

Cadet, Lieutenant, Cadet, Captain

Lewis Anderson Page, Jr. of Columbia was an Army brat, the son of a colonel. As a youth, Page decided that he would follow in his father's footsteps and serve in the military. In pursuit of that objective, Page enrolled at Clemson College in 1941.

A member of the Class of 1945, Page played the saxophone in the Cadet Brigade's Band Company and was also a member of Clemson's renowned orchestra, the Jungaleers. After the war started, Lew Page signed up for the Enlisted Reserve in November of his sophomore and final year at Clemson.

Page was accepted into the Army Air Force's Aviation Cadet Program and in 1943 earned the wings of a navigator. He was assigned to a B-17 squadron in England and began flying the long, dangerous combat missions over occupied Europe.



On a mission in July 1944, German fighters attacked Second Lieutenant Page's B-17, forcing the crew to bail out. As the navigator, Page knew the altitude, about 22,000 feet, at which his bomber had been flying. He allowed himself to fall approximately 17,000 feet before pulling his ripcord and settling to earth under the canopy of his parachute. Upon reaching the ground, Page was surrounded by German farmers armed with pitchforks and shotguns. He was marched off to the local jail and later transferred to Stalag Luft I in Prussia. Page spent the rest of the war in this prison camp on the shores of the Baltic Sea, returning to the United States in 1945.

Life in the service, despite its dangers and hardships, continued to appeal to Page. Aiming to make the military his career, Page applied for and was granted an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. In July 1946, Page transitioned from lieutenant back to cadet.



At West Point, Page took part in many activities. Once again, he played in the band, once again on the saxophone. He sang in the Glee Club and the Catholic Choir and was a member of the German and the Radio Clubs.

Upon graduation with the Class of 1950, Page was commissioned a second lieutenant in the newly established Air Force. The day after graduation, Lew married Joan Wojciehoski in the Catholic Chapel at West Point. Following graduation leave, Page, for the second time, began flight training. In August 1951 at Craig Field in Selma, Alabama, Joan pinned on Lew's pilot's wings. Soon, the couple welcomed a daughter, Carol.

Page completed Gunnery School at Luke Field, Arizona and once again headed to war, this time going west to Korea. As a squadron operations officer, Page flew 75 combat missions and helped plan many more. Captain Page completed his Korean tour and returned home to his family.

Page's next assignment was in Florida, where he was an instructor teaching pilots to transition to jet aircraft. George P. Vlisides, a West Point classmate, remembered Page as someone who "would willingly give his unreserved help to anyone who needed assistance." On July 20, 1953, Page's assistance was requested when he was asked to fly a young pilot home to Pittsburgh on emergency leave. Page and his passenger checked out a T-33 jet trainer and headed north. The trip to Pittsburgh was uneventful, but just after takeoff on the return leg of the journey, disaster struck. The T-33 caught fire and crashed, killing Page.

"Lew was a devout man," Vlisides recalled. "He acted in accordance with his beliefs. He was a good Christian. His morals and thoughts were of the highest."

Captain Lewis Anderson Page, Jr. was survived by his wife and daughter, his parents, and his brother. For his service in war and peace, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters. He is buried in the Post Cemetery at West Point.

