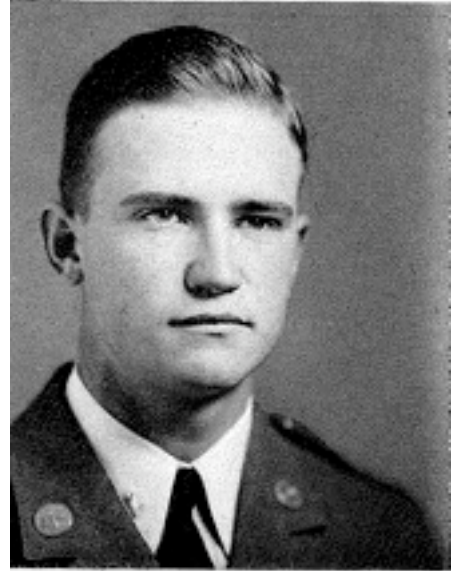


## Non-Battle Death

World War II was the first war in which there were more American battle casualties than deaths from other causes. More than 16 million Americans served in the armed forces during the war and 405,399 lost their lives on military service, according to a 2020 report from the Congressional Research Service. More than 113,000 died from non-battle causes including diseases, infections, and accidents. Jerome Laurin Simpson's death falls into this last category.

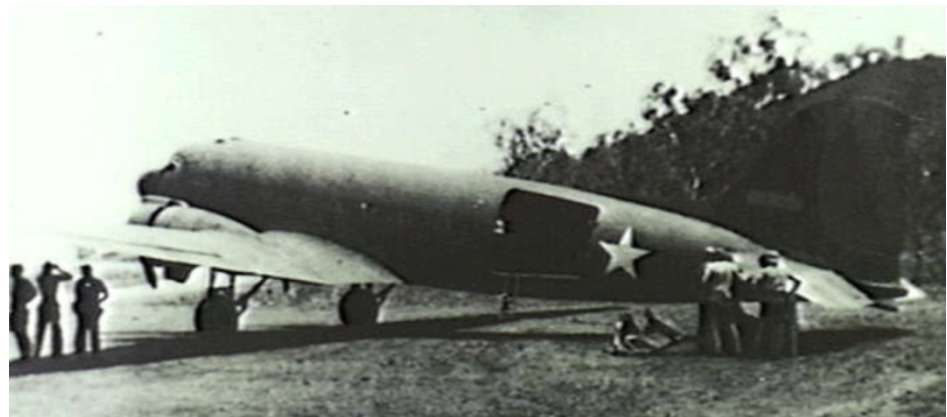
Jerry Simpson was an agronomy major from Iva and a member of Clemson's Class of 1941. Simpson was a member of the Anderson County Club and Kappa Alpha Sigma, the agronomy honor fraternity. He was selected for the Junior and Senior Platoons and attended ROTC summer training at Fort McClellan, Alabama where he qualified as a marksman on the rifle range. As a senior, he was a cadet first lieutenant and served as the athletics and recreation officer for Company G, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the Cadet Brigade.



J. L. SIMPSON

Members of the Class of 1941 received their degrees on June 2 at an evening commencement ceremony in the Outdoor Theater. Many of the new graduates reported immediately for military service as the country looked anxiously toward the European war. Simpson enlisted in October and volunteered for the Army Air Force. He was accepted into the aviation cadet program and earned his second lieutenant's commission and his pilot's wings on May 20, 1942, at Columbus Army Flying School in Mississippi.

Second Lieutenant Simpson was soon on his way, not to Europe, but to the Pacific, where American and Australian forces were engaged in exhausting jungle and mountain fighting in New Guinea. Operations in the battle zone were severely affected by rugged terrain, thick vegetation, extreme weather, tropical diseases, and a lack of infrastructure. These limitations constrained Allied doctrine of maneuver and firepower and made resupply more difficult.



Simpson was assigned as a pilot to the 374<sup>th</sup>

Troop Carrier Group which provided aerial transport of troops and cargo to the battle front in New Guinea. For his gallantry in action during the Battle for Buna in November, Second Lieutenant Simpson was awarded the Silver Star.

Christmas Day 1942 found Simpson in New Caledonia, an island in the Coral Sea about 900 miles east of Brisbane, Australia. The War Department notified Simpson's parents that their son was killed that day in an automobile accident, but no details were provided. Later sources reported that Simpson died when the jeep in which he was riding was struck by a bomb. Still, Simpson's death was categorized as non-battle, indicating that the bomb in question was likely an American one.

Second Lieutenant Jerome Laurin Simpson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement from October to December 1942. He was awarded the Air Medal for completing 25 air operations. He was survived by his wife, his parents, two brothers and a sister. After the war, his remains were returned to South Carolina where he is buried in Iva's City Cemetery.

