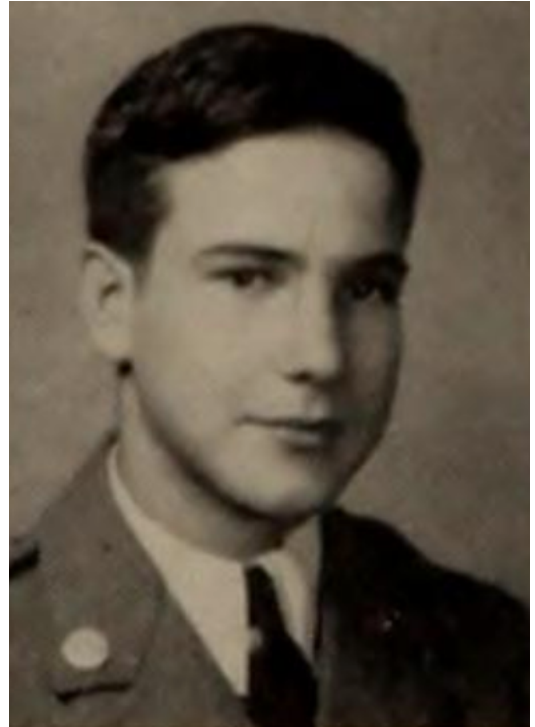


## Bound for Home

With the war over, Flight Officer Samuel Avery Turrentine was expecting to be released from the Army Air Force within a week or so. From his post in Greenland, he hitched a ride on a B-17 heading back to the States. It would be his last flight.

Turrentine enrolled at Clemson in 1942 as growing uncertainty over the future of the cadets rolled over the campus in one rumor after another. By the end of his freshman year, the rumors had yielded to the cold reality that Clemson's young men would be ordered to active duty at the conclusion of the spring semester. Turrentine, a mechanical engineering major from Greenville, had graduated from Greenville High School, where he had served as student body president. He attended Furman University for one semester before reporting for duty at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in March 1944.



Turrentine went to Keesler Field, Mississippi and then attended pre-flight training at Maxwell Field in Alabama. He completed navigation training and was commissioned a flight officer at Hondo, Texas in January 1945. The rank of flight officer was used only during the war and was equivalent to the present day's warrant officer grade. Following his graduation from the navigation course, Turrentine transferred to Avon Park, Florida for overseas training. Shortly after the end of the war in Europe, Turrentine was assigned to Army Air Force facilities in the Azores Islands, in the northeast Atlantic Ocean about 870 miles west of Lisbon, Portugal. After the war ended, Turrentine was transferred to the Air Transport Command in Greenland in December 1945.

On Tuesday, July 9, 1946, Turrentine departed Bluie West One airfield in southern Greenland aboard a B-17 bomber. With hostilities over, the armaments had been removed from the aircraft to make room for passengers. Turrentine, twenty other passengers, and the flight crew of four were bound for Mitchell Field on New York's Long Island. The B-17 made a stop at Goose Bay, Labrador before heading for its next scheduled landing at Westover, Massachusetts.

As the bomber approached Westover at about 10 p.m. in light rain and haze, it contacted the tower for landing instructions. The flight crew also asked if the airfield's landing lights were on. The tower cleared the airplane to land and reported that the runway lights were illuminated. The aircraft acknowledged the instructions in its final communication and reported that it expected to land in about ten minutes. Shortly thereafter, the big bomber slammed into the southeast side of 1,200-foot-high Mount Tom, about four miles from Holyoke. The aircraft exploded, scattering wreckage across a three-hundred-yard area and setting fire to nearby trees. The rain prevented the fires from spreading. All twenty-five aboard were killed.

Samuel Avery Turrentine was survived by his mother and two brothers. He was buried in Greenville's Springwood Cemetery.

