

# Battles Fought and Won: The Legacy of Turner W. Battle

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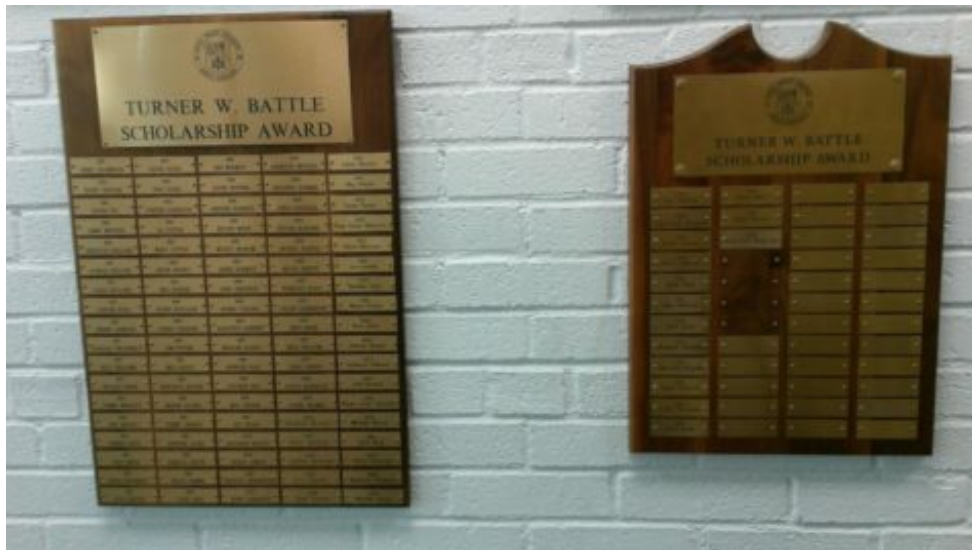
Next year Rocky Mount Academy will be proudly celebrating its 50th anniversary. This great accomplishment has been made possible through the tireless work of parents and volunteers, as well as the belief from Rocky Mount Academy's original founders that a quality college preparatory school was needed. Most notable in his accomplishments is the first chairman of the board, Mr. Turner W. Battle.

An instrumental founder of Rocky Mount Academy, Mr. Turner W. Battle had an interesting life. Those who knew him personally described him as organized and meticulous, finishing the tasks at hand. Whenever something was to be done, Mr. Battle was sure to have the best tools to do it right the first time. He received an education at several prestigious institutes, including Staunton Military Academy, Severn Preparatory School, and the US Naval Academy. Following his education, he served as a Naval Officer during World War II, where he earned five battle stars in the Asiatic-Pacific Theatre. Mr. Battle served alongside other military members who would later help found the school he helped start. Many aspects of the new school could be related to his experiences while serving as an officer. A love of country and strict discipline were important to Mr. Battle, and can be through the academic rigour of Rocky Mount Academy, as well as the eagle mascot with school colors of red, white, and blue. A dedication can be found in the 1974 yearbook honoring Mr. Battle, as he passed away that year following a three-year fight against lung cancer. He died at age 52.



Though he died prematurely, Mr. Turner W. Battle's contributions and vision for a better school were influential and are core reasons behind why Rocky Mount Academy was founded and why it is still in operation today. Before 1968, there were not many college preparatory schools around. Mr. Battle saw a need for one in Rocky Mount and set about

planning for one's creation. At the time there was lots of dysfunction in the public school system, so a new college prep school would be tremendously beneficial to the quality of education offered. While it was easy to say that something needed to be done, the real difficulty was in getting together enough interest to warrant starting a school. Mr. Battle recruited parents with similar interests and concerns. He, along with this group, needed to find money to cover a school's initial expenses, including land and construction. A designer would also need to be hired before any work could be done. Once all this had been accomplished, the problem arose of finding a suitable headmaster to hire teachers and other staff. Richard E. Cutler was, in the end, the one chosen. Mr. Battle's son, Richard Battle, remembers vividly a cocktail party that Chairman Battle hosted to invite the potential headmaster and prominent families interested in the school. During the party, Mr. Battle told his son Richard to "Introduce yourself to Mr. Cutler and ask him to be the new headmaster at the school you are going to attend."



Obviously Mr. Battle's tactics worked, as Rocky Mount Academy has remained an active school since its beginning, while other college preparatory schools around Rocky Mount have opened and closed. When Mr. Richard Battle was asked to comment on why Rocky Mount Academy was so successful, he stated a few reasons. The first was its attractive curriculum, with many courses offered, as well as beautiful buildings and grounds. Its success as a "college prep" school did not go unnoticed either. Most, if not all seniors, are on track to college at the time of graduation, thanks to the tireless efforts of the staff. While these are crucial in attracting new students, parental involvement and support is what Mr. Richard Battle says is most important to Rocky Mount Academy's continued success. Were it not for the volunteers' money donated and time contributed, the school would not be prosperous as it is now.



There is no doubt that Mr. Turner W. Battle would be proud to see what Rocky Mount Academy has become. While there have been many changes, just as many things have stayed the same. A quick glance through an old yearbook will provide evidence, because as the school buildings have been updated and annexes added on, many of the desks are the same ones as the first day of school in 1969. Physical similarities and changes are not the only ones worth noticing, however. For example, students at Rocky Mount Academy still share the same values of leadership, service, and character that they did at the start of the school, but Mr. Richard Battle commented on how he was impressed with the caliber of students now attending. When the school was founded, it was successful preparing students for college, but now students from Rocky Mount Academy are commonly nominated for merit scholarships and other forms of financial aid when applying for college.



In honor of Turner Battle, the Board of Trustees created the Turner W. Battle Scholarship Trust in 1974 following his death. Its purpose was to provide scholarships to Rocky Mount Academy for students who excelled in certain areas valued by Mr. Battle. The first item



considered is a student's weighted GPA. Next, students are more likely to be nominated if they show leadership in activities both inside and outside of school. College potential is another consideration. This criterion relates back to the goal of Rocky Mount Academy to be a quality college prep school and for its students to value education, as well as to want to become all that they can be. Finally, school spirit is very important. Students who support the school and their classmates, as well as participate in events with a passion for their school, are more likely to be chosen. Financial need is also a consideration, but because everyone has financial needs it is not a requirement.

In tribute to the school's founder, Turner W. Battle, this scholarship is the most prestigious and most rewarding scholarship given for a student at Rocky Mount Academy. Recipients are selected each fall after teachers and faculty provide recommendations to the scholarship trustees. The winners are recognized at a private reception and publicly recognized during the spring awards ceremony. The current trustees of the scholarship are Richard S. Battle, son of the founder, Jeffrey A. Batts, Esq., son of Jeff D. Batts, Esq., and the Honorable David M. Warren, a close family friend of the Battle family. Each trustee was a member of the Rocky Mount Academy class of 1977, and all knew Mr. Turner W. Battle. Since its beginning, over \$375,000 have gone to deserving students. While the number of Battle Scholars may be limited each year, all those who attend the Rocky Mount Academy share in the great gift and vision of its founder, Turner W. Battle.



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