

Atoka businesswoman honored for her service

By Sherri Onorati, Special to The Leader

Former Marine Sergeant Vickie Outlaw Coone was recently honored during Women's History Month for her dedication and service to the United States Marine Corps and to her country. The Atoka businesswoman, who owns Outlaw's Furniture Store, was feted at the Tipton County Museum, Veterans Memorial and Nature Center to a packed room filled with family, friends and fellow veterans.

Kathy Desjarlais, president of the Tipton County Veterans Council read Outlaw Coone's bio and award certificate to a crowded room, all gathered to honor the Marine Corp veteran.

"It is with heartfelt appreciation of your tireless efforts in support of our United States, the Tipton County Museum, Veterans Memorial and Nature Center in partnership with the Tipton County Veteran Council gratefully acknowledges your service as our veteran of the month," read Kathy Desjarlais, president of the Tipton County Veterans Council. "Your dedication to our country is commendable and an honorable addition to the fight for freedom in the world."

Surprised and honored at the recognition, Outlaw Coone was humbled by the accolades.

"I feel that every veteran in here deserves this more than I," she said. "This is a real shock but a great honor."

Born and raised in Alabama, she joined the United States Marine Corps at age 17 under the delayed entry program after seeing the Marine Corps recruiter in his dress blues. Being under age and still in school, Outlaw-Coone needed the permission of her mother, but once she had it and upon graduating from high school, she was shipped off to Parris Island, South Carolina for boot camp. Marine Corps boot camp is a 13-week intensive physical and mental transformation, the longest of all the military services, and Outlaw Coone excelled at it to become one of the few and the proud – a Marine.

She didn't realize it at the time, but she met the love of her life, fellow Marine Teddy Coone, during boot camp. After their initial training was complete, they dated for a year, but eventually splitting up to concentrate on their individual careers. Outlaw-Coone soon transferred to Cherry Point, NC, where she trained and worked as an administrative assistant.

After reenlisting for another three-year tour, she received orders to transfer to Millington Naval Air Station working in her field of administration. Although, she enjoyed the Marine Corps, when it was time to re-up again, she faced a difficult decision, but one that she easily made. She decided to give up her career in the Marine Corps to concentrate on raising her son, Jeremy. It's a decision she knew then, and one she knows now without a doubt was the best one for her, and one she couldn't have been more proud to make. Her son Jeremy Wright grew up to earn his doctorate degree in theology and now is Pastor of Redeemer Baptist Church in Millington.

Outlaw-Coone served from 1981 to 1987, earning a Good Conduct Medal during that time as an exemplary Marine. She is especially proud that four out of her five promotions were meritoriously given. After receiving an honorable discharge from the United States Marine Corps, she sold real estate for a year, and then spent several years working for Cargo Master. Never one to give up, she dreamed of opening her own business and in 2005 she opened Outlaw's Furniture and Mattress in Atoka. Realizing the success of her furniture business, she was able to open a second store last year in Memphis, Victoria's Furniture Gallery.

Part of her determination to never give up can be attributed to lessons learned while serving in the Corps.

“I learned how to improvise, adapt and overcome,” she revealed. “I don’t take no for an answer. It’s a matter of constantly improvising, adapting and overcoming any obstacles. You have to figure out how to get over it, around it or under it.”

Although it would take them several decades to find one another again, Outlaw-Coone and Coone found one another through Facebook and love won out in the end. They married on April 6, 2013, approximately 30 years after they first met. Today, Outlaw-Coone manages her furniture store and her husband, when he’s not helping out at the store, works onboard Naval Support Activity Mid-South in Millington. Son Jeremy is married to Alicia and they live in Memphis with their four children, Gabriel, 9; Luke, 7; and two-year-old twins Amia and Aleigh. Outlaw Coone and her husband are members of the Combat Vets Motorcycle Association and the Marine Corps League.

“I am so proud of her,” said husband Teddy Coone. “She doesn’t take no for an answer and I tell everyone I know I am not as near as tough or bad as I think I am when I look at her. She is the woman of my dreams and I love her.”