

## Episode 18: Catching Up w/Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy (Part 1)

Speaker 1:

Saint Leo 360, a 360 degree overview the Saint Leo University community.

Greg Lindberg:

Welcome to another episode of the Saint Leo 360 podcast. Once again, this is your host, Greg Lindbergh. On this episode of the podcast, it is a true pleasure to have a very special guest with us. He is a current student in our masters in emergency and disaster management program, which is online and he was a long time member of the US Army and is a retired sergeant major, and his name is Clifford Lovejoy. Lovejoy, thanks so much for joining us.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Well, thank you Greg for having me.

Greg Lindberg:

Absolutely.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

It's really a privilege.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. And I know we've spoken before, and I know you just have many incredible stories that you've, experiences in your life. So I'm definitely looking forward to capturing that here. To start off here, if you could just give us a brief bio about yourself, where you're from originally, where you grew up and just your early years.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Okay. Absolutely. Well, I was born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1955. And if I may, I can only speak for me. I would like to share a tad bit of my story that shaped my life. And in order to do that, I would have to digress and go back to 1961 at the tender age of six. As I was sitting in the living room waiting for my father to come home. And I heard the car door close because he had just arrived, and I began walking to the front door and greeted him and he said, "Come on son, I need to talk to you." And so I was walking with him towards the bedroom with my flip flops on and my Bermuda shorts. And we sat on the bed and he said, "Son, I'm leaving. And I don't know when I'm coming back and you're going to be the head of the household." And he gave me a kiss and he walked away.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And as I embraced my G.I. Joe, my action figured out, with my new found responsibilities. I went to the window and looked out the window processing or whatever a young boy would be because I was totally lost, and all of a sudden I'd seen a movie. Because I'd seen my father running down the street, with my mother chasing him with a butcher knife in her hand because she was trying to cut him and he was able to jump into his car and drive away. And she sat on the side of the road and began weeping because of a promise not kept. And so obviously he had told her then with four kids and the rent was due that he was leaving, that he had to go find himself.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

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And so young Lovejoy made a promise to himself then that day that no matter what life held, he would never do what he'd seen his father do. And so I would just say to those who are growing and going through some experiences, how does a young boy learn how to treat his mother when he never seen his father love her? What does right look like? Who becomes your role model? And so, as I begin to navigate through school as the oldest of four kids, I wasn't gifted like the rest of the young fellows who could dribble a basketball and run fast and things of that nature. I sat around and stood around and actually began talking to the young ladies because the boys appeared to want to impress them with their athleticism. And ultimately, they got mad at me because they said, "Look at young Lovejoy over there just talking when he should have been out playing with them."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so what actually happened from there was, I had the opportunity to walk a young girl home and carry her books because that seemed to be the noble thing to do. And what I walked her home all of a sudden, her mother was there to greet her. And because I carried her books, her mother was able to give me a slice of apple pie, and it was the best apple pie I've ever had in my life. And so I made a decision then that every day I was going to walk somebody home because I've wanted some good food. And I was doing that.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And then that's when all of a sudden in preparing to cross the street because I was walking the next young lady home, there was a guy that came out of nowhere and came up to me and said, "Lovejoy, what did you say about my mother?" I didn't even know the guy. And all of a sudden, he kicked me in the mouth and the books flew up in the air and she picked up the book and he took the girl and walked away. And I laid there on the side of the road and was processing because that was my first experience of being bullied. But I couldn't go home and tell anyone because back then, your mother would take you to that house and you'd have to fight that kid. And I wasn't ready for that. I hid that experience, but the next day, I was able to find a big kid and give him some candy and used him as a bodyguard. I've always had an imagination, so to speak. That's how my childhood Des Moines, Iowa went without a father as I began navigating through life.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But luckily I was able to go to the YMCA and have some experiences there with table tennis and some other things. And there was a mentor who had come into my life, Marion Upright who I guess he saw some sort of potential because I thought I was a Muhammad Ali or Cassius Clay at the time in table tennis. I played all day and it was sort of gambling actually, where I would maybe leave at the end of the day with 15 cents and we used to buy a lot of candy. But what ultimately happened was that I was able to get involved with the YMCA and learn some of the principles and morals that they had there and go to summer camp and learn how to canoe, learn how to scuba dive, learn how to swim with all the styles of swimming and judo, karate, badminton, soccer, all those things. And so I began to develop some skillset and outside of that, it was a wonderful place to grow up in Des Moines, Iowa. That framed how young Lovejoy was growing up.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. I see. And then I believe you had mentioned it was a recruiter for the military that came to your school and that's what really piqued your interest as far as enlisting in the military down the road.

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Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Well, yes, absolutely. It was actually on a Veteran's Day, there was a special forces soldier that came and he was a guest speaker in our auditorium. And as all kids are there excited because hero, someone important is coming to speak. And essentially, he shared with the entire group, the whole school, that school teachers are important, first responders, everyone, but there's one group of people that's responsible for saving the world. And that is America's service members, soldiers stay alert, Marine, all the airmen, all the different categories. And so if you want to be responsible for saving the world, join this group. And for some reason I didn't really hear anything else that he talked about. And I centered in on, I want to be a part of a group responsible for helping save the world. The seed was planted in my soul at that time. And from that moment on, I was battled focused to find my destiny of being a member of a team and being responsible to help save the world.

Greg Lindberg:

Very cool. And what age were you when, if you recall, what age were you when that actually occurred?

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

I had to be around nine or 10, I believe.

Greg Lindberg:

So very young?

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Absolutely. And today in school and even back then, there are people who are trying to recruit you to do other things. And so I was very fortunate between YMCA and deciding then that I was going to be in the military that, that was a good thing. And so ultimately, I was able to go into the military right after high school, but I think it happened in the 12th grade, actually, in high school where because I knew that I was going into the army and leaving and I was going to help save the world, and there was nothing nobody could tell me because Lovejoy was on his way.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And two days before graduation, we were in a class and the instructor told me to be quiet and I wouldn't be quiet because I was on my way to wherever that was. I got sent to the principal's office and ultimately I didn't graduate. And after sitting there for four hours, I walked away and thought it would happen by osmosis. There was no sponsor really in my life per se, in my household as a role model figure. And so I would shortly thereafter went into the army with the understanding that I had graduated but I hadn't and they caught up with me very shortly after and they made sure that I graduated from Frankfurt American High School. And so my military career was often running where they could take a young man.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And the military is the type of organization that they want you, no matter what your gender, to be the absolute best. And I began to fail because of everything that I learned in the YMCA, I was formally trained. Gymnastics paid off with diving and swimming, and there wasn't anything running or anything I could do. And so I was blessed actually to go from a private all the way up to a command sergeant major. And it's a part of army special operations, which was charged with overseeing Rangers, our

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aviation group, PSYOPs and civil affairs. That was the specialty that I had, civil affairs, which was to conduct civil military operations with humanitarian assistance and things of that nature. So whenever you go into another country, the military, even though the Marines and everyone has a special role in the Air Force, when we finish whatever it is we're going to do, you have to put the city back together. And that's really where Civil-Military Operations comes about.

Greg Lindberg:

I see. Now, if you could talk about some of the places you were deployed, and I know you mentioned other countries, just specific stories, anything that really stands out in your mind as far as your army experience.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Well, you know that's a good question because I believe it was back in April of 1999. And my career was very interesting because I was also, while I was a command sergeant major in civil affairs, I was also in the Army Reserve and I was a DS-12 in the federal government. And I'd been selected to go to a senior academic school at the Army Management Staff College. And at that point in time in 1999, the Army Reserve really wasn't as active in the army in their operations as they are today. And so things took off for me because the army G3, the three star general at the Pentagon in charge of all operations for the army came in and gave a briefing. And so here's a warrior again, but this guy was six, seven or so. And he started showing what we were doing all over the world in the army.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And I decided then having just received my senior service college academic evaluation records that trying to fit some things that I had complexities with ambiguities and I was a critical thinker and some other things that got the idea that I no longer wanted to be a weekend warrior. And that I wanted to serve on the A-Team and be a part of the army every day, for real, for real. And so I sent him an email. Got his email address from his business card and sent him an email and told him he didn't have an active duty sergeant major that possess the skillsets that I have and I want to serve, and I want to serve now. Now, I don't know what gave me that, who did I think I really am to do that, but I had a piece of paper that said I was pretty good for senior civilians and was command sergeant major, even though it was on the weekends.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so nothing happened for about six weeks and all of a sudden got a set of orders that I was ordered to the Pentagon to be the force readiness sergeant major for the army. Out of the clear blue sky, I was at Fort Belvoir, said by everyone, I arrived at the Pentagon, I sat in the parking lot, which has got to be the biggest parking lot in the world and had a prayer that I didn't know if I had the skillsets. This was a prayer to God naturally, just that he would give me the strength to not fail in whatever the country asked me to do. And so I went in and much to my surprise, I was working down in the army operation center, which is the bottom of the biggest building in the world. It took over a half an hour to get to the bottom of this place. You can even feel the air changing and some other things.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so to be in this area, everything required a top secret security clearance and all kinds of stuff. And this is where they cover down the operations all over the world on what every service was doing. That changed some things for me. And I began going to work as the force readiness guy and learning

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everything I could possibly learn. And they sent me to a lot of different schools to learn how to think, how to talk for getting all the normal stuff.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And what's interesting about working at the Pentagon that most folks don't know is that if you're not a three-star general and you're in the Pentagon, you don't really count. Even a two-star, a one-star general doesn't have a secretary. They have to do their own work. They don't have a staff there. Everybody that works there, even though you're the best and brightest in the military, you're an action officer. You don't have your own ... To have access to an airplane, you've got to be a three-star. To have a driver on a vehicle, you got to be a three-star. To eat in the dining facility, the Pentagon dining facility, you can't eat there unless you've been invited by a three-star.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

So we're all action officers. And there I am working together with these colonels in one-star sitting right next to me, doing the same kind of work. And the interesting thing was you had to learn how to collaborate because everybody worked for three-star and whatever project you had, you had to move it forward. And you couldn't threaten your counterpart with, "My general said," because they had a general too. And so your success was how well you could work with members of staff and move the deliverable forward, and to be able to complete the task.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

I believe a couple of things happened because of the work was so hard and so long. The days had to be 14, 15 hours a day every day, because there are problems all over the world. And when they are in those different countries, no matter who that ruler is, that president of that organization calls the president of the United States and asked him to please come and save their country. And in doing that, we have to put together a multitude of assets, both the state department and all the other federal organizations we have. But ultimately we send America's sons and daughters. So I was able to see how all of that works, got a lot of special training, and ultimately I was chosen then to be the operation sergeant major for the whole army.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And as I reported in to that three-star general directly, not having a clue what I should really do, he sat me down and said, "Sergeant major, this is the first time this position has been filled and don't really know what your duties are, but I want you to come back to me in 60 days and tell me what they are." And I saluted and moved out. And I went and met with the rest of the guys and sergeant majors and asked them what they did in their duties. And who did they work for? Did they have an office, a car and all these things. And I put together a sheet of paper that showed red, green, and amber, what they had, what they didn't have. Some had blackberries, some didn't. Some had their own office, some didn't. And then I also went out to all the operation sergeant majors throughout the army and said, "I'm the new guy on the block, and what is it I need to be doing for you?"

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

One of the sergeant majors, Dave lady in Europe said to me, "Sergeant major, who do you work for? Send me your organization chart." And which I did. And they had never seen in the field how big the Pentagon really is and what the operations cover down on across our full spectrum, without the whole army. And they invited me to Europe. And in doing that, they identified what all the problems were. And

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I then took it as a tasker, took it to our tasking section and began having the Army work on those issues. And from that time, the career was off and rolling. He also said to me, go see the sergeant major of the Army. He used to be my division sergeant major, sergeant major of the Army, Jack Tilley. And you take everything off of this plate that falls into operations and you do it for him.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so I reported to the sergeant major of the army, he thought I was crazy. "Where is this guy Lovejoy coming from?" But I was already selected and in that position. And next thing you know, I got a phone call from him in Korea, and it changed the destiny. Knowing this, that all the senior leaders in the different services, I'm talking about, the top guy, they all have their airplanes, their own Learjet at Andrews Air Force Base with their rank on it. And there I was flying on a Learjet, working issues. And man, this was really amazing, a young boy from Des Moines, Iowa. But really what changed the trajectory for my career was, not only the top secret security clearance, because there are some assignments that you can't know about, some missions you can't be involved in, unless you have the highest level clearance. You can even be considered for that.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

All of a sudden I'm getting all the necessary things that I needed. And when that general I reported in to him and told him, "Here's the things that I believe I can do for you." He said, "Absolutely, but I'm telling you what I'm going to do for sergeant major. You're not going to have your own office. I'm going to put you in my army initiatives group. It's a strategic analytical field with the best and brightest in the army. You're going to work with those people, because you'll see and learn what we're doing everywhere. And you can better serve the SMA, the Sergeant Major of the Army." And I mumbled under my breath because I said, "Man, every other guy's got his own office, and I don't."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But that turns out that was the best thing that could've ever happened to me because I was always flying with him everywhere with the chief of staff of the army and the only sergeant major that was there at those big conferences was a sergeant major of the army. It changed the way I would think and how I would do things. And many of the assignments was really exceptional. But the ones that really stood out I believe was, if I could, I had an assignment at the Western hemisphere policy integrator working directly for the secretary of defense, work in counter narcotics. Didn't know a lot about it, but operation orders and execution orders, I definitely understood. And so in that office, we were responsible for all the counter narcotics mission around the world. I had the Western hemisphere, which was primarily Northcom, and was learning every day.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Had a chance to go to a classified briefing with the secretary of defense. And there was a Navy seal that was in their briefing and this was classified. So I won't talk about what was being discussed except that Mr. Rumsfeld asked this seal a question that he couldn't answer. And man, the way that that civilian talked to that general, it had my legs shaking. I still shake today when I think about it. And so it changed the way I began thinking because I said to myself and I was going to have to go in and do those briefings at some point in time, "I'm never going to let that happen to me."

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Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so everyone in the Air Force and the Marine Corps and the Navy that had to deal with me as the secretary of defense above all the services, they hated talking to sergeant Lovejoy, because he always asked them why. Because I wanted to know was, why are we doing this way? And you know what? They couldn't answer the questions some of the times. Ultimately, it had me when the deployment books came forward, I had to go all the way to the lowest level and talk to the guys who put the operation together. Because I discovered that the secdef liked new toys, and anytime there was a new piece of equipment, we would test it out in our operations. And so, with that said, I wanted to know what all the lightning bolts meant when I looked in the operation books. And I mean, these books had like 200 pages.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so with my job then, to take the operation to the secretary of defense, get his approval on the deployment, the money was set aside the operation which started just a couple of days, the coast guard was fit within ships. We're going to do everything. The FBI, all our law enforcement agencies were there ready to go after the bad guys, whatever it was going to be, but it had to be approved. And so it was Lovejoy on point. And I couldn't afford to go in and not answer a question and say, "Sir, I don't know the answer to that question, but I intend to find out." Because the operation was starting in the next day or so. And so was able to do that and learned a great deal of things.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But what really happened that changed the trajectory of my destiny I believe is, there was a briefing that was scheduled on the national drug strategy at the White House. And I was the action officer preparing the briefing book for my boss. And all of a sudden two days before he said to me, "Sergeant major, I'm not able to go to the briefing. You've got to go in my stated." Now for the first time in my career, with 33 years of service to the nation, I knew that this was above my skillset. And I looked at him frightened if I could possibly be. And he said, "You got this sergeant major." And I couldn't tell him that I couldn't do it.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But for the first time I was scared because not only did I not know what I was doing, but I was frightened because the attendees at the White House was the director of the FBI, the CIA, Interpol, all the lead guys. And there I am just a sergeant major. What can I do? I didn't even belong there. All of this is running through my mind. I'm talking to everybody. And all I was doing was briefing the drug testing policy for the armed forces. That's all.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But I just knew that everybody knew more about drug testing than me, not to mention everything else. And so I reported that next day. Believe it or not, I didn't even know how to sit down the acoustics, the ... Man, just everything was so fabulous. The microphones, the seats, the way they moved and sitting next to guys who had Armani and Versace suits and had weapons scrapped to their ankles. I was really impressed and all I had on was a little military uniform.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

The briefing started as we looked at our strategy and different people were briefing different areas. But what stood out for me with the customs and border folks shared that they were struggling in our national parks because they didn't have all the equipment and couldn't cover down on the acreage and that when people were smuggled into the country, there were people smuggled, drugs and weapons,

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and these people were hiding out in the park. And we needed to get at it. Everyone took the approach that as this guy was asking for help, that that's your problem because we were each funded for our specific areas.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

When it finally came down to me to do my briefing, I went through our drug testing program I believe in less than a minute, and didn't even breathe. And afterwards, all of a sudden something happened in the young sergeant major and I called a time out. And everybody looked at the table and look at the young man with stripes and this star to the ribbon and wondered, what is he talking about time out?

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And I said, "Listen, ladies and gentlemen, we have an issue here and we have to get at it." I said, "We have ..." And I don't know where this come from, it had to be one of the employment deployments. My years of service serving I said, "We have America's sons and daughters deployed around the world. And they were deployed in short notice to go to that country. Many of them didn't get a chance to say goodbye to their children. And when they left at a moment's notice, they're hunkered down, fighting the fight. There is an expectation that their sons and daughters would be able to grow up in a drug free environment. But that's not really the case because you're sitting here squabbling over rat turds about who should be doing what. Let me tell you this on why would we need to take a time out. We need to take a time out because if we don't get this right, somebody is going to get benched. And what happens when you get bench is when Ben reached down into the bench and we pull someone up and we put them in your position. And then that person recognizes what needs to be done and they get it right. And then you're sitting on the side and you realize and want to raise your hand. Okay, I understand the commitment. I'm really now willing to do it, but you won't get a second chance because we've moved on. But you're going to get that second chance now, because we're going to take a time out. We're going to pause for the cause and we're going to come back and we're going to get these funding issues sorted, and we're going to get it right because America's sons and daughters are counting on you, the members of this room, the A-Team to get it right." We took the pause.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Everyone came and began talking to me and apologizing. I don't even know where it came from. It wasn't even a part of my portfolio. I wanted to apologize. When we finally left, I couldn't wait to go back to the Pentagon because when you get fired, you know that you're fired because none of your cards work. You can't get to your office, your computer won't be, it doesn't work. And you're being escorted out of the building. So I couldn't wait to get to my boss to tell him what happened, which I didn't know except that I fumbled the football. And he cut me off and said, "Sergeant major, that's why I sent you. We got this."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Every day, I've waited to realize that I was fired finally after two weeks, we were called back and I had to go back to the White House. And I had received the most special award. And the award was simply that the impact was resolved and they were able to work through the funding issues and the drug strategy moved forward, and it was because I cheered those things and sacrifices that America's sons and daughters make during the deployment. And some of those men and women apologized and said they had forgotten and thanked me for keeping them battle focused.

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Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so just goes to show you that, years of experience and training and other things, what it could really do for them. And so that was probably one of the highlights of my life serving, besides being in combat and watching every day what those heroes do as they would go out the front gate, knowing that many of them would not be coming back and that they was doing it for the nation. And you could always tell when someone was new and in a combat zone, because if you were on a main coast, a main base cluster, the dining facility ... And I never understood why we could eat so well in combat until later on I realized why that was so. Because we had to feed you well because it could be your last meal. And so eating was never an issue of eating good food. And so whenever I seen people with three or four lobsters on their plate, I knew that they were new.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But within it, what was really interesting that shaped everything for me was that as the CJ-1 Sergeant major for the multinational force Iraq, I had the opportunity to review along with some other members of my chain. Every award that every service member would receive as it was sent to the four-star general for approval. And all we were doing was looking at this ministry with peace, but I was able to read the stories and look at what our heroes were really doing. Regular folks, every day people and what they did when the EIB blew up and how they were surrounded by the enemy and what they did to save their fellow soldiers who were wounded and other members on their team, not to mention reading the casualty reports every day. Day in and day out, it just shaped the way that I thought. And it was just amazing.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And what you really learn with all of that is that, we take a lot of things for granted here in the United States every day as we wake up that there are men and women all over the world protecting us, laying their lives on the line. And at the same time, there are people in those other countries who looks to the United States of America to come and save them, to help them. And believe it or not, having been assigned to the embassies, one of the things I discovered and I'm closing with this on this piece is that even in Rome, Italy, Budapest, Hungary, every embassy, they have what's called embassy row where you have embassies from the different major countries. But the only embassy that had people lined up down the street around the corner was the US embassy. Everybody wants to come to America.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

I was thinking Italians have Ferraris and the best wines, why does every Italian want to come to America? The Koreans, everybody, because this is the only country where if you have a dream and skillset, the reality can come true. And so we have people who are defending it. We have everybody that wants to come here. And then we have the folks here every day don't necessarily appreciate it. And so I'm just privileged to having been on the team and this doing my very best to help keep America great.

Greg Lindberg:

And that's very well said. No question. I know you were in the Pentagon on the morning of September 11th, 2001. And I was wondering if you could recount some of that story and just describe the atmosphere, everything that happened when when the one plane hit the Pentagon.

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Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Yes. Let me pause for just a moment and get my breath, because I'm told that my index trauma for PTSD was based on that event.

Greg Lindberg:

Sure.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Actually it was a regular day just like any other day, except we had been preparing to take 400 soldiers to the Battle of Antietam on a staff ride. And we had been working on this for about four months. The final in-progress review with 25 sergeant majors was with me along with other members of the team to prepare to go on the staff ride.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And on the staff ride, one of the first things that we were going to do was go to the White House and dawn our new berets with the president and visit Congress and go through the different branches. Everything was set. All the approvals had been given, everything was done. And all of this was going to transpire on the 12th of September. So this is the final IPR. I'm ready. My destiny was going to be defined on what would happen with the staff ride and the visit to the White House taking 400 service members from each branch.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And the IPR started at 0900 hours. Shortly thereafter in the middle of the briefing, there was a loud boom. Some of us immediately knew something happened because the whole building appeared to shake. And as the first two went out the conference room, I was the third one to go. As soon as I exited the conference room, it was like football. Everybody was running in every direction and slamming into people. And I immediately went to my right, following those two service members who were first. And bam, I ran into a lady and she pushed me to the left. And as I stumbled, I found myself on a staircase and it was like I was in a sardine can and I couldn't move. Things had changed and I was in a Twilight zone and I didn't know what was happening. And as I was able to ultimately get out of the staircase, out of the sardine can and was in center court, there was smoke everywhere and everyone was moving in slow motion.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And no one was talking and no one was giving instructions. And all of a sudden, the medics were moving and everyone began going to the left. And I went to the left as well and all of a sudden we were out of the Pentagon and into the parking lot. And hundreds and hundreds of people were running and no one was saying anything. And I believe that I had some skillsets but someone needed to say something. And thousands of people was running at the same time and no one was saying anything. As I observed, even women would fall down and pick their high heels up and would run like it was a hundred meters and explosions were taking place in vehicles. And there were people who were run over because someone got into a vehicle and hit them. Everyone was just running in every direction.

## Episode 18: Catching Up w/Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy (Part 1)

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

All of a sudden, I found myself as I grabbed a battle buddy and I was standing on the middle of I-95. And you could either look to the north or the south. As I looked to the north, I could almost see all the way to Philadelphia. And traffic was backed up for miles and no one was moving in the middle of the highway. Everyone looked confused. I could almost see to the south, all the way to Fort Bragg, to Virginia and I was totally lost.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And the only thing I remember at the time was the general order of guard duty that I will not leave my post until properly relieved. But, I didn't know what had happened and I hadn't been relieved. And everyone that was in the Pentagon, wherever they were, I could only speak to the hundreds that were around me. We were talking and walking because clearly it was the end of the world. No one knew what happened, all communications were cut off and we were just walking. Some people decided to walk home. But because I had a uniform on with the type of shoes, I couldn't walk.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so what had happened, no one knew, no communications. Hours went by. We were thirsty. Couldn't hear any radio. None of the facilities and stores we went to would give us anything. I had my identification and my billfold was in my office. I didn't have any money for water. I was able to borrow \$10 from a sergeant major friend and was able to get some water and was actually lost like the many others who were still roaming the streets that was in the downtown Washington area. The Pentagon mall is across the street. Everyone was put out of every building. And it was thousands. Hundreds of thousands of people were just moving in every direction totally lost, but no comms anywhere that I could see.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Ultimately, on or about 10 o'clock or so, I was able to get back to the Pentagon because I knew that I couldn't abandon my post. And now I had to find a way to get in. And I had the right identification because the Pentagon was now identified as a crime scene and only mission essential folks could get in. And I had the identification which showed I was a member of the army operation center. I was able to ultimately get in. As I signed in with everyone that was getting accountability, I was told that I was missing in action and that we had had accountability for some of our folks and some we did not.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

At that point in time, the young boy within Sergeant Major Lovejoy realized that I had teammates that I needed to get to and I needed to get to my office to find out was anyone still alive? So I went into an area that all of a sudden showed that the wires were hanging from the walls. The water was busted and I had water up past my knees. The temperature changed, and it had to be over 100 degrees. I had to take my shirt off and everything. I was lost. And when I was moving forward ... And I knew the Pentagon well but it had changed because the staircase, the escalators, were now looking like bobby pins that were twisted and nothing looked the same. There was no sound and water, and it was pitch dark. And I was moving and just to go 200 meters or so, it took a couple of hours.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And as I was navigating and moving forward, I finally got to an area. And everything changed for me because I could go no further. And as I looked, there was the plane with all first responders doing what

## Episode 18: Catching Up w/Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy (Part 1)

they do to save and help. And I was totally lost because I know this was a nightmare. And I lost my faith this day at this particular time, because I knew that Jesus had come and I got left behind. And I became very angry that the good people were taken to heaven and I was left here because I wasn't worthy and I still had tasks to do. And that is where I was.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so I kept moving, setting that aside and I got to my office and checked the location. Deaths were everywhere and there were no bodies found. And so I did my duty to, well, what I thought my duty was to find my teammates. And found a bag that had my keys to my vehicle and other things. And I put it on my shoulder and it took another couple of hours to get out of that area to get back to the parking lot. And I was ultimately able to get home that evening or so. It was two or three in the morning. And when I did, I was in trouble already as I got home because they were doing accountability and I had been listed as missing an action.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And when I finally got home and began to share what I was struggling with and what the challenge was, I was told then that I fumbled the football because I had loved soldiers more than my family and that I failed to check in. And that is true, that I failed to check in. And I share with all service members that whenever they can in the middle of a crisis as soon as they can, check in not only to your higher headquarters, but to your loved ones so they can know that you're alright. Because they're going through a mess. The whole world was going through a mess, but I was going through a mess as well. And I was lost and was given a class then about the hierarchy of love and that I was out of step with some things because I love service members more than my family, but that was not really the case. I was just lost.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And as I reported into duty the next morning at 0500 hours, battle focused that the world had changed, as I climbed the staircase and was cleared to enter, each step that you took, it was warmer and warmer. And I observed that there was these two ladies and they had these handkerchiefs and they were calling on God and praising Him and asking Him to give us strength and encouraging us to believe in God. And everybody who walked past these women were able to get a little bit of strength on what they were saying. And they weren't anyone dressed fancy. They were just ladies with handkerchiefs in their hands.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Later I'm told and believe that they were angels as well. Angels are simply people who are given a mission by God to respond and go to a designated place. Because evil had occurred, those two women had received that assignment to go there and just to pray on that facility. And no one asked them for their identification. They didn't have any badges, but yet they were cleared to do that.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And as I passed them, I went into the restroom to get myself together and just asked that I not fail whatever the mission would be. As I got to the army operation center, I pulled my team together and we had jumped. All of our offices had been destroyed. We had moved remotely to one location. They were relocating people from Capitol Hill to site R. All the Congress men, representatives, everybody, every operational around the world was working as much as they could work. I pulled the team together that I knew, the enlisted members, and said, "Team, the nation has called us to be here at this appointed time.

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And so I don't know who you believe in, but you need to talk to him right now because we are the chosen ones. And so if you don't mind, we're going to hold hands and have a moment to get battle focused." So as we held hands, I began praying and I just simply asked God to give us an increase in strength and knowledge and skills and abilities and let us not fail our nation and our families.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And we went about our business of doing what we were supposed to do. On that day, I discovered the role of a sergeant major. You can read and study and go through multiple deployments, but I discovered then that the role of a sergeant major became very challenging. And I discovered really what it was because every colonel that went to the general to ask for guidance or with an idea, the general said to them, "Have you talked to the sergeant major?" Well hell, all of a sudden I had all these folks come in to talk to me, to run ideas by me and I had no clue. There was the best and brightest, but I was smart enough. And I knew what I didn't know, which was not much. But there was something I knew and that was just very few things. And I knew enough to take notes, to keep accountability of what was going on.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so I realized then more than anything that I needed to talk to another sergeant major. There was only two sergeant majors. It was clear that being in the facility in the Pentagon at that time, the sergeant major of the army and myself. And so I called the other sergeant major. I said, "I got the list of the primary sergeant majors in the army staff and asked them what they were doing for their soldiers." And they told me the things that they were doing and there was at least eight of them and each one was doing something different. And I now had accountability and I told them what I was doing.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Before you know it, I had a list of 56 things that needed to be done. And wow, I could shoot, move and communicate now because Lovejoy was all over. And I knew then that those sergeant majors needed to be in the building as well to support their generals so they could see the operation. And I was able to get them clear that coming to the facility and the same of the army operation center. And every morning, there was a briefing with the chief of staff of the army, the principal staff, on where we were, what we could see, who we thought it was and what our game plan would be thus far. I made sure that as I brought those sergeant majors in, it was clear they could get the same briefing that every general received. It was on the staff. And those sergeant majors then, it changed their way of thinking. And I was able to share with them, "My fellow sergeant majors, America's army is at war. And when the army G-3 asks you for anything, your response is Roger, are we tracking?" They said, "Absolutely Sergeant Major Rock."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And from that moment on, we was shooting, moving and communicating. The entire city began coming together. There were tents set up. There was food. We were working long hours and an awful lot was going on. What was really challenging I believe at the time was that we brought all the families together. If you had someone missing that worked in the Pentagon, you were brought to the Sheraton Hotel, told to report there, to ultimately get a status. So we had teams set up there, but there wasn't much we could do for you and tell someone because the searching was ongoing digging through the rubble. And it was rubble for days as they had dogs with masks on and just everything.

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Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so we had service members who were escorting the family members and it was not friendly because things were not clear, as clear as it could be. And the family members were angry and a lot was really happening because some guys had girlfriends. And so their girlfriends showed up. Their wives showed up from Alabama and they met. And the service member was not there to articulate his situation. And it was a soldier who was stuck in the middle, the escort who caught hit. Teams came together, everything was happening like it was supposed to happen. And couldn't believe that in a crisis, America would come together and do what it was supposed to do.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

But what's interesting, as you ventured outside of Washington, folks didn't care. And so while all traffic and airlines and everything was restricted and different procedures and every service member somewhere wanted to be a part of who did this to us and was ready to get at it. And I was scheduled to go to the sergeant majors academy that would be the guest speaker two weeks after 9/11 for army transformation and was able to still go, but they didn't want to hear about transformation. They wanted to hear about the attack on the Pentagon.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

So I'm standing in front of hundreds of sergeant majors, Special Forces and everyone who was students who wanted to do something and wanted to know what really happened. And I simply shared my story of what I saw and what I did, which wasn't much except to ask them, "Make sure you tell your family that you're alright, because that's critical." And I had no idea that some people seen the plane coming and happened to be on the phone and shared it with their family members. I'm still in the dog house today from how I handled that with my family calling and reporting home. But it was a wonderful moment to share with those service members and to watch our country come together.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And that day, I lost two service members that was in that conference room with me. As they went to the right and I went to the left and I was pushed to the left by that lady, who I'm told later, this is a Cliff Lovejoy's belief per se, that that was an angel that pushed me because the jet fuel had come down that corridor and took out those two service members as well, along with many, many others. And so I really wasn't supposed to be here today had she not pushed me in the direction that she did, to the left of where I was going. And so, again, I do know that there's angels walking on this earth who have different missions. And I had the opportunity to meet three that day.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And as I observe the many, many noble things that many, many civilians and members of the force did, it was just miraculous, the courage that they had. And I don't claim to be a hero by any stretch of imagination. And I'm just a member on the team and made a promise that day as I went to those funerals at Arlington Cemetery, because Sergeant Major Ivory was my best friend and his wife was a minister and a Lieutenant Colonel and so was mine at the time and we were working to be the best sergeant majors we could be. And I was struggling with his loss and the loss of my best friend, what was I going to do now? And so I made a promise that I would every 9/11 go to Arlington and I would constantly check on his children and would continue to serve until the army kicked me out.

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Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so I've been able to keep that promise for the most part and proud to say that, while that was not a good day for the nation per se, with the loss of the many folks that we had, the way we responded and came together and ultimately accomplished the mission years later, it's just a sign that we're still the greatest country in the world and have been able to verify and validate that everybody everywhere wants to be in America. And so that's why we catch heck, that's why we have some of the challenges because when you're the greatest country in the world, and you look at Rome, the Roman empire and all those other places, today it is the United States of America. And the US Armed Forces is charged with helping keep it that way. And so that is a snapshot of my recollection and some of my experiences during 9/11.

Greg Lindberg:

Just incredible. I really appreciate you sharing that story and being so upfront with everything. And I know it's got to be tough to retell just having gone through that and everything. And so can't thank you enough for sharing that. I know that you did ultimately serve for 39 years in the army. And from what I understand, it was health reasons that ultimately is the reason that you did have to leave the military.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Yes, it was. It's interesting that doesn't matter what your gender and what ethnicity you have, that you have an opportunity if you do to serve on the greatest team in the world. And I got a chance to do that and be with the absolute very best whose sole mission was to have saved the world in multiple combat operations. But one day, no matter how good you are and what you've learned and how you serve, you can get sick, you can get injured, you can get shot because the mission of the United States Army is to protect the United States of America and to win its wars. That's the mission of the United States Army. And so in doing that, you can get injured in training or in combat or you can get sick. Leukemia or any of those things, you're not exempt from that.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so young Lovejoy, yes I got sick and I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I had gotten very, very sick. And one of the interesting things you learn ... And there was a standard joke at one time, but it wasn't a joke to me which was if Denzel Washington would have served in the army, he would have looked just like Sergeant Major Lovejoy. And so there I was at the top of my game, the absolute very best with that illness. As I was told through a phone call that I was diagnosed with cancer, it changed some things. And the interesting thing is you begin dealing with the military. Again, as I mentioned, it's about fighting and winning America's wars. If you no longer can fight, you got to go. "Thank you for your service my brother and all that you've done, but you have to leave and we're going to help you get well. We're going to fix it if we can, but you can no longer fight and so your time is up."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And I began struggling and challenged at that point in time, because what was I really going to do? And cancer is something that I've not been prepared for nor trained. And so hell I'm a soldier. Don't tell me I got cancer and I can't serve. And so it was taking me from one side to the other and I struggled tremendously because I, at this time at joint base, San Antonio wanted to talk to another sergeant major who had cancer. And we had some HIPPA rules that you couldn't tell me who had cancer. And hell, I needed a man that talked. I didn't want to talk to those women who were trying to help you and talk to

## Episode 18: Catching Up w/Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy (Part 1)

you about cancer. And yeah, so I got an answer to the question of ... We were having a town hall meeting for wounded warriors and the secretary of defense was coming.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

I just been diagnosed. I got something to tell this brother, because I ain't got long to live. And so what you going to do is over for Lovejoy. And I went and I was there with all the other wounded guys and girls, and while my illness didn't appear to be that serious because I still had all my body parts and I wasn't in a wheelchair. I was 300 and some pounds and couldn't breathe. And I was a Pillsbury Doughboy for lack of a better definition. And the secretary of defense had said what he needed to say. And he asked us, "Is there any questions?" And all of a sudden again in that young sergeant major, there was a young boy that stepped out and I stood up and I raised my hand and said, "Sir, sergeant major Lovejoy with 38 years of service to the nation. I don't have a question. I have a comment that I'd like to share with you on behalf of the wounded warriors here."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Now, the congressmen were there. News media, all the senior military officials, and they all wanted to, how in the hell did ... who let a sergeant major up in here. And everybody, news media cameras were focusing. I didn't care. I was Pillsbury Doughboy.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And I simply shared, "Mr. Secretary, I want to talk to you quickly about military city USA, San Antonio, Texas. It's like no other city in the world. The civilian community truly loves its military members here. And we are one team and we're battled focus. Every other city professes to be focused and supports our military organizations, but they're really just faking the funk. This is where it really happens. But Mr. Secretary, what I want to really talk to you about is the Center of Intrepid and Brooks Army Medical Center. Those two medical facilities not only save life, but what's most importantly about them, is they heal families and keep them together along with the whole community. And so my request, Mr. Secretary is quite simple. As you prepare to head back to the nation's capital, when you board your Learjet with the distinguished senators who are here with you today, and your pilot has to bank left or bank right because of a foreign object that's left San Antonio, fear not because simply it's an angel who's received their wings because we've saved another life and we've healed another family. And so the request on behalf of all wounded warriors, Mr. Secretary is, spare these two facilities of any budget decrement because they are healing families and saving lives. That is our request, Mr. Secretary. My name is Lovejoy and I'm army strong."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And I sat down with my obesity and the secretary looked at me and I was waiting because I've been diagnosed for nine days and I'm going to die any day. So what are you going to do? And he said to me, pointed his finger, "Lovejoy, in all my years of service to the nation, I have never heard anything so eloquently said. And my commitment to you and each and every wounded warrior that is here today, there will be no budget cuts to these two facilities as I head back to the nation. I am the secretary of defense and that is my commitment to you."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And everybody began clapping and was thankful. And that was really it except that two days later, I went to the hospital commander and I said, "Sir," said, "I need some help. We're doing a lot of things

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here, but we've got men who are in the closet who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer and they're separating from their spouses and they're lost and we need to bring them together. I need your help in doing that because I'm not going to die alone." Now, real smart hospital commander, he flipped the script and said, "You know what sergeant major, I got you." He said, "But what do you want me to do?" And he said, "Well," I said to him, "We need a support group. And we need to flex our muscle and show our capabilities here." And he said, "Got you, I'll tell you I'm going to do. We'll have a support group and I'll fund it, provided that you facilitate it. And go see my communications folks and tell them what I said, see what you can do from there."

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

I went and talked to them, and the next thing I'm on my Lackland Air Force Base. And I asked every man in the room who has prostate cancer. And believe it or not, every man in there raised their hand, at least 19 of us. And everybody began talking about their story and how they were diagnosed and I put together the team that would help put together a video with our family members. And we stood up a prostate cancer support group to help us understand how we were going to do it. And I would just close with, that was the best medical facility in the world along with Walter Reed. But the challenges men face are really unbelievable.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And for me, everything came full circle when I had a chance to talk in front of each and every one of the family members at our first meeting and gave them their mission, which was essentially that your husband is going to begin cheating on you. And they looked at me and every ... Because there's Lovejoy again. He tells the truth. And I said, but he's not going to begin cheating with another woman. He's going to be then cheating because he's going to move out of the bedroom and he's going to move into another bedroom, and he's going to begin self-medicating. And he's going to begin dancing with Jack Daniels or Jim Beam and taking his Percocet and some other things. Because the radiation and chemotherapy that he's going through, he can't feel anything. He has not stopped loving you. It's just simply that he's not the man that he used to be and everything irritates him because of the medication and the radiation. And so he can't stand to be touched. He still loves you. So don't abandon him, but don't let him be in that room by himself.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And so what I asked you to do is even if he forces it on you, you go through that room and you check every drawer and all of the beds to make sure that if there's any medication, any alcohol that you're tracking it, because we can't come into your home and check what's happening there. And you have that responsibility. If you do that, it'll help us as we keep going forward. And there were a lot of people angry with me for sharing that secret that we struggle with that. But yeah. And so I ultimately had to leave the military because of my illness. But that didn't stop me from remaining committed to helping America's sons and daughters.

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah. That's wonderful that you would take the time in dealing with your own situation there and really helping others. That really shows just the kind of individual you truly are. In the interest of time Lovejoy, I was wondering if we could maybe follow up with you again next week to talk about Saint Leo and just your whole experience as a student with us, if that would be okay.

## Episode 18: Catching Up w/Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy (Part 1)

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Yeah. Do we have at least five more minutes?

Greg Lindberg:

Yeah, yeah, sure.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

Okay. One of the things I wanted to share while I had the moment, because we've got some things going on with the virus and everybody's doing everything and I may not get a second chance because I'm in that vulnerable population of being over 60 and what's happening in Georgia right now as we begin to test with the CBC. And so I just wanted to share that one of the things is very important with non-profits is we have an organization called Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. And it's really 25 years of caring for the families of the fallen for the service members, kids and spouses who as they perish and have been killed in combat. And so the question becomes, as I've been a part of this non-profit as a military mentor, we need some help. We need those veterans to step up and volunteer and get involved.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

And it's because I discovered that those great Americans who have given their life for the country, who cares for their children after they're gone? Who really looks after them? Some of them didn't have brothers and sisters to reach down. And so, yeah. But more importantly, we have losses to suicide. And when you kill yourself, there's a lot of shame associated with that. And so the families become lost and this program works with all of that. But the families become lost, the spouse who's still left, the kids that are there, the way they're treated in their communities. The military gives you the Heisman because you got to go. There's some benefits, but you're out. And they don't know why he or she killed themselves. And so their lost.

Retired Army Sgt. Mjr. Clifford Lovejoy:

So I've had the opportunity to be a part of this program and work with young kids whose brothers have killed themselves. And it's been one of the most rewarding times of my life as I serve as a mentor. And I asked any service member who's in veteran, who's available and healthy, please consider working with TAPS because the sons and daughters, it's our responsibility that their parent is no longer here to extend a hand, to make sure that they're looking in the right direction and still have hope. And so not knowing what's going to happen in the very near future. Maybe we can link up or not. I wanted to just say that and thank you for taking the time to allow me to share my life story thus far, and this non-profit organization that means the world to me. My name is Lovejoy, and I'm still Army strong.

Greg Lindberg:

Very well said. I appreciate you mentioning that sergeant major. That's such wonderful cause and we definitely would love to talk to you further about that on the next episode.

Speaker 1:

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