



The Early Life of Joe Lipsius

b. Jan. 8, 1918 d. Sep. 6, 2015 (Age 97)

Written by 69th Inf. Div. Website Contributors. Updated Sep. 08, 2015 | [HTML Version](#)

Joe Lipsius



Fig. 1—Young Joe Lipsius, 5th grade.

Joseph (Joe) Lipsius was born in Forsyth (Monroe County) Georgia, an around 2000 population town, January 8, 1918, to Alexander Samuel Lipsius, an emigre from Petrograd, Russia, and Anna Brodie Lipsius, a native of Brooklyn, NY. Forsyth is about 75 miles SE of Atlanta and at the time was widely known, for its girls' Baptist college, called Bessie Tift. There were two boys already in the family, Howard, the oldest, and Sol. A girl, Evelyn, was to follow about 3 years later. The family had settled in Forsyth in about 1915 with Mr. Lipsius owning and operating a small "dry goods" store, a popular means of livelihood for Jewish families in those days. Towards the late 1920s as the depression approached and the store business declined, Mrs Lipsius' health began to fail. At the urging of some relatives in Atlanta, Mr Lipsius sold the store and moved the family to Atlanta in January, 1928, to operate and own a small grocery store and where his wife would be closer to better medical care. It was to no avail. Mrs. Lipsius died June 3, 1928, at the age of 36, suffering an apoplectic stroke. Mr. Lipsius, some Atlanta relatives, the mother's sister from a small South Georgia town, all agreed Joe and Evelyn were a little too young for the father to take care of properly. So, Evelyn, almost 8, went to live with the South Georgia aunt. Joe, 10 1/2, went to live in the family of his father's uncle whose last name was Lipshutz and Joe's grandfather's brother. More specifically, Joe's father's uncle's son and wife were to take care of Joe. They had one son, Robert, 6 1/2, but Joe and "Bobby," as he was known, were about the same size. Robert Lipshutz was later to help "Jimmy" Carter become elected Governor of Georgia and President of the United States. He served as Carter's General Counsel for two years.

Joe stayed with the Lipshutz family that summer and all of the next school year which was the fifth grade. He would visit his father and brothers every 3 or 4 weeks for the week-end, He returned for good in time to begin the sixth grade. By this time, his father had sold the grocery store which had not fared well This was just before the October, 1929, stock market crash which plunged the country into a depression. Bad times had already taken place for small businesses.

Back with the family

Howard had quit day school to work full time and attended night school. Sol had taken an Atlanta Georgian newspaper route to earn money. The Georgian was in the William Randolph Hearst newspaper chain. Both contributed to the family upkeep. Joe obtained a small afternoon newspaper route centered around his house with The Atlanta Journal which was later bought by James M. Cox and became one of the Cox newspaper and communications holdings, a big player in today's publishing, radio and cable operations. The Journal's method of earnings was different than that of The Georgian so after a few months Joe obtained a Georgian route, reached by bicycle. The route was in a poor neighborhood but on it was the The Coca-Cola Company building in the same spot where today's headquarters is located but at that time it was just two-storied with a large garage for trucks on part of the first floor and a big tennis court in the rear. His only customer in the building was a Mr. Price Gilbert on the second floor reached by elevator. Joe had been forewarned that he would be able to drink a Coca-Cola free each day but wait until directed by Mr. Gilbert to do so. On the first day he delivered the newspaper to Mr. Gilbert he was asked why didn't he have a Coca-Cola with him? Joe fibbed about not knowing he was to get one out of the drink box between the two elevators. Mr. Gilbert instructed him to get one each day in the future. Two things Joe points out. At that time, the drink box was kept cold by ice! Mr Price Gilbert, in later years, donated millions of dollars to Georgia Tech which was just 2 or 3 blocks away. The Georgia Tech library is called The Price Gilbert Library.

A better newspaper route.

In the spring of 1930, when Joe was preparing to go enter the 7th grade in September, he changed his Georgian route again. This time, moving much further away and east of his home to the affluent Ansley Park section where one of his customer's was the State of Georgia Governor's Mansion. He still used a bicycle to both reach his route and deliver it. The number of customers was about the same, fifty or sixty. However, Joe was faced with a problem. His Junior High School, assignment was a newly constructed one about 2 miles or so west of his home. Between his home and the route was another Junior High (7th, 8th and 9th grades) which would be much closer to traverse to his route after school. What was he to do? Go to the new school and have a long haul or try to get assigned to the one closer to his route? They both were about the same distance from home. Joe decided to go to the Board of Education office which was housed in the newly constructed 10 to 12 story City Hall building and ask to be transferred. He rode his bike to City Hall, located the office, pleaded his case and obtained the transfer!

Joe started the 7th grade in September, 1930, at O'Keefe Junior High, delivering newspapers in Ansley Park. Early in 1931 he changed route again to a section on Peachtree St. which was adjacent to Ansley Park but still upper class, only it was comprised of apartment buildings and not widely scattered homes. About this time, The Georgian began an extensive campaign to increase circulation. The main thrust was to have period campaigns, as well award carriers who obtained a certain number of new subscriptions, a week trip to the beach. The first period contest was a trip to New York and Washington for the 6 who obtained the most subscriptions. Joe and Sol both won one week trips to Tybee Beach out of Savannah in the summer of 1931. His brother was one of 6 to go on an about 10 day trip to Washington and New York sometime in 1931. In the fall of 1931, there was a contest for 28 highest to go to Miami. Joe competed and was one of the winners. There were between 350 and 400 carriers who were now being called "carrier salesmen" who could be winners of either beach trips or in contests where a highest certain number were winners.

Winning bigger and better trips

In the summer of 1932, the beach trip was changed to Jacksonville, Florida. Joe went to the Beach. He also went in '33, '34 and '35.

The Georgian did not own a radio station as did The Journal with its WSB, "Voice of the South." However, The Georgian was one of the first to have nightly news broadcasts at 6:45 PM each evening from its building, piped to Radio Station WGST. The promotion manager wrote articles for the newspaper touting the contests. He decided the news broadcast would be a good place to publicize the contests, too, both during the contest and when the boys returned from the trips. The newscaster was "Mike" Thomas. A short segment called "Boy of The Week" was set up and "Mike" would interview the carrier salesman about the contest, how he was doing and the fun on the trip. Joe became a regular visitor to "Boy of the Week." One day "Mike" was asked by a planned producer of a weekly 30 minute radio soap opera to recommend a youngster to play a young boy's role. He sent Joe to be auditioned. He was accepted. The program was called "Symphony of Life." It rivaled a nationally broadcast "One Man's Family." It ran weekly for three years. The first anniversary program was to a packed audience at The Atlanta Fox Theater who paid to see the on stage radio broadcast.

Central America and FDR inauguration

The next big contest was in the fall of 1932. It was two-tiered. Twenty eight boys would go to Cuba via bus from Atlanta to Tampa, Florida and by boat from Tampa to Havana, Cuba, from after Christmas to over New Years. The reason 28 was the number in these contests was The Georgian had bought its own bus which had this number of seats. One of its employees drove. The second tier was a contest in which the four highest would go to Washington on the Governor's Special train to see Franklin D. Roosevelt inaugurated for his first term on March 4, 1933, already voted to be the last March 4 inaugural. Joe was a winner in the Cuba contest which was changed to New Orleans and Central America because of the Batista Revolution. He and another carrier salesman were tied in fifth place for the Washington trip. They both were sent!

World's Fair in Chicago

In the summer of 1933 there was a trip for the 28 highest to the Chicago World's Fair and a stay in The Stevens Hotel, at that time advertised as the world's largest. Joe was a winner. He also was one of 28 to win a trip to the 1934 World's Fair in

Chicago.

At some period during these years, he was a winner of a year's scholarship to one of the 4 major Georgia colleges. During the last 3 years of his newspaper route days, Joe was earning approximately \$18 per week. Part to his father for household upkeep, part to savings and the rest for clothing and upkeep of a car shared with his brother Sol.



Fig. 3— High School Graduate Joe Lipsius, Age 18, 1936.

Graduating Boys' High School

At the end of May, 1936, Joe graduated from the Atlanta Boys' High School. The oldest brother was preparing for marriage, the other brother was getting ready to graduate from Georgia Tech. The sister had returned to live with the family and finish high school in Atlanta. The brothers decided to pool some money and buy their father another grocery store. Joe agreed to help him for a few months before returning to school. He had given up his newspaper route a few days before graduation. The store was bought but Joe became restless and in January, 1937, when things seemed to be settled with the father and the store, Joe approached *The Georgian* for a job helping carriers and was accepted. In late 1937, there was a retrenchment in the circulation department which resulted in Joe losing his job. It was short lived and Joe was called back to work. At one point in this period, Joe conducted "The Boy of the Week" as the interviewer in a 5 minute segment at the radio station during the 6 PM period. He would arrive at the station early and from time to time be asked to take part in a two man commercial. Joe willingly took part and eventually asked the Chief Announcer to hire him for an evening job Joe knew was open. After an extensive audition, he was accepted and directed to report the next Monday evening. During the wait, Joe visualized himself becoming the next Boake Carter or Lowell Thomas who were the leading national news broadcasters. On the Sunday before he was to start, Joe went to the radio station to just hang around. The Chief Announcer was there and told Joe the Station Manager had a friend to come to Atlanta and ask for a job so he was being hired. This ended Joe's short career as a radio announcer!

Gone With The Wind

On Friday evening December 15, 1939, the movie *Gone With The Wind* was premiered in Atlanta. Authoress Margaret Mitchell had lived in an apartment on Joe's route under her married name. Before the book was published, Joe had called on her many times to subscribe to *The Georgian* and would be rebuffed because she had worked for *The Journal*. The day after the premier, the Saturday editions of *The Georgian* and *Journal* carried the announcement, James M. Cox, owner of *The Atlanta Journal*, had bought *The Georgian* which would no longer be published. Poof, *The Georgian* was gone with the wind! Joe, and many others, were out of their job. He had used a portion of his scholarship for a short-lived night school law college course in 1938 and had dismissed further education. What was he to do? There was a morning newspaper by name of *The Atlanta Constitution*. It sent out word it was looking for subscription canvassers to seek *The Georgian* customers so Joe took a commission job there. The store was barely making a living for his father who had re-married and was being helped by his wife. Joe was still living in his father's home.

Montgomery, Alabama

Early in January, 1940, the former Circulation Director of *The Georgian* called Joe and asked him to go to Montgomery, Alabama, where he was to become Circulation Director of *The Alabama Journal* there. Joe would work with the present the City Circulation Manager. Joe went. His stay was about 6 month at which time the man he went over with departed but he arranged for a better job for Joe with *The Birmingham News*, distributing in Montgomery. Shortly afterwards, *The Alabama Journal* called Joe and said it had been given permission by Joe's employer to talk to him regard coming back to work there. Employment was agreed and in late 1940 Joe returned.

Meanwhile, Montgomery was busy with the US Air Force's expanding Maxwell Field because of Hitler's actions in Europe and a new Air Force Training facility was opened by name of Gunter Field. Much activity was involved in establishing

newspaper routes to deliver papers to arriving Cadets who would be training for several weeks. Then, in September, 1940, Joe was required to register for the draft Congress had just newly enacted and in October, 1940, the first draftees were called up. Joe, of course, registered, but, by his own admission, gave no thought that he might be called up and required to enter one of the services. An older friend in Montgomery told Joe he knew someone at Maxwell Field who could arrange a plush job if Joe would go see him, thus assuring where he would serve. Joe resisted with the remark he was too little to be in any of the services!

However, in August 1941, Joe received a letter directing him to a Doctor for a physical. On being weighed and measured for height, Joe asked the Doctor if he wasn't too small for any of the services? "Son, you are as good as in the Army, now!"

[End of Joe's original post]

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[September 8, 2015 Update]

[Click here to read the second chapter, Joe Lipsius' Military Career.](#)



Webmaster Postscript:

Small in stature, but a giant among men.

On September 6, 2015, Joe Lipsius died peacefully at age 97. Joe had only just retired as 69th Webmaster about eight months ago. Just five weeks ago he emailed webmaster, Michael McKibben. He was following up an opportunity to recruit a librarian to assist with improving Taps records. Joe does not want us to forget a single 69er, or what they did for us. We will certainly not forget him.

Godspeed Joe, as you join The Long Gray Line
and reunite with your brothers who preceded you.

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