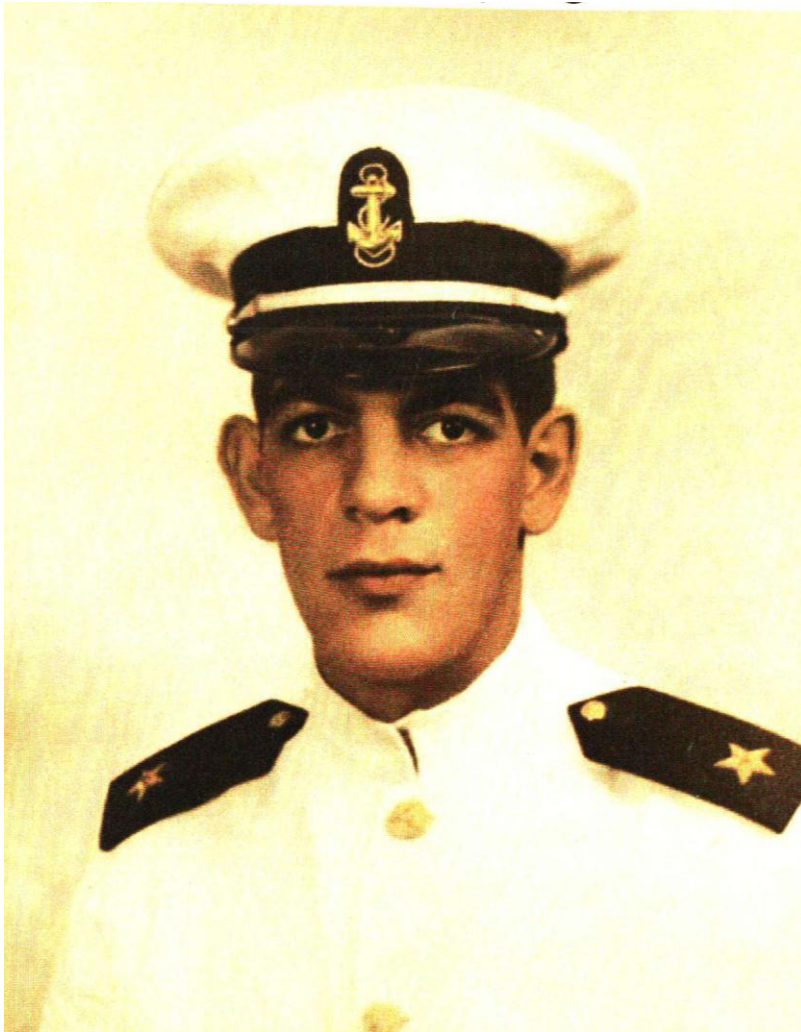


# Living Gracefully, Dying Gracefully



Cliff Glover was my father and a great inspiration to all who knew him. He became suddenly ill in June of 2007 and died on the 18th day of the same month. He was a kind and gentle person who had figured out early in life that the best way to live your life was to live it by serving the Lord, and serving he did. He attended the Central Baptist Church in Newnan, Georgia. Every time the church doors were opened, my brothers, Gandy and Taylor, along with my mother, Inez, and I were in attendance. My father served as a Deacon, Sunday school teacher, Boy Scout leader, and was on every committee the church had. He took over the scout program right after he was married and walked to the meetings because he did not own a car. He was active in the Boy Scouts for years and was awarded both the Silver Beaver and the Good Shepherd awards.

Cliff Glover was born on June 11, 1919. Three years later, his father died; however, he was too young to remember. He was raised by his mother, Becky, along with his two sisters, Ann and Carolyn. Becky was a peach farmer, and early in Cliff's life she instilled the religious and agrarian values that he so loved until his death. He loved the Lord and the outdoors. My brothers and I were lucky to have had this type of influence guiding our lives.

When Cliff became ill, we were all scared and saddened, but we all were able to enjoy some precious time with him before the end. He associated me with Auburn University, a school we both attended. He also associated me with his farm and a place called Wynn's Pond.

Cliff had liver cancer and was on a lot of pain medication, so our conversations were sometimes lucid, sometimes they were not. However, each conversation was always sweet, so I decided to take notes when I was with him. Each time I would leave, I would walk away scared but somehow at peace. His speech, his smile, and hand gestures were all incredibly kind and peaceful.

Cliff grew up in Newnan, Georgia and spent many hours helping on the family farm. He loved hard work, and he assigned difficult projects that most people would not have considered, to my brothers and me. I can never remember meeting a repair man in our house because my father would rather take the time to figure out the problem and fix it himself. He was never in a hurry and it didn't matter how much time it took to finish a project. Once when I was away at school at Auburn, my mother called and said that I should come home to see what my father had done to the front yard. We lived up on a hill and the main water line was leaking about 30 feet below ground. Instead of hiring someone with a backhoe to dig the hole for him, my father decided to dig it himself. He started digging and made a ladder that he could add to as the hole got deeper. He also devised a rig that when he filled his bucket up with dirt he could pull on a rope attached to a pulley and get the dirt out of the hole. When the bucket reached the top, he made another device that would turn the bucket over to empty it; he would then pull it back down to him in the hole. When I arrived home and headed up the driveway, the mound of dirt that he had dug was unbelievable, it blocked our dining room.

In early June of 2007 Cliff became sick. It is customary for my mom to prepare a great lunch every Saturday and we would usually take Cliff to the country after the meal. We always had fun, did a little work, and enjoyed his company. One Saturday he did not feel good enough to eat with us, and it was not like him to miss one of my Mom's famous meals. The week before, after lunch, we were going fishing but he was not feeling great then either, but my father decided to go fishing with us. Many times we fished a small pond that had an old boat on the bank; we almost never used it, but this time he wanted to get in it because his back was hurting him. We cleaned out the boat, launched it, and he caught a bass. It was a decent fish that he must have taken 3 minutes to land. I would have rushed catching the same fish, but my enjoyment time would have been about 10 seconds. He never rushed anything and enjoyed every second of catching this fish.

When my father ended up in the hospital the news was not good. One of my old buddies, Cliff Cranford, was one of my father's Boy Scouts and later became his doctor. He told our family that there was nothing more that could be done for him medically and that we should take him home and make his life as comfortable as possible. A hospital bed was delivered to our family home and an ambulance brought my father home for his final days. My mother, with the help of many other wonderful people, cared for him. He was very comfortable and had people visit him night and day.

On day on one of my visits, we talked about Auburn, about the woods, about fishing, etc. I am the youngest son, and when both my brothers were gone off to college, Cliff and I spent a lot of time working in his garden, making repairs, working in the country, fishing, etc. He always had a project going and one on the drawing board. Most all of them were a challenge and required hard work but were also fun in a strange way. A neighbor, Mr. Clinton Burks, stopped by and asked Cliff if he wanted to go for a ride in the country. When we had to tell Mr. Clinton that this was not going to be possible today and, unfortunately, probably was never going to happen in the future, it hit me really hard. This harsh reality of death waiting at the door was something I was not used to nor was I prepared to deal with.

The second day of my visit was a whole new experience. The first thing he said was, "Where are they moving you? Where is the goat?" If I don't want the goat, take it right here". He was smiling and using the warmest gestures I had ever seen. I decided then that the best way to make him feel comfortable was to pretend that what he was seeing was real. It was a strange and almost sacred experience to me. Here was a man of God making no sense, but it was stated in such a sweet manner that it was comforting. "Where is the shirt? Why hasn't the shirt been picked up? Get me that paper. What is the name on the paper?" I told him that the paper was a Walmart ad, "It must be a bill," he said. "Put the shirt over here.

He is going to hang up the shirt. Put the paper in the box right over here" (no box present). "Pull this out, wait, wait, a little while". Before I left he asked me to pour some water in the box. He loved to plant so I left thinking that we had planted something special that day.

Cliff had a sweet manner and strong convictions that were portrayed in the way he lived. He spent 4 ½ years in the Navy during WWII, basically on the ship for the whole time. When I asked him if he had any regrets about his length of service he said, "America went to win and we did. "One day I asked him why he never cussed around me. We were always doing dangerous jobs that every once in a while seemed to deserve a cuss word or two when he injured himself. He said he cussed like a sailor during the war and decided after Gandy was born that it was inappropriate for him to do it anymore, and he never did.

He also smoked a pipe until he was 80 years old. He was in Piedmont Hospital getting a knee replacement. The doctor told him to stop smoking and he did that day. Everyone in the family did not think getting a knee replacement at 80 was a good idea, so I asked him one day why he wanted to do it. He said he wanted to do it before he got too old. He immediately had my blessing.

On the third day my father said, "Don't pull any paper from that end. I started from this end but should have started from the other end." I asked him if he knew what was on the paper. He smiled and very gently told me not to worry about it. He was very tired but his mind seemed to be racing at 100 miles per hour. I started singing Jesus Loves me and he joined in and sang every word. He really seemed to enjoy the song and became very relaxed. He would also make the sweetest gestures with his hands and fingers that I had ever seen. I continued to hum some of his favorite church songs. I knew he was totally at peace with himself and with God also. When I stopped, he said, "Cut it in an odd shape to weigh down here. I can't find this end of the paper. Put it in the center. Let me get up." I told him it was okay for him to get up. He tried for several minutes unsuccessfully to pull himself out of the bed.

He thought he was getting close, but his body did not have enough strength to make it out. "I will keep on working on it and find the center." I will draw it on paper. Excuse me; I don't want; to pinch a hole in it. "Talk to the City Council. Put the thread in the clock". My wife Helen walked in and asked him if he knew her. He smiled back at her and said, "Yes." I said, "Happy Father's Day," and he said the same back to me. "We will get back with them after while." I started humming religious hymns again. "I don't want to mess it up. Do you see the calendar? How many days are left?"

I knew from my father's last statement that he knew his time was coming to an end and that he was fine with it. I had asked him many years earlier why he had such strong religious convictions. He said that since his father had died at an early age that the only way he was ever going to meet him was to lead a good life so he could meet him in Heaven. He had asked enough of his father's friends about him, and all of them told him that he was a godly person. This was the best answer that I have ever heard for wanting to go to Heaven.

On the fourth day he said, "Ya'll come back to see us and we will straighten it out. Thank you for coming by. I am going to hop up." I asked him where he was going, he said he didn't know. My father was trying hard to get up because he always had projects going on. He was never afraid of work and he continuously had projects. He had beautiful gardens and was able to grow crops that I didn't have the slightest idea how to grow. He would grow many of his plants from seeds at home under lights and transplant them in his garden. He was agrarian and had a wealth of knowledge on plants and trees. It was a joy to walk through the woods with him and ask him the name of something and get the right answer. There was a copy of the Newnan Times Herald on the table and he pointed toward it. He loved Newnan and the Herald. "Where was the fan made?"

I am going to get it and it will show up. We will find out what happened and get back in touch with you." He was smiling a lot. You could sense that whoever he was talking to understood that everything was going to be okay. My father was very talkative. All of a sudden he said, "I don't know which way is north."

He pointed toward the ceiling and I assured him that he did know. To me he wanted to know the direction of heaven from his position in the bed. He was ready to go soon.

On the fifth day he said, "Round trip ticket from Atlanta to Los Angeles please." This was a shock because we had never discussed Los Angeles before in my life. Any time the state of California was mentioned, it was regarding naval training or attending the Rose Bowl. "No, Abe, no." Abe was an old dog he once had. Cliff never opened his eyes that day but once. When he did, he was talking about having half of something. "He has to stand up because the guy has a sack of nuts." This was hilarious to me. I burst out laughing and he laughed with me. That was special. "You can make funeral arrangements." I asked him for whom and he said anybody you want." He was seeing someone in his mind and he said they wanted to know what the plans for tomorrow are. I told him that I didn't know. Life after death. Margaret Glover died 3 or 4 years ago. See if I can find the big black rock". I had never seen a big black rock, so I told him that I had moved it out of the way for him and he was happy. "If you have too much wire you can swap it out."

On my last day with my father, he was less talkative and seemed at peace. He talked a little about a road problem at Wynn's Pond and said that I should call the State Patrol if I had a problem. "We need to go to McKoons". McKoons was the local funeral home where basically everybody we knew had ended up. I asked him who died and he said he didn't know. I knew this was going to be my last day with him and because he was so sweet and gentle about everything. I felt an overwhelming peace that I had never felt before.

Cliff truly lived gracefully and died gracefully. All of our family and anyone that had ever had the chance of knowing him were better off because of it. When you can go through your life and only hear compliments about your father, my brothers and I are truly the luckiest guys ever.

A Remembrance and Tribute by Peter Glover