

## On the Border

The border between Germany and the Netherlands ran right through the small Dutch town of Kerkrade. The international boundary stretched along the middle of New Street—known as Nieuwstraat on the Dutch side and Neustraße on the German side—placing Kerkrade on an often volatile frontier. During both world wars, the Germans heavily fortified the border and in January 1945, as the Allies pushed eastward, Kerkrade once again became a focal point. Milton Clair Wiggins from the Dillon County community of Little Rock was in Kerkrade during the Germans' last great winter offensive.



In the summer of 1942, with Axis military forces still holding the initiative, the United States lowered the draft age to eighteen. Even so, Clemson's enrollment actually increased that fall as the induction and training of eighteen and nineteen year-olds had not yet started. As a result, Wiggins and his fellow members of the Class of 1946 were able to enroll at Clemson—at least for the time being. Practically all of the young men who did enroll that fall were gone after the end of their freshman year as wartime manpower demands caught up with college students. Wiggins, who had been an agriculture engineering major, departed campus and headed to the Army.

On June 7, 1943, just two weeks after the end of the spring semester, Wiggins reported for duty at Camp Maxey, Texas. Additional training took place in Louisiana before Milton shipped overseas to England in June 1944.

Once in Europe, Wiggins was assigned to a military police unit in XIII Corps. The corps was one of the subordinate commands of General William Simpson's Ninth US Army under the command of General Omar Bradley's 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group. In November, elements of XIII Corps penetrated the Siegfried Line of German defenses along Germany's western border and pushed forward to the Roer River.

The German offensive known as the Battle of the Bulge halted the forward movement of the Allies. Ninth Army, now attached to Field Marshal Montgomery's 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group, attacked from the north to help reduce the salient the Germans had created. XIII Corps continued to hold the line along the Roer. That line ran through the southeastern portion of the Netherlands which included Kerkrade.

On January 9, 1945, Wiggins's military police unit was in Kerkrade. Private First Class Wiggins was killed by an accidental gunshot. He was nine days short of his twentieth birthday.

Milton Clair Wiggins was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. He was survived by his parents, a sister, and a brother who was then serving in the Army. In 1949, Wiggins's body was returned to Little Rock where he was buried in Saint Paul's Methodist Church Cemetery.



MILTON CLAIR  
SON OF  
R. H. & LUCILLE WIGGINS  
JAN. 18, 1925  
JAN. 9, 1945  
DIED IN SERVICE FOR HIS  
COUNTRY