Clifford Leon Vandiver

Written by his brother, Willis Vandiver

Introduction

Clifford Leon Vandiver – Age 34

Sister Loree called me February 25th, 1984, from Rigby, Idaho. She introduced the conversation by saying that she had some bad news. It was!! She had developed liver cancer as a result of previous breast cancer.

Sis was one of the best amateur genealogists and the only one in the family. Genealogy has been one of her life-long interests and endeavors. She expressed a heartfelt desire that certain things get finished for the benefit of all our families. She strongly expressed this to Merrill and me about a month before her death. She said, in effect, that Clifford had lived a short but good life and that his memory should not fade into oblivion with the deaths of his immediate brothers and sisters.

"What a shame it would be," she said, "that my children and yours should never know what kind of person he was; that his life slide away unknown, unappreciated and forgotten."

Merrill and I promised Loree that we would get together and reconstruct, as best we could, the events, anecdotes and personal characteristics that would tell his story.

Fortunately, Merrill knew more about Cliff than anyone else in the family because he was with him more. He grew up with Cliff. Together they worked and played. They shared common interests in hunting, guns, fishing and work. They worked several summers as sawyers in the timber during the Great Depression of the 1930's when men had to depend on their strength, speed and skill to scratch out a bare living — especially if you had a young family as did Merrill. In their day they were both strong, big and physically tough.

I had four older brothers — much older than I. They were all good men! They were honest, kind, ambitious and very generous — especially to me as the kid brother growing up in a motherless home. Much good could be credited to each one but Cliff is the one to be written about here. He had some characteristics that stood out and were different from the rest of his brothers and sisters. Merrill and I do want these characteristics described and illustrated by events that happened, but we hope not to distort them at the expense of truth and accuracy. Memories are faulty enough and biographies written by loved ones can become easily eulogized and distorted. We have tried to stick to the facts as best that memory provides despite the danger of distortion colored by our love and respect for Clifford.

Clifford

Clifford was born March 6, 1908, in Adair County, Missouri, the second child and son of James P. and Edna Woods Vandiver. The family lived in the house shown here on a farm. Little is known about their day to day life. Probably Cliff's birth was attended by a mid-wife because we know that at least three more later births were so attended and the birth was not recorded in the county records. Thirty-three years later when the Army demanded a birth certificate before Cliff could be released after serving the required one year in the pre-war draft, he had difficulty getting it because there was no record of his birth. Getting the certificate took several weeks and Pearl Harbor was bombed and he was frozen in the Amy as were all other men in the services.

Missouri Home of Jim and Edna Vandiver

The first five children were spaced very close together. Their fifth child, Loree was born December 10, 1912, just 21 days short of 6 years after the birth of the first-born son, Willard.

In March 1913, the Vandiver family migrated West by train. At Marshalltown, Iowa, they changed trains and were chugging along at night in the old steamer “Puffer-Billy”. All were asleep in their berths when the train wrecked and came to rest in a marsh with many of the cars on their sides. The baggage cars caught fire and burned. All the family valuables were lost including the family pictures. Cliff's parents had no camera during their young married life; consequently there are no pictures of him except those given to us by Missouri relatives. Some passengers were injured but none were killed; only Susan Vandiver, Dad's sister-in-law, was injured. She suffered a broken hand.

Willard & Clifford

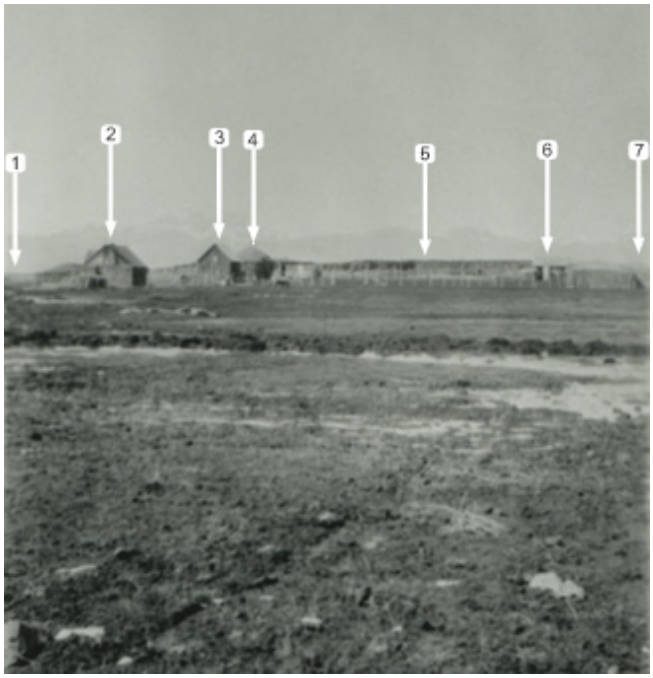
A relief train was sent out from Marshalltown which took the family back to town. Dad was the only man allowed to go back on that train because Mother had broken her hip a few months earlier when a run-away team threw her from a carriage as she was taking several cases of eggs to town. She needed help to take this young family back to town. Mother was expecting Loree at the time of the carriage accident and now Loree was 3 months old.

The family took another train west to Spokane where they were met by Dad's brother, Steve. That same spring Steve and Dad bought some hay and pasture land in Mountain Home, Idaho, where they lived before moving to Fairfield, Idaho in January of 1915. Dad bought the Anderson place consisting of 160 acres along with all the horses and cattle. Clifford was seven years old at the time.

The picture on the right is of the old home site in 1925 — looking north into the face of the buildings.

Description by numbers –

1. The rocked-in fresh water spring for house use.
2. One room rock house with attached food cellar extending to the left.
3. Shop in which Clifford and other boys often slept.
4. Underground birthing cellar for cows – top with straw.
5. 8 foot rock fence on 3 sides of corral.
6. Horse barn for 4 horses.
7. Cow barn for 30 cows, built N. to S.



Some of the childhood events may shed some light on Cliff's boyhood. Merrill recalls this one which was recorded on tape with Merrill.

> "While living in Mountain Home Cliff saved my life," explained Merrill. "It happened this way. Cliff was just a little guy not much bigger than Van's youngest boy (about 6) (Merrill 4). Cliff was the one who would sometimes get me in trouble. There was a canal in back of our house and across the road. To keep the canal from running too fast and wash the dirt sides away, concrete steps were built on the floor of the canal to provide for this steep drop. Also was built a concrete apron under the steps to stop the wash. This created in effect, a waterfall below which there would be a rolling, revolving pool. At each end of this, it had a round top wall to keep water from going outside. The water had splashed upon this forming a thin sheet of ice.

Clifford said to me, ‘I bet I can step up on this and you can't.’

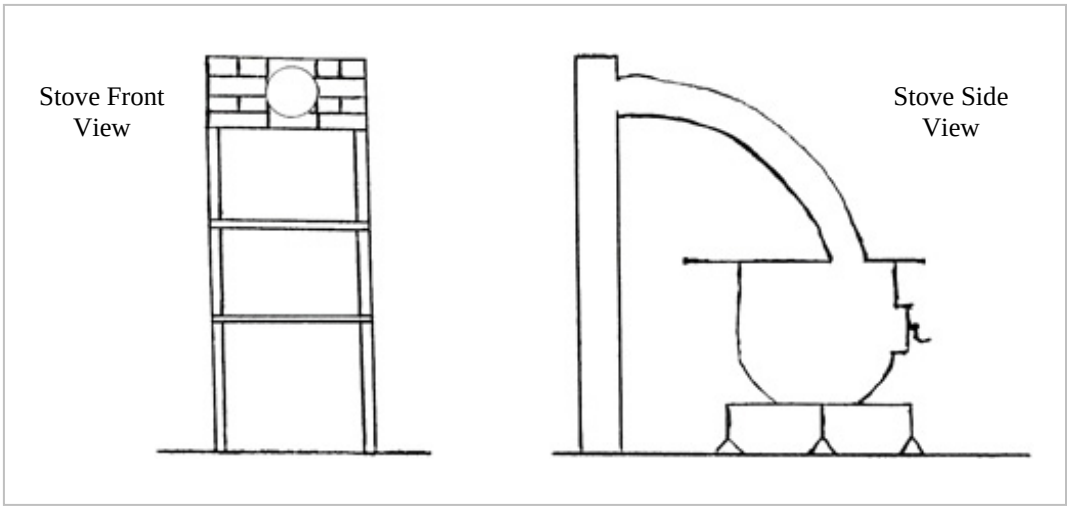
I accepted the challenge and stepped right up on it; my feet slipped out from under me and into the pool below I went. The water wasn't very deep —perhaps two and one half or three feet but deep enough to drown a young kid. The water pushed me under and I would come up and its boiling and rolling effect took me under again. Cliff got down and got me by the coat tail. I had one of those TEDDY BEAR coats on that was popular at that time. Actually I hadn't got a drop of water in my lungs.

I can remember that Bill, Cliff, and I used to talk about holding our breath if we ever would fall in the water. We said, ‘All you got to do is hold your breath, and you can't drown!’ I must have practiced what we had talked about.

If Cliff hadn't reached me, I would have drowned that day in the whirlpool. This was the way Cliff did things even as a little boy. He was the same when he got older. He didn't get ruffled – not a damn bit.”

So within a span of five minutes time, Cliff proved to be both a child villain and also a child hero demonstrating his love for a practical joke but yet the calmness under stress to keep it from turning into tragedy. Thus he was! Merrill tells of another instance when Cliff got him in difficulty.

“In our house in Mountain Home, first thing in the morning Dad would build a fire in the heating stove so the house would be good and warm when we got up. In those old time houses the chimney would begin about six or seven feet from the floor. Usually the bricks rested on a heavy wooden platform held up by 2 X 12s. Often shelves were made in between the 2 X 12s for storage.



Cliff said, ‘I’ll bet I can climb up those shelves and you can’t.’

Up the shelves he goes! Back down he comes! Up I go, and back down I

come, but I fell, first on the hot stove burning a big spot on my cheek! Mother put a diaper on me to dress the burn and kept me around the house for awhile. Of course, I was embarrassed about that diaper. When the neighbor kids came I wouldn't let them see me for anything!"

Of the older boys, Cliff was the best student at his school work and was a very fluent and able oral reader. Because Dad had only attended school through the third grade, he was a relatively poor reader. Dad would have Cliff read aloud at home often as a means of entertainment or just to assimilate information from something that needed to be read. When Dave Eskulson was teaching the country school at Springdale, he introduced to his pupils a book entitled *Uncle Nick among the Shoshones*. Dad had Cliff order the book from the Desert Book Company in Salt Lake City. Cliff read it aloud to the family in the evenings. The book was later mailed to Grandpa Woods in Missouri.

At Age 13 Cliff's Mother Dies

In 1981, I learned in visiting with Loree that she was the only eye witness to the brain hemorrhage that cause Mother's death. I asked Loree to tell me what she remembered after 60 years. We were sitting on the davenport in her dining room as she told me this tragic story. I was touched by her account as she shed tears after all those years. I asked Loree if she would type the account and send it to me so I could put it into my life story. This she did in 1983.

Because Clifford and all who were old enough to remember shared in the tragedy of Mother's death, I am reproducing Loree's account followed by the role Cliff played in the events of those tragic days.

Loree's Account

Edna was born June 17, 1921, and Mother died June 20th at about 6:00 a.m., I think. The trouble began the day after the baby was born in the late afternoon, as I recall. Mother started to nurse the baby which normally brings on after pains. However, the pain she had was not normal. It was a very intense pain in her head. I remember that she put her hand to her head and said that it just felt as if her head would burst. And I think that is almost what happened and I believe that it must have happened at that time. The actual cause of her death was cerebral hemorrhage and I think it must have started at that time.

The woman who was there caring for her and the new baby turned to me and said, "Go get your father." I was frightened, knowing that something must be seriously wrong. I hurried out to the shop where Dad had taken Willis for a nap. At that time, Dad was recovering from a near-fatal siege of spotted fever and was still very weak. I woke him and told him something was wrong with Mother. He

slipped on his shoes and hurried into the house, but by the time he reached her side, Mother was already unable to speak.

From that point on, things are somewhat confused in my memory. I had followed Dad back into the house but stayed in the kitchen. When Dad left Mother's bedside and came into the kitchen, he was distraught and crying. I had never seen him cry before, and I was almost terrified. One of the boys was sent to call the doctor which meant that he had to ride a horse several miles to the Lazy A Ranch where there was a telephone. Later, the doctor came but apparently was unable to do anything. Mother remained conscious for a while, and once when Dad asked her if she was in pain, she was able to whisper, "No." Later that night, she sank into a coma and never aroused.

That night was probably the worst night of my life. It was a nightmare of fear and despair. We children all stayed out in the shop. I can't remember how much anyone slept, if any. The older boys went to the house from time to time and came back to report to the rest of us, but there was never anything hopeful to report. Dad also came out to the shop at intervals, but his visits only confirmed our worst fears. Finally, late in the night, he came out sobbing and told us there was not hope for our mother's life.

Morning came at last, and I was sent with Mae and Willis over to Scheer's our nearest neighbors, about a mile away. I was eight years old at the time, Mae was less than five and Willis was just two. I had the responsibility of helping take care of the two younger ones. I spent a dreadful, fear-filled day and night at Scheer's, and then early the next morning, Dad came by with word that Mother had died. Sometime later that day, I was taken home and taken into the house to see my mother's body. The place was crowded with people who had come to help. I overheard someone remark about my bravery because I didn't cry as I looked at my mother's body. I know that whoever said it, simply misunderstood. It wasn't bravery at all. It was just that, in death, she didn't look like my mother to me.

The funeral and burial took place the next day. At that time and in our remote area, there was no embalming. The McHan brothers served the community as morticians probably because they were the ones who sold the caskets at their hardware store. I remember seeing a fruit jar filled with ice against my mother's shoulder as her face was uncovered for me to see. Summertime burials of necessity took place without delay.

I remember feeling hurt because I was not taken to the funeral, but it was

thought that Willis and Mae were too young to go and I was left with them at Scheer's. The funeral was held in the Manard LDS Church with the Rev. Edwin Deacon of Fairfield Community Methodist Church in charge and Mother was buried in the Manard Cemetery. Granddad Woods and Uncle Perry Vandiver came out from Missouri but didn't arrive until after the funeral, of course. I think Granddad had instructions to bring us younger children back to Missouri but didn't, probably because Dad wouldn't permit it. I'm still extremely grateful that Dad had the courage to keep us. I can remember hearing Dad sobbing and saying, "I don't know what I'm going to do!" But somehow he found a way. It was never easy, but Dad didn't give his children to relatives to raise.

- - End of Loree's Account - -

The room under the "A" was the bedroom in which Mother died.
The rock house on the left was built four years later.

What did Clifford do during the first hours after Mother's brain hemorrhage? Dad sent Cliff to the Lazy A Ranch, the nearest telephone, to call the doctor. He rode Old Nell, a black half-percheron mare, with orders to run her as fast as she could travel. After calling the doctor, Cliff was to go to J. R. Robinson's and bring Willard home by riding double on Old Nell.

The Doctor came but Mother never regained consciousness.

Because Clifford was older than Loree, he, no doubt, could understand the impact of Mother's death on the family to a greater degree. Furthermore, he could see the effect it was having on Dad as is shown by the following incident told to me by Mae.

"I was only four years and ten months old when Mother died. I cried often for Mother during this period. Clifford took me by the hand and led me to a private place behind the house where he got down on one knee and emphatically explained, 'You must not cry any more in front of Dad!'"

Obviously, Mae's tears were very upsetting to Dad. At that time, understandably, Dad was having serious adjustment problems of his own. Needless to say. Cliff was mature beyond his years and assumed unassigned responsibility consistent with his unusual understanding and insight, uncommon in a thirteen-year-old boy.

The fall after Mother died, Dad kept Cliff home from school to take care of Willis and Mae and to do the cooking, washing and keep house. The following year Willard (Bill) would exchange with Clifford. A quotation from Loree's life story describes the situation.

> "Cliff went at his new duties with a will. He was soon making biscuits as good as Mother's and frequently made cake too. They were plain cakes with sweetened whipped cream instead of frosting and we devoured them with relish. But in spite of his best efforts it was a struggle at best. The house got dirty; the laundry was never properly done. Dad and the boys wore un-ironed shirts. Our diet was largely beans and meat. Dad was having a struggle to make ends meet financially and keep us fed and clothed. Life wasn't easy!"

There were several occasions where Clifford demonstrated his maturity and sense of justice. One such occasion is recorded in Loree's life story.

> "When I was quite small, Herschel was my special playmate, he being next to me in age. Mae was nearly four years younger than I and too small to play with much. As we grew older, Herschel discovered that it was more fun to play with Merrill and deserted me, and I sometimes felt quite left out. After Mother's death, there were times when Herschel was the enemy. Sometimes he delighted in tormenting Mae and me and in seeing how mad he could make us. I remember when Mae and I were playing in our roofless playhouse, he'd come out and yell, 'Come in the house quick, girls. It's gonna rain.' Then he would throw water up in the air so that it came down on us inside. When he had pestered us until we got mad enough to leave the playhouse and chase him, Merrill would swipe our dolls while we were gone. When Clifford thought this sort of thing had gone about far enough, he'd call a halt to it, and the other two were smart enough to listen to him. I considered Cliff my best hope of obtaining justice."

Nothing unusual happened to Clifford during his teenage years. He grew up with his four brothers and Dad working on the farm milking cows, slopping hogs, feeding stock and doing his share of the cooking where again he seemed more adept especially at making baking powder biscuits. Even the neighbor women remarked that none could be made better.

Merrill claims, "We grew up like other kids but better than most." In his view <u>better than most</u> meant that we were taught to take special pride in being morally clean, honest and always more than willing to do a good job at whatever we were employed to do.

Merrill tells this story which gives further insight into Cliff's character.

> "One time about 1923 or 1924, Cliff and Merrill were hauling hay from Nielson's place which was located west of J. R. Robinson's. It was fall and there were hundreds, yes, hundreds of sage chickens (sage grouse) around so they took the shot gun along and hunted before loading the wagon with hay. Consequently, too much time had elapsed to do anything else but hurry as they were loading. Merrill was on the wagon loading and tramping the hay as Cliff pitched it up. When Merrill shouted, 'We're loaded.' Cliff, being in a hurry, threw the pitchfork up on the load — tines first. The fork hit Merrill in the shin and one tine penetrated through the bone. (Merrill claimed it didn't hurt until sometime after they pulled out the tine.)
>
> Cliff was so concerned that he had hurt me that he insisted I stay in the house after we got it bandaged up. He did all the milking that night alone. I never even went to the barn."

The years passed and Clifford finished the eighth grade with the highest examination grades in Camas County. He was 15 years old by that time having lost a year while staying out to care for Willis and Mae.

Our family lived over 8 miles from town and never owned a car. If Clifford or any of the older brothers were to attend high school, it would have been necessary to move to town and board, for there was no bus transportation in those days. Dad was too poor to provide the cost of room and board. Consequently Clifford and the older brothers were deprived of further education.

Cliff finished growing up on the farm and at the age of 20 left home and went out on his own the spring of 1928. Bill helped him get a job with the Harder Brothers near Kahlotus, Washington. There he worked either as camp tender or sheep herder for a year or two. In those days, if the bear bothered the sheep, the herders simply shot them. While working for Harder's, the 1929 crash occurred and the Great Depression was on. Cliff was good at managing his money and had a substantial amount in a savings account when the bank closed its doors. I do not know how much money Cliff lost but enough to equal several months' pay.

Merrill told this story of Clifford's confrontation with a grizzly the summer of 1929.

> "When Clifford was working for Harder's and was out with the sheep in the mountains of Montana, he had a rather narrow escape. He was carrying his loaded rifle as he was crossing an old 'burn', an area that had previously been crossed by fire. The underbrush was so thick that his rifle could not be comfortably carried in the shoulder sling. He was carrying it in his hands when suddenly a Grizzly reared up just below him and put her front paws on a windfall.

Since there was no time to take aim he simply pointed the gun and fired. The bullet knocked the bear down but she got right back up roaring loudly enough to be heard for a mile and came straight for him standing full height on her hind legs. The next shot knocked her down again only momentarily. She came again to be knocked down again after which she ran. Cliff tracked her until she quit bleeding. He then went back and found where she had slept and found two small hollowed out beds where cubs had slept.

A year later another employee of Harder's, Dutch Grabner, told Clifford and me that he killed a sow Grizzly in that same area. She had a bullet lying on her skull and another bullet scar in her neck. He didn't skin her so the third bullet was unaccounted for. The cubs following her were yearlings indicating that it could have been the same bear."

During times when Cliff was unemployed, he would come home to Greenacres, Washington, where Dad and I (Willis) were batching in the early 1930's. Dad and I especially enjoyed his company. He was careful with his money. Consequently, he always had some in reserve. When he bought anything, he looked for good quality even if at a higher price. Cliff was always "up front" when it came to paying his share when he came home.

Clifford & Merrill

Clifford and Merrill Work as Partners in the Woods

In 1934 Clifford and Merrill started working for a lumber company sawing logs located on the Coeur d'Alene River. They were paid by the log. Each man carried certain tools because of the handiness to the work style. Clifford carried a bottle of oil in one pocket and a small wedge in the other. Merrill started carrying the hammer, the axe and a measuring stick as well as his wedge. He couldn't measure and carry the hammer at the same time so Clifford insisted on the hammer which proved to be a good idea since speed and efficiency was all important.

If they were in big timber, Merrill carried two wedges. The one was a heavy wedge, probably about four pounds. Normally they each carried only one small wedge. The 8 ft. 2 in. measuring stick was used to mark the logs so that they were the right length for 8 or 12 foot lumber and provide a means for figuring the payment for labor.

When they sawed a log to the point that the cut above the saw began to close up or pinch, the

partner who sensed this first would call "wedge". Merrill would put the wedge in the cut and Cliff would hit it with the hammer. This maneuver with the wedge and hammer was all done with one motion because it increased speed and time was money. The men who could work faster and more efficiently could make a few pennies per day more and in those days of the Great Depression that was important.

After they learned how to saw, working as hard as they could, they made around $100.00 apiece per month less $1.35 per day for food, less the price of an axe per summer. It was considered good wages for manual labor at that time. They worked 5½ days per week at first until labor became organized and overtime pay would be in force for the extra half day. Then they worked only 5-day weeks. Merrill said that a two foot log could be cut in two within 60 seconds by a reasonably good sawing team. Only strong and ambitious men could make any money sawing logs.

On weekends, Merrill and Cliff would drive back to Post Falls, Idaho, where Merrill would stop with his family and Cliff would drive on down to Greenacres, Washington (about ten miles) to spend the weekend with Dad and me.

Cliff and Merrill worked together each summer in the woods from 1934 to 1938.

Clifford's Advice

During my senior year in High School, 1937-38, I was working mornings and evenings at Naser's Dairy milking cows, bottling and delivering milk. A friend of mine, Beverly Noble, and I were batching in a little boxy trailer house. (Even though his name was Beverly he was every bit a masculine male. His name led to a humorous but unfortunate misunderstanding some 40 years later when two of my children secretly read my diary of H.S. days about my living with Beverly.) Clifford visited me in my trailer house one Saturday that same year, and we shared a bachelor's lunch as we talked. He emphasized how important it was for me to go on to college. He explained how hard it had been for my older brothers to scratch out a living without the financial rewards that often came with a formal education. I remember well him saying, in effect, "Kid! Stay in school. Go on to college no matter how hard it is to find finances. If you ever get in a financial bind, you can call on me for help but don't drop out." When Cliff gave advice, which was seldom, usually people listened. I did.

Merrill had given me the same interest and encouragement to continue with my education. He and Cliff had talked about encouraging me and worked at it.

In 1939, Clifford moved his meager personal belongings consisting of his car, a 1937 Chevy coupe, his guns, fishing gear and the usual possessions to Los Angeles, California. He was met there by a cousin, Clyde Vandiver, where he stayed for a short time until he could find a place of his own. Clifford worked for a contractor but little is known about the specifics of his work.

Military Service

After WWII started in Europe, the United States passed the prewar draft law. Clifford was 32 years of age and single. Consequently, he was one of the first to be drafted. He served the required year in the army and was eligible for discharge by November 1941. However, the army would not discharge him until he could produce a birth certificate. As previously mentioned, his birth was not on record in Missouri where he was born. As a result, it took some weeks to go through the legal procedure to obtain a birth certificate. In the meantime, Pearl Harbor was bombed and all military personnel were frozen in the service. So we can understand how the circumstances of his birth may have had a bearing on his death in a combat zone 37 years later.

The details of his years in combat are sketchy to say the least. His letters home were matter of fact mainly to let his family know he was still o.k. In a letter to sister, Mae, he stated, "We left Port Lewis, Washington, the 19th of February, 1942, and got here (Fort Dix, N.J.) February 25th at noon. We are going overseas but don't know where. We are drawing clothing for a tropical climate." Later in the same letter he mentioned that he had made corporal on the 14th of February and that his salary had gone up to $24 per month.

By October 3rd, 1942, he was in Australia and wrote in a letter to his sister-in-law, Artise, "Can you imagine Christmas in mid-summer? We are getting accustomed to reversed seasons and driving on the left side of the road."

By that time censorship of military personnel's mail was in effect. Men stationed in fighting zones were not allowed to tell where they were. In another letter to Artise a month later, November 11th, he had written, "It hardly seems possible that Morris (Herschel and Artise's oldest son) is old enough to go to school." Later in the same letter, "According to the latest news dispatch the turning point of the war has come. Here's hoping Hitler will not be able to sleep so sound from now on."

Clifford, like the rest of us, couldn't foresee that WWII was just getting well started.

Artise received another letter dated January 19, 1943. He was then a Staff Sergeant as his letter-head confirms, but he never mentioned it in any letters that are now in existence. Staff Sergeants were combat leaders directly under the command of the Lieutenants. Cliff, no doubt, was a good leader under those conditions because he was always cool and unshakable in his emotional makeup and had learned how to be independent and reliable during his youth.

We learned sometime later that Cliff was fighting near the villages of Buna and Gona, New Guinea. In another letter he stated that he had a mild case of malaria and was hospitalized for 5 days. He seemed to play his illness down so we at home would not worry. Likely he was quite ill.

Cliff received a lot of mail overseas. Not only because everyone liked him, but in WWII nearly everyone at home supported the War effort and empathized with the fighting men

overseas. He answered all his mail, sometimes under very adverse conditions of heat, rain, mud and constant danger as the following unit citation indicates.

Unit Citation

18 December 1944

By direction of the President, under the provision of Executive Order No. 9395 (Section I, Bulletin 22, WD, 1943 and Section 4, Circular No. 353 WD, 1943) The following unit is cited by the commanding general, 41st Infantry Division:

First Battalion, 152nd Infantry regiment is cited for outstanding performance of duty against the enemy near Salamaua, New Guinea, from 29 June to 12 September 1943. On 29 and 30 June 1943 this battalion landed at Nassau Bay, New Guinea one of the first amphibious operations by American forces in the Southwest Pacific area, on a beach held by the enemy and during a severe storm which destroyed 90% of the landing craft able to reach the beach. Moving inland through deep swamps, crossing swift rivers, cutting its way through dense jungle, over steep ridges, carrying by hand all weapons, ammunition and food, assisted by only a limited number of natives, this battalion was in contact with the enemy for 74 consecutive days without rest or relief. All operations after the initial landing were far inland. Living conditions were most severe due to constant rain, mud, absence of any shelter, tenacious enemy and mountainous terrain. The supply of rations, ammunition and equipment was meager. For five weeks all personnel lived on rations dropped by airplane, for days at a time on half rations. Individual cooking was necessary throughout the period. Malaria and battle casualties greatly depleted their ranks, but at no time was there a let up in morale or determination to destroy the enemy. Each officer and enlisted man was called upon to courage and stamina. The battalion killed 584 Japanese during this period while suffering casualties of 11 officers and 176 enlisted men. Cutting the Japanese supply lines near Mube, exerting constant pressure on his flank the valiant and sustained efforts of this battalion were in a large part instrumental in breaking enemy resistance and forcing him to withdraw from Salamaua on 12 September 1943. The first battalion 162nd infantry regiment has established a worthy combat record in keeping with the high tradition of the United States Army.

Kenneth B. Sweeney, Colonel

Clifford was killed March 10, 1945 on Mindanao Island in the Philippines. The following are two letters written to Dad — thus closing the chapter on a young man's life — one we loved and respected.

Company B
162nd Infantry
A.P.O. 41

19 May 1945
Mr. James P. Vandiver
Green Acres, Washington

Dear Mr. Vandiver:

The war department has probably informed you by this time of the death of your son, Clifford, in action against the enemy in the Philippines. As his company commander, I wish to extend to you on behalf of myself and Clifford's many friends over here our sincere sympathy for we too, feel the loss of a friend and comrade.

Clifford met his death on the 10th of March while on the beach helping with rations for his unit, when a long range Jap artillery opened fire. A shell fell close to Clifford and he was instantly killed. Perhaps you may find some little relief in the knowledge that there was no pain or suffering. The following day he was given a simple Christian burial service in the United States Armed Forces Cemetery at Zamboanga, Mindanao, P.I.

I realize your great sorrow, and I want you to know that the loss of your son was deeply felt by his friends and comrades. Clifford was a well-disciplined soldier, and one that you and his country can well be proud of.

I do hope his passing will not dwell too much upon you though the void, I know, will be hard to fill. Please accept my, and all his other friends, heartfelt sympathy and do not hesitate to call upon me for any additional information that you may desire.

Sincerely,

James M. Gray
Capt., 162nd Inf.
Commanding

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2nd paragraph of letter from Chaplain – Vincent B. Appleton

Philippines
9 April 1945

Mr. James P. Vandiver
Greenacres, Wash.

Dear Mr. Vandiver,

In regard to the death of your son Clifford L. Vandiver, 39152247, S/Sgt killed in action on the 10th of March from shrapnel. The funeral services were held by Chaplain A. P. Lam, as I was unable to be present. He is buried in U.S.A.F. cemetery, Zamboanga, which has an attractive native bamboo fence around it which was erected by the Philipinoes and the cemetery is tended by them for the United States Government. He was dear to his men for they remember him as "always had a laugh and smile for almost everything," and was "one of the best liked boys in his company."

This letter, though dated May 19th, wasn't stamped out until June 25th. Jim read it July 2nd. Clifford's body was later moved to the cemetery in Manila. Lynn Barkdull (Clifford's nephew-in-law) took the picture of the cemetery at large in November 1981. Penny Quinn Walker (Clifford's grandniece) took the picture of Clifford's marker in September 1998.