



CLIFTON CUSHMAN

1938 - 1975

After failing to qualify for the 1964 U.S. Olympic Team, former CAP cadet Clifton Emmett "Cliff" Cushman penned an open letter to the youth of Grand Forks, challenging them to strive to become better citizens.



... Over fifteen years ago I saw a star -- first place in the Olympic Games. I literally started to run after it. In 1960 I came within three yards of grabbing it; this year I stumbled, fell and watched it recede four more years away. Certainly, I was very disappointed in falling flat on my face. However, there is nothing I can do about it now but get up, pick the cinders from my wounds, and take one more step, followed by one more and one more, until the steps turn into miles and the miles into success."

I dare you to **HAVE YOUR HAIR CUT** and not wilt under the comments of your so-called friends.

I dare you to **CLEAN UP YOUR LANGUAGE.**

I dare you to **HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.**

I dare you to **GO TO CHURCH** without having to be compelled to go by your parents.

I dare you to unselfishly **HELP SOMEONE** less fortunate than yourself and enjoy the wonderful feeling that goes with it.

I dare you to **BECOME PHYSICALLY FIT.**

I dare you to **READ A BOOK** that is not required in school.

I dare you to **LOOK UP AT THE STARS**, not down at the mud, and set your sights on one of them that, up to now, you thought was unattainable.

There is plenty of room at the top, but no room for anyone to sit down. Who knows? You may be surprised at what you can achieve with sincere effort. So get up, pick the cinders out of your wounds, and take one more step.

I DARE YOU.

Clifton Emmett "Cliff" Cushman joined CAP as a cadet in Grand Forks, North Dakota in the mid-1950s. A high school and collegiate track star, Cushman was an NCAA individual and track and field team champion at the University of Kansas. In 1960, he commissioned as an Air Force second lieutenant and won the silver medal in the 400 meter hurdles in the Summer Olympics in Rome, Italy. A stumble, however, at the 1964 U.S. Olympic Team trials in Los Angeles cost him a chance for gold. Undaunted, Cushman soared higher and deployed to Thailand in August 1966, flying combat missions over North Vietnam. On September 25, his F-105D Thunderchief was shot down northeast of Hanoi. Missing in action, Major Cushman was declared dead on November 6, 1975. In his brief combat career, he received the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, two Air Medals, and the Purple Heart.

