

WAR HERO

NELDEN “J” WHITMER

KOREAN WAR



Nelden “J” Whitmer was born to Angus Don and Conda Cox Whitmer on February 19, 1933 in Alpine, Arizona. Don was the oldest son of Angus Van Meter and Jennie Whitmer. When he was just seventeen years old he decided to become a U.S. Marine. Following Boot Camp, he was shipped to Korea where he became a Platoon Sergeant in the middle of the bloody battle for South Korea. He forged his parents’ signatures. Nelden felt the Marines would give him some stability since his parents had divorced. He planned on making the Marines his life until his plans were shattered.

He saw many good friends die, and after seven and one half months of fierce fighting, Sergeant Whitmer was wounded inside and outside by a concussion

grenade. At the same time, he was checking the line when a mine exploded. He remembers staying curled up in a ball. His injuries were very severe. There were pieces of metal tattooed all over his body. By the time the medics got to him, he had lost a lot of blood. Half of his stomach had been blown apart. This injury led to 8 major operations, with each surgery bringing him very close to death and followed by a lifetime full of discomfort.

He was shipped home, half dead, to undergo multiple operations in various V.A. Hospitals. After one of his last operations, he was near death’s door for many months. Nelden miraculously survived through priesthood blessings and the faith, love and prayers of his wife, Joan, and his family.



The early years of Nelden were in Alpine, Arizona. Life was simple, trips to town were two to three times a year. Nelden's mom was a seamstress and would make her children's clothes. "The clothes my mom made me were better than any clothes you could buy in the store, others were jealous of my clothes" J stated. Life in the Whitmer home was no nonsense, as noted by a Christmas memory told more than once. Nelden and his cousin Keith were arguing about what Santa would bring them, their dad took his shotgun, stepped outside and shot three times. When their dad returned to the house he said, " Now you don't have to worry. I'll just shoot Santa down."

Nelden joined the military at the age of 17-years-old. He forged his parent's signature, this allowed him to join before he turned 18-years-old. The Marine Corp was his military branch. Nelden took on multiple missions, crossing over into enemy territory for a better understanding of location of the opposing troops and explosives. Nelden advanced in rank, he stated, "everyone was dying so I just kept being advanced." He grew close to the men he served with including Forrest and Rocky. Two of my brothers were named after these two buddies. A hand grenade exploded near Nelden and damaged his internal organs, resulting in a lifetime of pain, and over eight surgeries. Nelden's plans for making the military a lifetime career ended. The rest of Nelden's life his prayers would include "those serving in the military."

After being released from the military, Nelden worked on doing taxes, his goal was to receive his education in this area and be certified. With time he gave up on this goal due to multiple return trips to the hospital and the constant pain he endured. However, J did do taxes for his family and friends throughout his life. He had a gift with numbers. Nelden worked for the US Postal Services in Mesa, AZ and transferred to Stockton, CA US Postal Services after his fifth child was born. Nelden and Joan lived in a small town called Lodi and had a simple house that sat on 10 acres. J wanted a place for his boys to run. He raised beef to sell on Whitmer Ranch, as it was called. This provided extra income along with his postal job. Nelden had a dreamer's heart and would often talk about starting a new business and "making it big." Nelden did many side businesses (some worked and others did not.) When his sons became adults, he set each of them up in their own business.

Family was important to Nelden and his goal was to be a good father and husband. His sense for adventure was passed on to his children through travel, love of horses, animals and the joy of gathering as a family.

Nelden J Whitmer was born February 19, 1933. He went by the name J - no period just "J". He is married to Madge "Joan" Stallings. They have five children: Forrest, Rocky, Brent, Brandon, Tammie.

