



# TED TURNER SPEAKS

*Insight  
from the  
World's Greatest  
Maverick*



JANET LOWE



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Georgia State University, just before he was scheduled to undergo surgery:

*“The one piece of advice I can give you is put on sun screen and wear a hat.”<sup>58</sup>*



### **BOATS AND COURAGEOUS CREW— AMERICA’S CUP 1977**

1977 America’s Cup Contenders

*Courageous* (U.S.)

*Enterprise* (U.S.)

*Australia* (Perth, Australia)

*Independence* (U.S.)

*Sverige* (Sweden)

*Gretel II* (Sydney, Australia)

*France I* and *France II*

1977 America’s Cup *Courageous* crew:

Richard Boyd

Robbie Doyle

John Edgecomb

Conn Finley

Bunky Helfrich

Gary Jobson

Bill Jorch

Marty O’Meara

Stretch Ryder

Dick Sadler

R. E. Turner III

Paul Fuchs



## **HAVE FUN**

*“The most fun that you ever have as a man is in doing men’s things. Men’s things are primarily getting a bunch of guys together and going out and conquering a country, fighting a war, winning a big fight, putting a baseball team together.”<sup>59</sup>*



Turner recalled a pep talk he gave to his baseball team, the Atlanta Braves: “I told them a story about something that happened in 1977, when I won the America’s Cup. We won most of our races in June, then lost most of our races in July. After the last race in July, everyone was writing us off. I remember a reporter asked me: ‘How are you going to approach the finals?’ I told the team my answer to that question: ‘I’m going to have fun. I’m going to enjoy myself.’ I told the Braves to do the same thing: ‘Have fun. Enjoy yourselves. Don’t worry about everything.’”<sup>60</sup>



*“To me business is a game. It’s like a poker game: You’re playing for chips, but the most fun is the game. I may look like a clown, doing flips at a baseball game, but I’m a very deadly serious person in trying to accomplish things just for the satisfaction of accomplishing them. Struggling hard to achieve something is the most fun I get. All my life is a game. Everything is a game—and you keep score with dollars, to a degree. It’s like there are two kinds of*

*points. I consider the money like hits in a baseball game. They're great, but the runs are what really count. And the runs are just being successful and having a good time."*<sup>61</sup>



*"People have the most fun when they're busting their ass."*<sup>62</sup>



# A SCARED, SCRAPPY KID

## **ED'S BOY**

It is easier to understand Ted Turner when you know something about his father. Both in life and death, Ed Turner's shadow has loomed over his son's life:

*"My father could be absolutely charming or he could be a horse's ass. He could be the kindest, warmest, most wonderful person in the whole world, and then go into a bar, get drunk, and get into a fist-fight with the whole place."*<sup>1</sup>



Ed Turner was brought up in Sumner, Mississippi, the son of a prosperous Mississippi land and store owner who fell on hard times during the Great Depression. When money became scarce, Ed Turner left school and migrated north to Cincinnati to find work. There he met and married Ted's mother, Florence.



## FROM MISSIONARY TO MADMAN

Ted Turner received Bible training at McCallie and thought highly of his Bible teacher. Ted decided he wanted to be a missionary.

*“Religion was pounded into us so much that I was saved seven or eight times.”<sup>51</sup>*



All that changed when his beloved younger sister, Mary Jane, developed lupus at age 11, and suffered from the disease and its complications for many years before she died in 1960. Turner recalls:

*“She was sweet as a little button, she worshiped the ground I walked on, and I loved her. A horrible illness.”<sup>52</sup>*



When Ted’s young sister died, he seemed to lose his faith in God.<sup>53</sup>

*“Prior to [her death] I was very religious.”<sup>54</sup>*



Turner once called Christianity “. . . a religion for losers.”<sup>55</sup>



*“I don’t think I’d like to go to heaven. I just can’t see myself sittin’ on a cloud and playin’ a harp day in and day out.”<sup>56</sup>*



Although his interest in a church-oriented career faded, Turner never lost his missionary zeal.<sup>57</sup>

*“I think that there’s a battle going on in the world between the forces of good and the forces of evil and I want to be damn sure that the forces of evil don’t win and there’s a good chance that they may. I think we’re at the crossroads between the potential of living in the garden of Eden or the battle of Armageddon.”<sup>58</sup>*



When asked who he really is, Turner once responded: “Charlemagne, saving Christendom from the infidels.”<sup>59</sup>

## THE BRIEF GOOD-BYE

Peter Dames spent a lot of time with the Turner family after he and Ted left Brown University. Dames said Ed Turner cut a theatrical swath. “He might meet you out front of the house in a silk robe or maybe a white linen suit with a mint julep in one hand,” said Dames. “Sometimes he drank Scotch from the bottle. There was duck hunting, and barbecues, lots of food and drink. He really knew how to do it. He was a great host. He laid the red carpet out for us. I think he was happy Ted had finished with Brown.”<sup>60</sup>



In 1962 Ed Turner and a group of investors acquired General Outdoor Advertising and split up the company among themselves. In return for cash and a secured note totaling \$4 million, Turner took control

## MAJOR TURNER PROPERTIES

PROPERTY	SIZE	PURCHASED	COST	COMMENTS
<b>NEBRASKA</b>				
Spikebox Ranch ( <i>Western Nebraska</i> )	40,000 acres	1995		1,800 bison
<b>SOUTH CAROLINA</b>				
Hope Plantation ( <i>near Charleston</i> )	5,000 acres	1978	\$2 million	Former Rice Plantation
St. Phillips Island ( <i>near Hilton Head</i> )	5,000 acres	1979		Private Island
<b>FLORIDA</b>				
Avalon ( <i>east of Tallahassee</i> )	8,100 acres			Plantation
<b>ARGENTINA</b>				
Patagonia	9,000 acres			Wilderness Ranch



## TIMELINE

- 1937 Jane Seymour Fonda, Turner's third wife, was born on December 21 in New York City.
- 1938 *November 19*: Edward Robert Turner III (Ted) was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, to Edward Turner and Florence Rooney Turner.
- 1947 The Turner family moved to Savannah, Georgia. Ted was enrolled in the Georgia Military Academy.
- 1948 Turner's father transferred him to McCallie, a Christian/military school in Chattanooga, Tennessee.
- 1956 Turner won the Champion Tennessee Affirmative Team, debating champions. He graduated from McCallie. Turner entered the International Lightning Regatta in Canada, coming in 26th place. Rejected by Harvard, Turner enrolled at Brown University.
- 1957 Turner's parents, Ed and Florence, were divorced. Ted pledged the Kappa Sigma fraternity at Brown University.
- 1958 *February 12*: Turner enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard during a semester-long suspension from Brown University.