

ELLIS LOVE TURNER

b. February 8, 1935 d. September 11, 2001

Ellis Turner was born in Prospect Hill, NC, graduating from high school there, and briefly attended Duke prior to enlisting in the Navy. He served aboard PATRICK O'BRIEN before receiving a fleet nomination to attend the Naval Academy Preparatory School (NAPS) in Bainbridge, MD. In 1956 he received a NC congressional appointment and entered USNA with the Class of 1960.

From the beginning Ellis showed us character that wasn't all too obvious. This exhibit of inner strength started during Plebe year boxing. Nick Temple recalls, "My memory of Ellis was how gritty he was. When we all had to experience boxing, Ellis and I were matched up because we were about the same size. Ellis was not really gifted at boxing and at times presented a pretty easy target. I think that I hit him about as hard as I could hit a human being and he just stood there and took it without a flinch. When we were finished I distinctly recalled having a great admiration for his true grit and real gusty performance."

Ellis did not have an easy time at USNA. He was older, not gifted as a great athlete or a slash at the books. These along with his Southern accent made him a target for upper classmen to pick on. Dint Moore remembers, "I remember Ellis... standing on the table in the mess hall, shouting the commands to bring a full rigged ship about. Initially it was in English, and later on, French. It was for a rather cruel reason, looking back on it. It was totally because of the way he spoke. What great guys we had as firsties in the Class of '57."

Phil Rognlén, his Youngster year roommate, gives us Ellis' motivation behind the continued boxing. "Ellis went out for the brigade boxing team, and would come back to the room really beaten up after practice each afternoon. I asked him why he would put himself through the punishment and he responded that there were some guys back home that had beaten him up in high school and he was going to go home over Christmas leave and settle some scores. He came back and was satisfied that all the boxing training he had undergone had allowed him to do just that." Also during that year he met the love of his life, Margaret Beggs. They married at graduation, 8 June 1960, and were together the next 41 years. They have two sons, still living in their hometown of Timonium, MD.

Ellis persevered and, like many of us, he had to struggle to stay afloat and meet the demands that Academy life presented. All in all, a competent, solid, gritty performance, a theme that repeats itself again and again. Second and First Class years he roomed with his best friend and good buddy, Dave "Moon" Marquis. They were inseparable and pulled jokes on each other. Unfortunately, Dave preceded Ellis in death by 13 years.

Ellis' service choice was Navy Air, so off he went to Pensacola. He completed basic flight training and soloed, no small accomplishment, before a ruptured eardrum that would not heal after surgery and skin grafts forced him to transfer to Navy line. Typically Ellis, he picked himself up from a huge disappointment that would have floored many and embarked down a new career path making the most of his tour as Communications Officer onboard NEWPORT NEWS participating in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although he loved the Navy, Ellis resigned his regular commission in 1964 for a reserve billet. This

was because his elder son had a severely broken leg requiring numerous surgeries, special braces and therapy. Ellis felt that his place was at home.

He went to work with the Southern Bank of Virginia (Norfolk) as Communications Division Officer. That lasted one year. He was called back to active duty during the Vietnam War and was sent to Vallejo, CA, for training in Talos missiles. After completing this training he reported to Fleet Training Group, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for four years. After Cuba, Ellis served aboard VERMILLION and ASHLAND. He completed his active naval career at the Naval Manpower Center, Bainbridge, MD, in 1973, and retired from the Naval Reserve in 1995 after a combined 22 years of service to his country. Kent Bromwell '59, commander of the reserve unit, had this to say, "Ellis and I served together at the Naval Reserve Center, Fort McHenry, Baltimore, MD during the seventies. He was a competent and diligent officer. We once took a driving trip together from Baltimore to Staunton, VA to visit a reserve center there. He was a pleasant and friendly companion. I was very sorry to hear of his death."

Between 1973 and 1995 Ellis first held various public works jobs working for the city and county of Baltimore while he strove to earn both a BS in Civil Engineering and a MS in Administrative Science from Johns Hopkins. It was during this time that he underwent surgery to put a cochlea implant in that troublesome ear. The result was immediate, his grades went up and his speech improved greatly. His Southern drawl plus the mishearing of words was the reason for what we thought was a speech problem. Imagine what that would have meant to him if this had been done Plebe year? His last work of ten years was for the State of Maryland as a Highway Design Civil Engineer. This job called for him to utilize all his previous experience and Navy training. He truly had arrived at his supreme vocation and his third love, this passion being eclipsed only by Margaret and his sons. His professional accomplishments are too numerous to detail in this writing, but if you traverse the main roads of Maryland such as Route 50 on the Eastern Shore or use the Choptank River Bridge, and I-168 in Western MD you are experiencing the results of his planning and design. His family reports that he received numerous awards for his road designs

Ellis was at the top of his game and in the process of designing a new Baltimore Beltway when he was in a serious accident in 1993. About this same time he was diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. The effects of this illness caused him to retire in 1995, two years early. This was the final test, after so many others of this man's true grit. As before he rose to the occasion and fought it more than eight years. Near the end while still having the ability to write he showed his great love and concern for his family by helping them sign the "Do Not Resuscitate" certificate. What magnificent love and fortitude once again displayed in the face of this time over-whelming strife. Ellis went down for the big count September 11, 2001 and was interred at Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens in Timonium, MD.

If a man is measured by love of family and country, peer relationships and personal accomplishments, you, Ellis (True Grit) Turner, have measured high in all. Bravo Zulu to you, Les, if I may. We salute you and wish you and your family fair winds and following seas for the rest of eternity. You've certainly earned it, if any man has!