigned to General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group and moved to Aachen, inside the Third Reich. Bradley conceived Operation QUEEN, an attack on

German forces east and north of Aachen, as “the last big offensive necessary to bring Germany to her knees.” The plan, which included the 104th, was to push through German lines to Düren, cross the Roer River and reach the Rhine, only 25 miles farther east.

On November 16, QUEEN commenced with aerial bombardment of German positions followed by an intense artillery barrage. The 104th outflanked the town of Eschweiler, just northeast of Aachen, but the offensive soon faltered in the mud, rain, sleet, and gloom. In conditions in which they were nearly always cold, wet, and exhausted, the hollow-eyed soldiers continued to confront German strongpoints, continued to fight, and continued to die. On December 12, with the division still five miles west of the Roer, Private First Class Tabor was killed in action.

Howard Tabor was survived by his parents and his brother. He was awarded the Purple Heart. After the war, his remains were returned to the United States and reinterred in the West View Cemetery, Monticello, Georgia.



See also *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-1945*, by Rick Atkinson, Henry Holt and Company, 2013.