



## **WALTON, RAY D JR**

### **361<sup>ST</sup> Field Artillery B Battery**

Mr. Ray D. Walton, Jr., 92 of Frederick, Maryland formerly of Johnson Drive, Damascus, Maryland, died April 8, 2013 at Homewood. He was the husband of Frances Crabill Walton whom he married July 6, 1997 in Damascus.

Born January 26, 1921 in Ogden, Utah to the late Ray Dee Walton and Margaret Simpson Walton, he was raised in Portland, Ore. In 1943 Mr. Walton received his bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering at Oregon State College, Corvallis, Ore. At Oregon State he met his first wife, Carolyn Jane Smith Walton, whom he married on May 25, 1944 in Ogden, Utah. Later they had the six children listed below. She predeceased him in January 1984.

Like many of his generation, Mr. Walton proudly served his nation during the dramatic events of World War II. In 1943 he earned an artillery lieutenant's commission in the U.S. Army.

In early 1945 he was assigned to the 361st Field Artillery battalion of the 96th Infantry Division (the Deadeyes). On April 1, 1945 that unit landed on Okinawa in one of the largest amphibious operations in history. The goal was to seize that island – located only 330 miles from one of the main islands of Japan – as a springboard for the expected invasion of Nippon.

Lieutenant Walton served as a field artillery forward observer during the entire eighty day campaign. For three days at a time, these men would serve with the infantrymen of 381st Infantry Regiment on the line of battle. They would direct artillery fire against Japanese positions while exercising caution to see that American artillery fire did not fall within U.S. lines. Then they would rotate back to the artillery battery behind the lines for three days and supervise the operation of the howitzers. The wartime exploits of Ray Walton and other forward observers are the topic of a book scheduled to be released by Naval Institute Press on May 15, 2013: *Big Guns, Brave Men: Mobile Artillery Observers and the Battle for Okinawa*. Although resistance was relatively light on Okinawa for the first few days, the Americans eventually ran

into the first major Japanese line of resistance at Kakazu Ridge. The Japanese threw an American infantry regiment off that ridge on April 9. The next day the Americans sought to regain the heights. Seeking to reinforce American infantry units already on the ridge, Lieutenant Walton's observation team found itself showered with Japanese mortar and machine gun fire while attempting to cross a creek in a gorge at the base of Kakazu. He and two of his men were wounded. Although pinned down by Japanese fire, Walton administered first aid to the two men and saw that they were evacuated. Despite his back wounds, Walton was able to pass through the gorge later that day, climb the heights, and take up his duties as an observer on Kakazu.

The battle for Okinawa (April-June 1945) has been called the bloodiest in the Japanese-American Pacific War. The Japanese defended the island with suicidal fury. Kamikazes struck repeatedly at the American invasion fleet. Around 13,000 Americans and over 100,000 Japanese were killed in the battle. The commanding generals on both sides died. No one knows how many thousand civilians fell. Although Walton's team had no more than five men forward at any one time, twelve different men were wounded while serving on that team. Walton himself received the Bronze Star for valor and a Purple Heart. In 2001 the 96th Division belatedly received a Presidential Unit Citation for its heroism on Okinawa.

In mid-1945 the soldiers believed that Okinawa had only served as a hellish prelude for the upcoming assault on the Japanese home islands. Although the Deadeyes were secretly scheduled to participate in the second invasion of Japan (CORONET) scheduled for March 1946, the Japanese surrendered before that costly landing near Tokyo was necessary.

Following his discharge from active duty in 1946, Mr. Walton returned to Oregon State where he used the GI Bill to obtain a Masters Degree in Chemical Engineering. In 1947 he began a lifelong career as a nuclear engineer. Altogether he spent half a century participating in and managing research and development programs for (1) the recovery of plutonium and uranium from spent nuclear fuels and (2) the mobilization of high-level nuclear waste.

In the early Cold War, America sought more nuclear weapons to balance against Soviet military might. Mr. Walton moved to Richland, Wash. to begin work for General Electric there. At the nearby Hanford Works plutonium had earlier been produced for the atomic bomb used on Nagasaki in 1945. Mr. Walton worked on the recovery of plutonium from spent nuclear fuel.

In 1956 he became a federal government employee with the Atomic Energy Commission (which later became the Department of Energy). He worked in Idaho Falls, Idaho from 1956-1960 focusing on the

recovery of enriched uranium from spent nuclear fuel. In 1960 he was transferred to the Atomic Energy Commission headquarters near Germantown, Md. where he spent most of the rest of his career (1960-1964, 1966-1986).

Throughout his working life, he focused on the solidification and immobilization of liquid, high-level nuclear waste. He was responsible for the process design of the world's first engineering-scale waste solidification facility at the Idaho test site. The American Nuclear Society designated this calcinating facility as a historical landmark.

For two years (1964- 1966) he served as an international nuclear fuel cycle expert for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria. While on that assignment, he led an international nuclear power mission to Turkey in 1965. There he gave advice about the desirability of building a nuclear power plant in that nation. Even after returning to America in 1966 for further duty with the U.S. government, Mr. Walton remained in contact with the international atomic energy community. In 1975 he presented a paper at an IAEA symposium in Gabon, Africa. His paper examined a natural nuclear reactor, now called Oklo, created in Africa millions of years ago. Mr. Walton's paper discussed the relevance of this natural reactor to modern issues concerning the geologic storage of radioactive waste. After retirement from the federal government in 1986, he worked part-time as a high level waste consultant for Argonne National Laboratory until 1996. In 2005 he received the Wendell Weart Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Waste Management Symposia (the largest nuclear waste management meeting in the world).

Mr. Walton's Christian faith remained central to his entire life. For two years at Oregon State he was president of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. He enjoyed active participation in whichever local church he was attending. He began by teaching and supervising Sunday school. Later he served on committees directing the local church affairs. For many years he was a member of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Germantown. In more recent decades, he belonged to the Mountain View United Methodist Church, Damascus, where his first wife had once served as pastor and where he met his second wife. Mr. Walton also travelled widely including three trips to the Holy Land. He enjoyed hunting and fishing as well.

Mr. Walton's large family stood as the focal point of his life. Surviving are his wife Frances of Homewood, Frederick and his daughter, Trudy Schwarz (and husband Dave) of Derwood. Also surviving are his five sons, Rodney Walton of Miami, Fla., Scott Walton (and wife Peggy) of Churchville, Md.,

Eric Walton (and wife Cheryl) of Ballston Lake, N.Y., Kip Walton (and wife Ellen) of Hartland, Mich., and Jim Walton (and wife Anne) of Irvine, Cal. In the category of grandchildren and step-grandchildren, he had several: Heather Jung (and husband Ji) & Rebecca Harris (and husband Brad); Philip, Bethany, Charissa, James & Joy Walton; Jessica Walton Nettesheim (married to husband Ryan), Carolyn Marvel (and husband Alex), & Cassie Sutter (and husband Craig); Sam (step-grandchild), Alan & Michael Schwarz; Peter, Julie & Caroline Walton. From his marriage to Frances, he had two step-sons: John C. Crabill (and wife Collete) of Martinsburg, W. Va. and J. Alan Crabill of Smithsburg, Md. Mr. Walton had three great-grandchildren: Ethan Nettesheim, Alice Nettesheim, and Emmet Sutter.

His brother, Richard Bruce Walton, predeceased him but Mr. Walton is survived by three nieces, all from the Portland, Ore. area: Sylvia Walton Dennis (and husband John), Shelley Walton Canutt, & Vicki Walton Napier (and husband Steven).

A memorial services will be held on Saturday, April 13 at Homewood, 7407 Willow Road, Damascus (10:30 a.m.) and Mountain View United Methodist Church, 11501 Mountain View Road, Damascus, (3 p.m.) with the Rev. Eric Walton officiating. Although the family is not requesting any memorial contributions, those who wish to do so may make contributions for the benefit of Mountain View United Methodist Church.