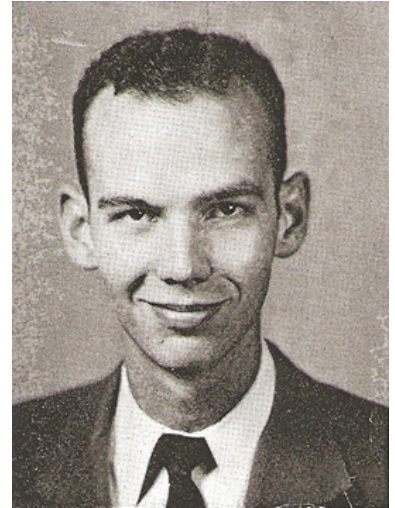


The World Is Poorer Because of His Untimely Death

James H. Turner “was a hard worker, rather serious and quiet. His major was Textile Manufacturing and he was willing to put in the time it took to get Honors. James’ outlook on life is noted by his participation in the Baptist Student Union and YMCA Council,” recalled his classmate Bill Laffoday.



Turner, from Spartanburg, was a member of Clemson’s Class of 1951 and held positions of increasing responsibility as he worked his way through his Clemson years. He was a cadet sergeant, sergeant first class and, as a senior, a cadet first lieutenant and platoon leader. Along the way, he was also a member of the best drilled platoon and best drilled company.

As a freshman, or “Rat,” Jim Turner lived in First Barracks, across the hall from classmate Dick Mattox. “I knew him almost from the day we entered - and since we were both active in the Baptist Student Union and were enrolled in Infantry ROTC, we were together frequently and were friends all four years at Clemson. We even went into the Army the same day ... along with about 20 others.”

Once on active duty, Turner and Mattox again found themselves sharing the same barracks for the Company Officers' Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. Mattox recalled a trick Turner played on him when they were together in the barracks one evening. “I heard a voice calling: 'Lt. Mattox.' I looked around and could see no one calling me. Another two or three times I heard the voice call out, 'Lt. Mattox;' and I was beginning to think I was 'going nuts.’” It was only when Turner began to laugh that Mattox recalled his friend was an amateur ventriloquist, expert at “throwing his voice.”

As part of its response to the invasion of South Korea, the Army reactivated a storied division from World War II. The 45th Infantry Division was deployed to Korea in December 1951, the first National Guard division to deploy to the Far East since the war began. After completing a period of troop duty in Japan, Turner was assigned in May 1952 to the division’s 179th Infantry Regiment.

At this point, Chinese forces had intervened and the war had fallen into a battle of attrition with the front lines generally close to the pre-war boundary between the two Koreas, the 38th parallel. The 45th relieved the 1st Cavalry Division which had been decimated by fighting over the previous 18 months. Under enemy artillery and mortar attack, the 45th conducted constant small-unit patrols along the border seeking to engage Chinese outposts or patrols. Chinese troops were well dug-in and more experienced than the troops of the 45th and it suffered casualties and frequently had to disengage when it was attacked. It was in one such encounter that Jim Turner met his fate.

On the night of October 29, 1952, First Lieutenant Turner was ordered to lead a patrol from G Company in order to contact the enemy and engage him in battle. Near Sintan-ni, Turner, as recounted in the citation for the Silver Star medal, “guided his men across rough terrain to a point at the base of two small knolls [then] point-blank enemy fire cut into the patrol from both flanks. Although seriously wounded in the chest by this cross fire, Lieutenant Turner refused to seek cover or medical aid. Realizing the impossibility of his patrol’s position, he ordered the withdrawal of his men. As the patrol maneuvered toward the security of friendly lines, Lieutenant Turner raised to his knees and directed rapid covering fire for the unit until fatally wounded. Lieutenant Turner’s effective fire was responsible for the survival of many members of the patrol and his devotion to his men and his gallant leadership reflect the highest credit on himself and the United States Army.”



His classmate Mattox remembered "Jim was a committed Christian gentleman, and the world is poorer because of his untimely death."

James H. Turner was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman's Badge.

