

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

DONALD E. BALLARD, HOSPITAL CORPSMAN SECOND CLASS, UNITED STATES NAVY

Donald Everett Ballard was born on December 5, 1945, in Kansas City, Missouri. He attended North Kansas City High School, prior to enlisting in the U. S. Navy on December 27, 1965. He had basic training at the Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois, until February 1966, then attended the Naval Hospital Corps School, Great Lakes. Assigned in June 1966 to the Naval Hospital, Memphis, Tennessee, he remained there until October of that year, then joined the Second Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. In January 1968 he reported for duty with Headquarters and Service Company, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines, Third Marine Division. "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on May 16, 1968 while serving as a Corpsman with Company "M"...in connection with operations against enemy aggressor forces in the Republic of Vietnam..." he was awarded the Medal of Honor. The citation continues:

"During the afternoon hours, Company "M" was moving to join the remainder of the Third Battalion in Quang Tri Province. After treating and evacuating two heat casualties, Petty Officer Ballard was returning to his platoon from the evacuation landing zone when the company was ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army unit employing automatic weapons and mortars, and sustained numerous casualties. Observing a wounded Marine, Petty Officer Ballard unhesitatingly moved across the fire-swept terrain to the injured man and swiftly rendered medical assistance to his comrade. Petty Officer Ballard then directed four Marines to carry the casualty to a position of relative safety. As the four men prepared to move the wounded Marine, an enemy soldier suddenly left his concealed position and, after hurling a hand grenade which landed near the casualty, commenced firing upon the small group of men. Instantly shouting a warning to the Marines, (he) fearlessly threw himself upon the lethal explosive device to protect his comrades from the deadly blast. When the grenade failed to detonate, he calmly arose from his dangerous position and resolutely continued his determined efforts in treating other Marine casualties. (His) heroic and selfless concern for the welfare of his companions served to inspire all who observed him and prevented possible injury or death to his fellow Marines. His courage, daring initiative, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, sustain and enhance the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

He was also awarded the Purple Heart Medal with Gold Stars in lieu of the Second and Third similar awards for wounds received in enemy action.

He was attached to Camp Smedley D. Butler, Kawasaki, Okinawa, during the period July to September 1968, then returned to the Naval Hospital, Memphis. On February 26, 1970 he was released to inactive duty in the Naval Reserve.

In addition to the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart Medal with two Gold Stars, Petty Officer Ballard has the Combat Action Ribbon; Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Vietnam Service Medal with two bronze stars and Fleet Marine Force Combat Operations Insignia. He also has the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.