

## Giving back in return for the greatest gift

By VAL VAN METER

The Winchester Star

**WINCHESTER** — R. J. Turner can claim two birthdays... both on the same date, but 60 years apart.

To celebrate that second birthday, Turner recently gave a present to George Washington University Hospital in Washington.

"I died," said the owner and chief broker of R. J. Turner Real Estate, when he collapsed at the beginning of the Marine Corps Marathon Oct. 29, 2006.

A dedicated runner who still manages to run-walk 40 miles a week or more, Turner was competing in his 10th Marine Corps marathon in Washington.

His goal was to finish in the top 100 in his age group. Since he had just reached the big "Six-Oh" that

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day, he thought he had a good chance. "I felt good. My blood pressure was good."

In fact, he'd had a stress test shortly before the run and passed with no problem.

Turner remembers the beginning of the event — at 8:30 a.m., he had joined 34,000 people in the run. "I inserted myself into this mass of humanity."

About a thousand feet ahead was an overpass with people standing and cheering the runners on.

Turner remembers throwing up both hands to wave back, and "I blacked out and fell forward. I broke a tooth and smashed my glasses."

The next thing he knew, it was 11:30 a.m. and he was in the hospital.



A spiral of coincidence began to work immediately in Turner's favor.

Behind him in the mass of runners were two first responders, one from Fairfax County and one from Prince George's County, Md.

One had elected to run the marathon in her firefighter's equipment.

When she saw Turner collapse, she had what she needed to start cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

"I actually died," Turner told a reporter for The Washington Post from his hospital bed, "and they brought me back."

Then came Turner's next piece of luck.

Also behind him in the crowd of runners was Dr. Frederick Lough, director of cardiac surgery at George Washington University Hospital.

When an ambulance arrived, Lough jumped in and directed it to the GW hospital.

That was a return in a way for Turner, who had been a graduate teaching fellow at the school in 1974 after his active duty service in the Army.

And that was another bond. Lough had served in an Army hospital cardiac unit in California for many years.

At the hospital, tests determined that Turner had a 98 percent blockage in an artery leading to his heart. He immediately underwent a procedure to reopen the artery.

He now carries a card in his wallet in case he needs future medical care. It shows a drawing of a heart and a notation that he has a stent in the left circumflex coronary artery.



It seemed appropriate to Turner to return the favor and give the hospital some pictures for its medical library.

The Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library was given five sets of prints by Robert A. Thom, illustrating the history of medical advances over thousands of years.

The prints were made from a set of paintings, described as having a "Norman Rockwell realism," commissioned by Parke-Davis & Co., a leading pharmaceutical business in the 1950s.

The original paintings are the property of the University of Michigan.

Turner found the print sets about eight years ago at a Headley Auction in Berryville. "I always go to auctions, because of my wife's store," he said.

Mary Turner operates Hometown Gifts and Gardens on Cedar Creek Grade. The couple rehabilitated the stone and wood house there, which



dates to 1790.

Turner said he hunts for furniture, fixtures, and equipment to sell at the store or period pieces for displays of handcrafted items.

"I grew up in Connecticut surrounded by old things," said Turner.

While his Winchester office in Executive Suites on Valley Pike is quite modern, his office in Wardensville, W.Va., is another rehabilitated old building, Turner said, and he enjoys finding old hunting and fishing equipment to decorate its walls.

"I even have a horsehair sofa. You don't have many of those anymore."



Turner was discussing antiques with Lough when he was inspired to offer the Thom prints on the history of medicine to the university.

"It couldn't have been better timing. We just refurbished the library," said Ann Linton, director of the library.

The university recently added several electives on the history of medicine, Linton said, so the prints tie into the students' classwork.

"It's a perfect match for us. It will give us a nice sense of our place in time and how we fit in a long line of doctors," he said.

Turner recalls the day he and his wife delivered the Thom prints to the library.

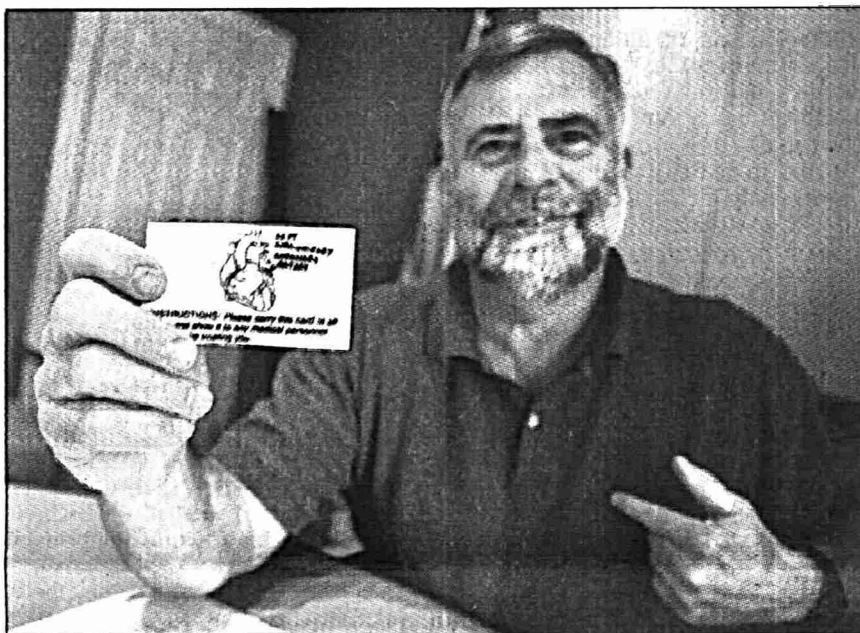
As they drove into the university's parking garage with its two above-ground and three underground levels, they decided to head downward. Mary, who was driving, found a parking spot.

As they got out, Turner said, another person was getting out of the car parked behind them.

When Turner looked, he saw the driver was Lough, behind him again.

He said he couldn't help but ask: "Are you here just in case?"

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GINGER PERRY/The Winchester Star

R.J. Turner holds a card he carries in his wallet in case he needs future medical care. It shows a drawing of a heart and a notation that he has a stent in the left circumflex coronary artery.



Photo provided by R.J. Turner

R.J. Turner (center) watches as an unidentified official and Dr. Frederick Lough (right), director of cardiac surgery at George Washington University Hospital, look through prints by Robert A. Thom that Turner is donating to the center's medical library.