

David Whitman Walker

September 20, 1923—July 31, 2011

A scientist, a teacher, a pacifist, a raconteur, an enthusiastic family man, a gardener, a world traveler, a dabbler in the arts, David Walker was a man of conscience and action, who, with his lifelong partner Della, ran a welcoming home. David and Della were both founding members of the Port Townsend Friends Meeting. David will be remembered as warm and outgoing, with a generous concern for others—also as a lively member of his exercise group.

David's career took him from refugee work in the 1940s for the American Friends Service Committee in Gaza, to running a family pest control business in Marysville, Washington, to retirement in Port Townsend. In between he taught entomology and zoology at the University of Puerto Rico, conducted crop pest eradication research for the University's Puerto Rican Nuclear Center, and taught at Washington State University in Pullman, his alma mater.

David was a founding member of the RoseWind Co-housing Community in Port Townsend, where he served on the board and was instrumental in starting and tending to the community's impressive garden.

Born to Lucy and George Walker of Seattle, David enjoyed what he called "an idyllic childhood," growing up in a boisterous household with three siblings. The family was Baptist, and David's older brother Scotty grew up to be a Baptist minister. But David would admit that he "wasn't the religious one." Instead, "I was the guy who made spit-wads and sat in the balcony," he said.

David graduated from Seattle's Franklin High School in 1941 and, after briefly studying at the University of Washington, was drafted into the Army's 42nd Infantry Division. When his superiors discovered that David's poor eyesight made him a hopeless marksman (he had faked his way through the entry physical's eye exam, guessing that the big letter at the top was an "E"), they assigned him to maintaining military vehicles. His unit visited the Buchenwald Concentration Camp three days after its liberation, and the experience solidified a current of pacifism that was already gaining strength in him. He became an ardent anti-war activist.

David had been hospitalized with polio in England as his unit prepared to transfer to the Eastern Front. Although the disease left him with a withered leg, David never considered himself handicapped. The experience seemed to give him more stamina.

After discharge David returned to the UW. He moved into the Men's International House, where he met a feisty young woman named Della Winchell. She was working to set up a women's house because she was "tired of women just being ancillary to the men's house." The two married in 1946.

This was also a time of religious exploration. While attending the University of Washington, David became a "convinced" member of the Religious Society of Friends.

The newlyweds took an assignment in 1947 from the American Friends Service Committee to help Gaza refugees control malaria and with basic sanitation. During their year there, David oversaw construction of 14,300 latrines.

Upon their return, David earned a master's degree in Public Health from Washington State University in Pullman. He and Della became parents to three children: Jeffrey, Robin, and Roy. And they were off again — this time to the Philippines, where David worked in malaria control for the U.S. Public Health Service. "It was like living in the Wild West," David said.

The Walkers returned to Pullman. David received a PhD in Entomology in 1958, and Della her Master's Degree in Anthropology in 1959. Then the family moved to Puerto Rico, where they lived for the next twenty years with David researching crop pest sterilization at the Puerto Rican Nuclear Center and teaching at the University of Puerto Rico, and Della teaching at the Interamerican University.

Retiring from academia in 1980, David and Della moved to Marysville. There he established Walker Pest Control. Fifteen years later they moved to Port Townsend.

David remained active in the affairs of RoseWind until his death. He volunteered for causes outside RoseWind as well: working for resettlement of Central American Refugees, doing draft counseling, serving at the Emergency Winter Shelter and Jefferson Healthcare Hospice, and keeping an ongoing involvement with the Society of Friends.

David's travels took him around the Caribbean, Central and South America, and many European countries, where he attended conferences and presented his findings. During two sabbaticals he took his family to live a year each in Thailand and Canada. The family took regular trips throughout the U.S. and Mexico, usually on a shoestring budget. After retirement he, or he and Della, traveled in India, Bali, Java, Cuba, Tibet, China, Central and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and "probably several other countries we've forgotten."

At his request, David's ashes will be scattered at the intersection of two roads in rural Oregon that he and Della came upon many years ago. One road leads to Paradise, the other to Promise.