



PETER BENSON

1934

Peter Benson spent five years at St. Paul's, graduating in 1934. As a Sixth Former, he was a Supervisor, and, though still very light, he rowed on the 2nd Halcyon crew. Later, at Princeton, he rowed on the Freshman 150-lb. crew, which defeated both Harvard and Yale. Having taken the R.O.T.C. course, he was commissioned Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery Reserve at the same time that he took his A.B. degree, in 1938. In June, 1939, just after completing one year at the University of Pennsylvania's Law School, he was so severely injured in an automobile accident that nearly two years later he was not yet completely well. He was, in fact, honorably discharged from the Army in February, 1941, on account of physical disability, after serving for a brief period with the 166th Field Artillery.

Benson then worked as salesman for the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, until, in June, 1942, he began the work which was to take him to India and to China. At first, a courier in the Office of Strategic Services, he was, early in 1943, appointed Second Lieutenant, U.S.M.C.R., and sent for training to Quantico. Graduated there that June and assigned by the Marine Corps for duty with the O.S.S., he went overseas in September, 1943.

In March, 1945, after his return to this country, Benson reported as follows to O.S.S. on his "Duties Performed While Overseas":

"Was assistant instructor in all types of SO work at Detachment 101 for one month.

"Worked in Calcutta for six months in procurement and supply,

transportation and operations (dropping agents by plane into Burma). Also did liaison work.

"Worked in China for seven months training agents (Kweilin) and worked in operations with them (Shiuhing); established liaison with General Tang (Tahking), Chief of the Kwantung Province Armies; performed air-ground liaison with the 46th Chinese Army in relationship with the 14th Air Force. Did demolition work (roads, bridges, etc.) in Liuchow and the Ping-lo area; did liaison work with the 14th Air Force at Chihkiang, site of the last important air base in central China."

For his work in China, July, 1944, to December, 1944, Benson was cited as follows:

". . . He voluntarily took part in extremely dangerous missions into rough and mountainous enemy-held territory in inclement, monsoon weather, for the purpose of securing vital information concerning enemy positions and defenses, and to impede the progress of enemy troops. During this period, he acted as Operations Officer and personally directed the destruction of numerous roads, bridges and ferries directly in front of the Japanese drive, toward the cities of Kweilin, Liuchow and Kweiyang, China. These missions involved exceptional dangers, which he met with great personal courage. The results achieved were of greatest importance in the planning and execution of Allied strategy. His services, perseverance and conduct during periods of severe stress reflect great credit on him and on the United States Armed Forces."

In his country's service Benson had given his life. In January, 1945, mortally ill, he had been invalided by plane to Washington, and he died at his home in Philadelphia, September 11, 1945, two weeks before the award of the Bronze Star Medal which accompanied his citation.