

## **Clifton A. Lowder - Private to Staff Sergeant**

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon from October 1942 to September 1945. A magnificent soldier, loyal comrade, and a trusted friend.

Clifton Lowder was a Hq1 "Hell's Half Acre" survivor (See Chapter II, Combat Operations – Normandy).

Cliff's outstanding career qualifies him as one of the "Greatest of the Greatest Generation."

Cliff Lowder entered military service in Charleston, South Carolina. He was sent to Fort Jackson, SC where he volunteered for airborne training, expecting to be sent to the Parachute School at Fort Benning, Georgia.



Instead, Cliff was shipped to Camp Blanding, Florida where the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment was scheduled to be activated.

Cliff was present when the regiment was formed and he was assigned to Hq1 -- which was the first company with a cadre of "qualified" parachutists. Almost the next day, Cliff started basic training and pre-parachute school physical training.

Clifton Lowder served his entire military career in Hq1. He participated in all the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR campaigns and later served with the regiment's honor guard and security force supporting General Eisenhower's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.

Clifton Lowder was a courageous soldier and a magnificent leader. During WW II he earned:

- ?? Bronze Star Medal
- ?? Purple Heart Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Invasion Arrowhead
- ?? Four Battle Stars
- ?? Parachutist qualification badge with two combat jump stars
- ?? Presidential Unit Citation
- ?? French and Belgium Fourrageres
- ?? Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army
- ?? Numerous defense medals including the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar

Our beloved comrade, Clifton Lowder died November 1, 1986 in Orlando, Florida. Myrtle Lowder, his devoted wife and his daughter Claudia provided a comprehensive perspective of one of our "Greatest of the Greatest Generation" for this album. This summary recalls the typical experiences of many Hq1 men and their

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families before, during and after World War II, and it is of immeasurable value to the album. It will help many readers understand what kind of men served as WW II paratroopers. Like Cliff Lowder, they were brave, efficient, determined, and dedicated men.

Myrtle Lowder always referred to Clifton as "My Lowder" -- and still does. Myrtle says:

"I met my 'Lowder' during the 1943 Memorial Day weekend -- for me it was love at first sight. Thereafter, Cliff Lowder, Harry Higgins, John Boone and Harry Monroe came to Charlotte, North Carolina every weekend [at this time, Hq1 was stationed at Camp Mackall, NC and the men were qualified parachutists]. I lived with Higgins' High School sweetheart, his sister and another girl. We worked as radio technicians at Morris Field, but we reserved our weekends for 'our' paratroopers.

When the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR shipped overseas in December 1943, we girls were lost. We kept busy doing what thousands of other wives and girlfriends did -- filling jobs that men had previously accomplished.

We lived for mail from our boys. 'Lowder' lost many friends on D-Day when they parachuted into Normandy and later into Holland; and still later fought in the terrible 'Battle of the Bulge.'

We lost our dear friend Sergeant Harry Higgins in Normandy.

My 'Lowder' came home on September 30, 1945, and we were married October 10, 1945, in Asheville, NC. We lived in Summerton, SC for several years while 'Lowder' worked as a Master Plumber and went to night school to further his education.

We moved to Virginia in August 1951, where 'Lowder' taught plumbing and heating in a Manassas Vocational High school for two years.

In October 1953, we moved to Orlando, Florida. 'Lowder' became a salesman for the Southern Pipe and Supply Company. He worked there for 33 years until his death in 1986. For years 'Lowder' had been the top salesman in the company, and during the last eight months of his life -when he was too sick to travel, the company let him work from home.

'Lowder' would call his customers and relay their orders to his office. His customers considered 'Lowder' a friend and were very loyal to him. They would wait for his telephone calls to place their orders.

We had three children Quinette, Claudia, and Michael. Thankfully, Cliff Lowder lived long enough to enjoy his first two granddaughters -- we now have six granddaughters and one great grandson.

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On January 1, 1955 we moved into our house in an area west of Orlando. The area was populated with veterans and their young families -- it was like a small town. We had 33 good years together in that little house but after 'Lowder' died it was no longer a home and I sold it.

In 1950-1951 the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR was reactivated 'Lowder' and I went to Fort Bragg, NC to see his brother who had been wounded in Korea, and to attend the reactivation ceremony.

'Lowder' was overjoyed to see Kenneth (Rock) Merritt, and to meet with Leonard Funk again. Leonard had been the First Sergeant of Company C and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Sgt. Funk was the most decorated WW II soldier in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.

Cliff's hookup with his WW II 508<sup>th</sup> PIR comrades was an important event in his life. In January 1983, 'Lowder' received a copy of the 'Static Line' magazine. He found and called O.B. Hill's telephone number. O.B. gave 'Lowder' phone numbers for Joe Atkins, Mel Beets, John Boone and others that I can't remember.

As the result in 1983, 'Lowder' went to his first 508<sup>th</sup> PIR Association reunion in Portland, Oregon. John Boone, at the time was President of the Association. 'Lowder' was pleasantly surprised to find 322 508<sup>th</sup> PIR WW II veterans and their wives present for the reunion. Many Hq1 men were present.

When 'Lowder' returned from the reunion he entertained us for a long time talking about the different fellows and their wives he had met. He often repeated his favorite story -- when he met John Boone's sons he was introduced as a very good friend. Boone's son replied -- 'if you are such good friends, where have you been for the past 40 years?' Always quick -- 'Lowder' said: 'That's why we are such good friends.'

We attended the Association's 1984 reunion in Omaha, Nebraska. It was a thrill to see John Boone again and to meet Helen his wife; also to meet all the men that 'Lowder' had talked about over the years.

We continued to meet and visit with many of 'Lowder's' WW II friends. For example, we went to Oak Hill, FL to visit with Mike and Jean Wargo, and O.B. and Margaret Hill visited with us in Orlando, and we went to Winter Haven to see Durrel and Arnice Head.

We also attended the dedication of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR Memorial Monument at Camp Blanding, FL, and met many other 508 WW II veterans during the ceremony.

In December 1985, 'Lowder' had surgery and was diagnosed with Mesothelioma in the lining of his lungs -- with three months to live. But God was good, he gave us ten months for which we were grateful.

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'Lowder' never realized his full worth on this old earth. The first time he was able to go to church, he was so surprised that everyone greeted him so warmly. The ladies hugged him and he did enjoy that!

We had a lot of support from the many friends in our life. Fellows would come and take Cliff for a ride or later just sit with him so I could run err-ands or go out to lunch for a little break."

Clifton Lowder's daughter Claudia says: "When Dad passed away my husband Bill said 'Your Dad should have been a politician -- I have never seen so many people at a viewing or funeral.'

Dad enjoyed life, laughing and playing a prank on someone. He was a lot like Archie Bunker -- always grumbling about changes and people but always one of the first to be there to help someone.

Much to Mom's chagrin - Daddy discovered golf and thoroughly enjoyed the game. Some of the tales that came from the golf course are price- less and that would be a whole new chapter.

Daddy left me with his warped sense of humor -- we always seemed to laugh at the wrong time and wrong place.

But I don't think God gave anybody a better 'straight' person than Mom except maybe George Burn's 'Gracie'! Mom was always ready to supply Daddy with new material.

Mom the quiet little hillbilly from North Carolina and Daddy the hell raiser from Charleston, South Carolina -- they were a delightful pair.

Daddy loved his family and many friends -- he didn't want to leave us but it was time to go to his heavenly home.

Before Daddy passed away, he was able to meet with Bill (my husband) and be around him enough to give his 'approval' for our marriage."

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**Myrtle and Cliff Lowder 1981 at Their Son's Wedding**

Mrs. Clifton (Myrtle) Lowder resides at 923 Hales Chapel Road, Jonesborough, TN  
37659-3846

## **This Album is Not For Sale**

**T**his excerpt from the "We Served Proudly, The Men of Hq1" album contains the recollections of men who in their youth risked their lives in furtherance of our national interests. These memoirs are sacred to them -- especially those events alluding to activities in which comrades lost their lives on the battlefields of Europe.

This album was prepared for perpetual residence in the archives of the Camp Blanding Museum complex, operated by the Camp Blanding Museum and Historical Associates, Inc. Starke, Florida. We are grateful for the support and assistance of the Camp Blanding Museum and Historical Associates, and for their kindness in having the museum make our album available to historians, students, researchers and others interested in our background and brief history.

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Copies of the album have been presented to the Hq1 veterans or their survivors that contributed information for the effort. To facilitate reproducing copies of individual memoirs for relatives or friends, the memoirs have been developed as separate entities.

**October 19, 2004**

**~~Georg. Stoeck~~**

**Hq1 Album Collator**