

## KOREAN WAR MARINE'S SECOND PURPLE HEART SENT HIM HOME

William Harold Turner, Jr. thought it was a good plan – he and three Fort Pierce, Florida buddies would quit school, join the Navy, and see the world together. He was only 17, but his father gave his approval – with the stipulation Turner would work towards his GED.

The plan unraveled – Turner joined the Marines. The world he saw was predominantly Parris Island, South Carolina and Korea -- in April and October, 1952 respectively. He earned his GED aboard ship while crossing the Pacific Ocean.

Turner picks up his story, “We were terribly short-handed. When we needed 200 replacements, we received 50. When little more than a boot Marine, I served in a lieutenant’s billet as platoon leader.”

He was awarded a bronze star -- with valor device -- for bravery and leadership in combat. His first purple heart came when an enemy grenade was tossed into a foxhole occupied by Turner and members of his platoon.

“Several of us were wounded but we could have all been killed at that moment. The grenade was kicked into a corner of the foxhole and a steel helmet thrown over it,” he recalls.



According to Turner, his second purple heart came at a much higher cost. “After hostilities were supposed to have ended, we took Korean interpreters into the field to coax enemy soldiers out of their caves and hiding places to tell them the war was over.

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They did not trust the interpreters and sometimes came out shooting. A rifle bullet hit me in the head just below my helmet – that purple heart sent me home.”

At home again in Fort Pierce, Turner decided to spend the remainder of his eight-year military obligation with the Seabee Reserves. That worked out so well that he joined the Coast Guard Reserves, where he spent 10 years and advanced to Chief Petty Officer.

In 1980, Turner did as many Floridians do – sold out and moved to North Carolina. He picks up that story, “Judy and I had married, I had my degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Alabama, we had operated a successful marina in Lake Okeechobee, Florida, for many years, our family was complete, and both sons were living in North Carolina – it was a no brainer for us!”

The Turners enlarged their cabin in Edneyville and moved to the mountains, “I golfed, fished, and slept in – for six months, before realizing I wasn’t a good retiree,” Turner admits.

Re-entering the labor market, Turner found his experience as a youth with his father’s citrus business in Fort Pierce, made him a natural for the Senaca Apple Juice Plant in Mountain Home, North Carolina.

Even after service in the Marine Corps, Seabee Reserves, and Coast Guard Reserves, Turner had designs on more military time – he joined the North Carolina National Guard. “In that billet as an E-7, I instructed Army Reserve personnel exclusively. They eventually persuaded me to come with them as an E-8. I took military retirement in 1994 with 33 years of service. In addition to Turner’s Marine Corps awards, he received three Army Commendation Medals and two Meritorious Service Medals.”

After relocating to Kernersville in 2008, the Turners lost an adult son, William Harold Turner, III to cancer in 2016.

His son, William Harold Turner, IV, made multiple Gulf War deployments during his eight years in the Marine Corps. A law school student at the moment, he is a member of the Greensboro Detachment of the Marine Corps League. He and his wife, Maggie, have given Judy and William Harold Turner, Jr. a great-grandson, William Harold Turner, V. He is 10 months old.

Another Turner son, Michael Thomas, is a prominent Kernersville builder. Not surprisingly, he was the builder of choice for the new Kernersville home of Judy and Harold Turner, Jr., which is now under construction.

He and his wife, Glenda, have two sons, Michael Thomas Turner, II, and Brandon.

Over the years, the elder Turners have been avid RV’ers – progressing from tents to pop-ups to pull-behinds, to motorhomes. He is a 32<sup>nd</sup> Degree Mason and served as Master of the Fort Pierce, Florida Lodge. He is currently serving as judge advocate of the Greensboro Detachment of the Marine Corps League.

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