

Busy, Alive and Out of Trouble

Ab Walker was making a name for himself as a career officer and the future looked bright until illness forced his retirement. Now he's making a new life for himself in San Antonio.

By BILL FRYDAY

SAN ANTONIO

"Let me get on a jacket if you're going to take my picture to print," said Ab Dalton Walker, '33phys.ed. "Without one, I look like a San Antonian."

Walker left the room and returned in seconds, buttoning a brown jacket over his slacks and white shirt. He dropped into a chair. Sunlight streamed through the windows onto the face of the graying, handsome man.

A reporter and photographer had come to San Antonio to search out Walker on a warm, clear Sunday afternoon, two days before Christmas 1956. They found him and his family spending a quiet weekend in their fine gray home on Larkwood Drive, just off the Austin highway.

Walker talked steadily to the reporter and watched the photographer move here, there, about him in quest of the correct picture angle. Walker eyed the camera, wanted to know its make and the results it usually gives. Then, waving a finger toward a pink stone fireplace on the east wall, he suggested that perhaps a shot of his golf trophies might be suitable.

"This is my latest," he said, taking down a golden statuette from its perch. He had won it in the Armed Services Tournament staged annually for contestants over the age of 40. "I play a good game of golf for an old man," he winked.

Everyone laughed, for, though actually 46, Walker looks about 15 years younger. He is smooth-faced and tanned, and he has an admirable physique. Observing him, one can still easily see the man who, after being an all-state quarterback for Blackwell High School's football team, moved on to O. U. and gridiron stardom. He was one of those amazingly active students who not only letter in football for four years, but also take part in track, tennis, and everything down the line to horseshoes, badminton and darts. He was a member of the Athletic Council, ROTC, a couple fraternities.

After graduation he taught and coached athletics at Okmulgee High School, joined General Mills as an Oklahoma City field

representative, and went on to become state director of the National Youth Administration's recreational program.

His last post was not to last for long—only three years, in fact. One morning he and the world learned that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, and 36 days later he was in uniform, an Army lieutenant.

The service might have become a career for Walker. He advanced relatively fast, was soon captain, major, then lieutenant colonel. Working with the military police, he earned special commendation when, ordered to quell riots in Detroit's auto plant

areas, he displayed what a general termed "quiet but forceful handling of crowds . . . without bloodshed."

He was proud of the men who served with him. "Men like I've got," he wrote in a letter, "can knock hell out of (the enemy) with one hand tied." And his men liked him. When Walker was promoted to the Provost Marshal's staff and prepared to leave for Washington, D. C., he found himself honor guest at a surprise chicken dinner and recipient of a new overcoat and gold identification arm badge. "Believe me, I really choked up," said

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Ab D. Walker, '33phys.ed, relaxes at the keyboard of the organ in his home in San Antonio, Texas. Now retired from the military service, he both teaches history and runs a play park.



Vice President Richard Nixon and House Speaker Sam Rayburn forget political differences as they present All-American Jerry Tubbs with more trophies for O.U. Nixon presented Washington Touch-down Club trophy in honor of team's national championship. Rayburn presented Knute Rockne Memorial Trophy to Tubbs as outstanding college lineman of year. Picture by Wide World Photos.

California, was killed December 20 when a helicopter he was piloting crashed into San Francisco Bay. Walker had just flown Mary Gray, an opera singer, and Robert Lachenback, a *Life* magazine photographer, from International Airport to the San Francisco Ferry Building. The accident occurred when he started to move the plane so that Miss Gray could be photographed against the Ferry Building.

William Robert Folsom, '50eng, Ardmore, was killed in December when the pickup which he was driving was struck head-on by another vehicle near Tatums, New Mexico. Folsom, 29, was working at the time as a General Electric representative on a construction job in nearby Lovington. Three people were killed in the accident.

1951-55

Victor E. Lee, '51pharm, is a new representative of Eli Lilly and Company, a pharmaceuticals firm. His territory covers several counties in southern Mississippi and eastern Louisiana. Lee is a registered pharmacist in both Oklahoma and Louisiana.

Capt. Daniel L. Vaughan, '51ba, '55med, Oklahoma City, has completed a company level officers course at Army Medical Service School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He was last stationed at the Madigan Army Hospital, Tacoma, Washington.

Capt. James G. Billingsley, '52bs, '55med, has been assigned to the staff of Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver, Colorado. He has been with the army since July, 1956.

Pvt. Alan K. Lilley, '52eng, Redondo Beach, California, is assigned to the Army's ordnance climatic test detachment at Fort Churchill, Canada. He is a petroleum laboratory technician.

Charles E. Stiles, '52eng, has been employed by the University of California's Los Alamos (New Mexico) Scientific Laboratory. He works as an engineer in the "N" Division, where nuclear reactors are studied as a means of rocket propulsion.

Allen N. Keegan, '53ba, now works in Cities Service Oil Company's land department in Bartlesville. He formerly was with the Baroid Corporation.

Herbert V. Abrams, '53eng, recently was employed by Temco Aircraft Company, Dallas, Texas.

Charles W. Gullikson, '53ms, '56fa, and Mrs. Gullikson are now located in Littleton, Colorado, where he is employed by the Ohio Oil Company as a research technologist.

Navy Lieut. Jerry Bullard, '55bus, Norman, recently received his wings in a squadron pinning ceremony at Corpus Christi, Texas. Afterwards he reported for flight duty at Quonset Point, Rhode Island.

BIRTH: Lieut. Col. Robert W. Schafer and Mrs. Schafer (the former Helene Louise Hurd, '52ba), Falls Church, Virginia, have selected the name Helene Louise for their daughter born December 21. They also have a son, William Richard, 20 months.

DEATH: Joe R. Leguene, Jr., '51bus, died recently in Tyler, Texas, following a six months' illness. He was 30. A former O. U. football player, he went on to work as an oil scout for Amerada Petroleum Company. Leguene's family asked that memorials be in the form of contributions to the American Cancer Society.

1956

Mrs. Charles Rambo (the former Suzanne Riley, '56ba), Long Beach, California, has won a \$500 award in the Oklahoma Golden Jubilee essay contest. She placed second in the contest which she entered while still a senior history student at O. U.

Elmer L. Davis, '56, Tulsa, has received word from the Carl Fischer, Inc., music company, New York City, that his song, "Chillun" has been accepted for publication and now is being printed. Davis is studying toward a master's degree in music at O. U. Before entering college, he was a vo-

calist with Benny Carter's orchestra in Los Angeles, California.

Ensign Delmas L. Northcutt, '56bs, Willis, recently qualified as a Navy carrier pilot after completing landings aboard a carrier in the Gulf of Mexico.

Ralph F. Ellinger, '56, Oklahoma City, has been assigned to the Michael P. Massad Insurance Agency for three years of field work. Ellinger recently completed the home office phase of the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company's sales management training program.

Pvt. Joel M. Bagby, '56ba, Oklahoma City, has been assigned as an information specialist in the public information office of the Army's Engineer School, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Navy Ensign Joe L. Vowell, '56bus, Frisco, Texas, has graduated from the pre-flight school at Pensacola, Florida. He is now assigned to Saufley Field, Pensacola, for primary flight training.

Lieut. John E. Long, '56ba, Madill, recently was graduated from the officers basic course at Fort Lee, Virginia.

BUSY AND ALIVE

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Walker. "My company of men really did make it tough on me—to leave them."

The year 1948 was his sixth with the Army. Soon after he entered service, he had married Erma Lee, a graduate of Oklahoma A&M. Their first child was a son, Bobby. They were happy, and things seemed to be going just fine.

Then one day Walker hemorrhaged. He was rushed to a hospital, checked, and found to have ulcers.

"You might say they sort of knocked me low," he said. "I was retired, of course. Last Christmas (1955) I spent in a hospital. You see, I almost lost half my stomach, and I may lose it yet—if I ever hemorrhage again."

There is a formidable line of hospitals in his memory, those at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and Brooks Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and others. Suddenly inactive for the first time in his life, he now had to learn to slow down.

He and the Missus chose to settle down in the part of the country where they'd grown up. (She is from Hugo, and he was born in Stamford, Texas.) San Antonio holds a strong attraction for settle-downers. The beautiful, historical old city starbursts out from the nucleus Alamo, symbol of Texas independence. Dissected by the wandering San Antonio river which gives to it the nickname "Venice of the Southwest," the city also cradles sections which look like nothing so much as Mexico City and can be approached only by streets narrow and meandering like the river. And the military is there, four air bases and an army post, to remind Walker of six satisfying years of his life.

"I began to operate a little business on the south side of town," said Walker, and

talked of his play park featuring an M. K. & T. junior railroad. He likes children, and he and Mrs. Walker have three of their own now. "There's Bobby, 11," he said. "He's sick today. I'm raising a Boy Scout in him. Then there's Doak, 7; he's going to be a football player, and we named him for Doak Walker. And there's Sally—"

"I'm five," volunteered Sally, seated in a brown leather reclining chair in the corner of the room.

"Say, come over here and take a look at my Christmas present," said Walker, unseating Sally and coaxing the visitors to try the chair. "Like it? You fellows wait 25 years and that chair'll come in handy."

Erma Walker, a strikingly pretty woman, had been sewing during the interview. Now she rose and hurried toward her back door. "I'd better see what's causing my dog to make so much noise," she smiled. However, she paused long enough to point out that the interview room had been built by Walker during the previous summer. A large, pine-lined recreation area, it had become Walker's special project when a seizure of restlessness came upon him.

"I got tired of playing too much golf," he said, "so I hired a carpenter to help build the room, and I worked side by side with him, kept up with him all the way. While I was at it, I built Bobby a dark-room under the stairs and both the boys a room of their own upstairs."

But the restlessness wasn't quite abated. When, about three months ago, one of the local school districts needed a history teacher, Walker gladly took the position and enjoys it to the hilt.

He still follows football closely, and of course his favorite team is the Big Red. He and other alumni gather for TV parties when one of the games is on the air, and he gives Texans the devil about their Cotton Bowl losses to the foe from the north.

A newer interest is his Hammond electric organ. In a tiny room which seemed built around the instrument, Walker seated himself, switched the organ alive and, waiting for it to warm, put on his spectacles. Green tropical plants brushed his elbow and a brightly painted Indian totem hung above his head.

Sally clambered up the staircase, plopped herself down near the top and watched the crown of her father's head through a glass partition backing the organ.

Everything grew quiet. Then Walker raised his face and grinned. "Won't those O. U. football players laugh when they hear about this!" He waxed serious: "This is something every man should have. I didn't know a note of music, and

yet I learned, just playing this thing. One of our friends is coming over tonight to listen to the organ, and to sing with us. She wants to try and talk her husband into buying one."

He played a soft "Silent Night," then "La Golondrina." Obviously both seemed appropriate. Then he insisted the visitors attempt his "easy method" of playing, which consisted of following illustrated scale formulas in a special songbook. "It's like shooting fish in a rain barrel," he said.

There are nights when Walker has trouble sleeping. On such occasions he comes down into his tiny room, switches on the organ and one light above the music, and he plays for half the night. The feel of the music does something for him.

But he's no brooder. He thinks about himself harnessed around a dangerous stomach, and he talks about it, but he keeps the talk light. "Come out some night and have a bowl of chili with us," he'll say. And he'll chuckle: "I'll drink soup."

His philosophy is blunt, exactly what one would expect from such a straightforward person as Ab Walker:

"I'm trying to stay busy, alive, and out of trouble."

L. N. MORGAN

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ter which had cluttered them for years. When the *Sooner Magazine* included an "Oklahoma Quarterly" section for five years, Morgan edited it.

For more than 40 years' service he was made a Regents Professor in 1955. Only two events had ever seriously diverted him from his job. The first consisted of military service in World War II; the second came about five years ago, when he developed a heart condition.

Though his illness brought with it two bad attacks, Morgan kept working. Then, on December 15, the hardest attack of all came. He died at the age of 66.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of . . . grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.—George Bernard Shaw.

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