

## **MWilliam Randolph Clatterbuck**

From Paul Carter in the Orange County Historical Society *Record*:<sup>1</sup>

“William Randolph Clatterbuck, son of Herbert Earl Clatterbuck and Freta Mae Wash, was born on September 6, 1923 in Barboursville, Virginia. The family home was located on the old Route 20 near the railroad tracks. It has since burned down. Billy (as he was known) had seven years of elementary school and four years at the James Barbour High School, graduating in 1941—the last high school class in Barboursville. At that time, there was no eighth grade.

“In his teen years, he spent most of his time earning money for the family by cutting pulpwood. It was a tough job for a young man, but he was always known to be a perfectionist. Every cut had to be perfect—even for pulpwood. He then served six months at a CCC camp in Stanley, Virginia working on Skyline Drive. All the money he made there was sent back to his parents. Billy decided to return to Orange County and took a job at Snead and Company riveting on no less than the pontoon boats that Snead was known for throughout World War II.



“Billy was drafted into the Army on February 23, 1943. He had two other brothers who served in the military, but he was the only one drafted. He had his basic training at Camp Wheeler, Georgia until May 14, 1943. He was promoted to Private First Class on December 5, 1943 and landed in Casablanca, Africa as a member of the 9th Infantry Division. The 9th Division was subsequently sent to Sicily and then to Italy. While in Italy, Billy contracted malaria and had only recovered for one week before he was sent to England in December 1943 to be a part of the D-Day invasion in Normandy on June 6, 1944.

**William R. Clatterbuck**

**Photo courtesy of Charlie Clatterbuck**

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Carter, “William Randolph Clatterbuck,” Orange County Historical Society *Record*, Vol. 48, No.2 (Fall 2017), 6.

“By this time the 9th Division was known as a seasoned outfit, ready to take on the invasion without hesitation. While in France he was wounded and eventually died of his wounds on Sunday, June 18, 1944. “It wasn’t until August 1944 that the family got word that Billy had died. There had been no letters from Billy since the D-Day invasion at Normandy. A worker from Virginia Power just happened to be in the telegraph office when the wire came in and he brought it to the family.

“After the war a soldier named Smith, a friend of Billy’s from Louisa County, came to see the family and told them that Billy had died of a friendly fire incident in which the 8th Air Force had mistakenly dropped bombs on U.S. troops and killed 1,000 soldiers, a very significant incident. This author began to investigate the history from the 8th Air Force and 9th Division and found that no such bombing took place. There is record of a friendly fire accident that occurred on July 25, 1944 in France in which 350 soldiers were killed, but no incidents on July 18, 1944. For 70 years the family believed this friendly fire incident and only after all this time did it prove to be false.

“In September 1944, the family received a letter from a friend of Billy’s who had borrowed two dollars from him before the D-Day invasion. It read:

*For the past year I have had the honor of knowing and servicing In the army with your son. I am writing this short note with the hopes that everything is going along fine in the home front and this note finds you and your family in the best of health. I am enclosing two dollars with the hopes that you will accept it because I loaned it from your son shortly before the invasion of France. Please accept the money.*

“It was signed M.C. Anderson. Later the family found out that Mr. Anderson was practically illiterate and had someone else write the letter for him. This certainly was the greatest generation.

“Billy’s remains were buried in the Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, France. The cemetery is located on a bluff overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel and covers 172 acres, where 9,387 soldiers are buried and 1,557 are listed as Missing in Action. After the war ended, the family had the option of bringing his remains back to Orange, but declined. They knew at that time soldiers were buried in mass graves, and it would not be certain that the remains received would be Billy’s.



Paul Carter

Charlie Clatterbuck, Billy's brother, holding the two purple hearts that were finally awarded to Billy.

“Billy received two Purple Hearts, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the European/African Medal, a Good Conduct Medal, a World War II Medal, and the Bronze Star. The family never received any of these medals until many years afterwards when they pressured the U.S. Army to provide them.”