

Stephen Strang: How George Clouse Encouraged Me to Start 'Charisma'

Today I'm remembering my friend and mentor George Clouse, a World War II vet, who died July 21 at age 93. He was a great, godly man who impacted many—especially me. That's because in 1974, I told him about my idea to start a magazine for the church we both attended. He encouraged me to do it. The result is *Charisma* magazine and all the related ministry products developed over the years. I've often said if George had discouraged me that day, I would have likely dropped the idea.

On my "Strang Report" podcast today, I talk about his life with his widow, my good friend Mary Jo Clouse. My wife, Joy Strang, and our friend Rebecca McInnis also talk on the podcast about how this special man impacted our lives. And in that way, he impacted yours. Had it not been for George Clouse, *Charisma* might never have started nor this newsletter and podcast.

We can all learn from George's example in life. He was patriotic, hardworking, respected and did a lot of good during his time on earth. He was loved by many. He was faithful, and God blessed him as he blessed others. Isn't that how each of us should be remembered?

In that first issue of *Charisma*, George wrote an article about how God convicted him of the scripture in Romans 13:8—"to owe no man anything but love." When this happened in 1974, George felt he should believe God to retire \$38,000 worth of debt—the same as \$206,000 today. While he had a good job, he didn't have extra money to pay off the debt in only a few months. As he writes in this article, God performed miracle after miracle, and the Clouses paid off the debt by the end of the

year. George stayed out of debt for the next nearly 50 years. The article is so applicable today that I ran it again on our website, and you can read it [here](#).

George was born in Franklin, North Carolina, in 1926. His mother died of cancer when he was 9, and his father was killed in a car accident when he was 10, at the height of the Great Depression. His grandparents raised him and taught him to be self-sufficient. He entered the Navy at age 18 and served until 1946. When the war ended, he returned to North Carolina and was employed in Bryson City as the editor and publisher of *Smoky Mountain Times*.

George moved to Florida in 1957 and worked at the *Orlando Sentinel Star* for 25 years as the supervisor of mechanics. He has authored eight books and published stories in the *Reader's Digest*. He was a wonderful writer, guitar player and athlete and could repair anything mechanical. In his younger years, he won the bowling championship for Orlando, Florida. He was going on a bowling tour when he met Mary Jo, and they were married in 1969. They had a wonderful 50 years of married life together.

In 1971, George received Jesus as Savior and traveled across the country ministering in churches and Full Gospel Business Men's meetings. Upon retiring from the *Sentinel*, he moved to Winnie, Texas, and served as an associate pastor. In 1990, he moved back to Orlando, where he enrolled in college and received his degree at the age of 71. During this time, he was the headmaster of Wekiva Christian School in Longwood, Florida (where my son attended). He was loved and respected by the employees and students he led for 14 years.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Mary Jo Clouse, five children—Bill Clouse, Judy Skiles, Carolyn Harris, Gill Bottoms and Karen Pope—as well as 13 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren and a host of friends.

George Clouse was a devoted father, husband, grandfather and honorable man of God who impacted many lives. His stories, jokes and wisdom will be carried on by all those who were blessed to sit and listen for a while.

But I will remember him for the impact on my life and how he encouraged me to start *Charisma* and was so helpful in those early days.