

Bill's daughter Janis authored this obituary.

OZARKS HILLBILLY

William D. Walker died on 5 September 2021, in Beaverton, Oregon, where he had been a resident since 1958. He was born on 28 September 1930, the sixth of ten children born to Earl and Grace (Campbell) Walker. Like many children of that time, Bill was born at home; in his case in a recently completed board and batten cabin on a rocky farm near Mountain View, Missouri, in the Ozark Mountains.

Though 1930 was not an auspicious year—the Great Depression was taking its toll on America and the world—the Walker family had food and a place to sleep. What they lacked in material wealth was more than compensated for by humor and familial love.

Bill attended Shady Grove, a one-room school, through the 8th grade, and then moved on to Mountain View High School. There, in 1946, Lula Fay DeBoard asked Bill to a Sadie Hawkins party; Bill said he fell in love that night and has never looked back.

Following his high school graduation in 1947, Bill worked a variety of odd jobs. His future father-in-law, Floyd DeBoard, was a firm believer in education and encouraged him to attend a summer session at Southwest Missouri State College (present-day Missouri State University). These classes qualified him to teach in a one-room rural school. He first taught at Montier, then the following two years at Trask. In the spring of 1951, he left his teaching position in Trask to join the Air Force, planning to use the GI Bill for a college education when he mustered out.

Bill scored well on the Air Force entrance exam and was given his choice of fields to pursue. Not knowing what the word even meant (but thinking it sounded like something from the Buck Rogers science fiction stories) Bill chose “radar” as his specialty—shaping his future career.

While Bill was sent off to Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, Lu’s family made the big decision to move to Hood River, Oregon, and Lu moved with them. A few weeks later he wrote a letter asking her to marry him. On 22 August 1951, the high school sweethearts were married in the base chapel. Bill and Lu were loving partners in every sense of the word for more than 65 years, until her death in 2016.

Their first child, daughter Janis, was born at the Air Force base just a little over a year after their marriage. Three short months later Bill was dismayed to find that he was being posted to Korea, which was, as he always said, “the one place in the world where my family could not come with me.” Lu and Janis rejoined Lu’s family in Oregon and Bill shipped out for Korea, where he serviced a mountain radar installation on the Sea of Japan, in the far northeast of what is now South Korea.

Released from the Air Force in 1954, Bill entered the Rolla School of Mines (present-day Missouri University of Science and Technology). While in Rolla, Bill and Lu had a second child, Alan Scott. Grinding away at school while Lu handled the family, Bill graduated with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering in 1958.

Having worked with their marvelous oscilloscopes in the Air Force and in college, Bill had his eye on Tektronix. However, at that time Tek did no recruiting on his distant campus. Because Lu’s family was in Oregon, and because it was nearer to Tek, he accepted a job at Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, the lowest-paying of five job offers.

The strategy worked. Not only were they able to visit the DeBoard family often, but Tektronix sent a recruiter to interview candidates in Seattle and Bill was hired. Just a few months after arriving in Seattle, the family set off for Beaverton, where he and Lu would live the rest of their lives.

Bill's first day of life at Tek was November 26, 1958. Within less than a year he was identified by founder Howard Vollum as the right kind of manager for their company and received the first of many promotions in his rapid climb to positions of greater responsibility.

Bill remained engaged with Tektronix either through executive roles or his position on the board of directors for over 40 years. In addition to COO, CEO, President, and director at Tektronix, Inc., his roles included chairman of Sony-Tek (the joint-venture oscilloscope company for the Japanese market), chairman of the charitable Tek Foundation, and chairman of Tek Development Corporation (Tek's venture capital operation that spun off countless new businesses in Oregon). Bill was a familiar sight with his "managing by wandering around" the Tek campus, meeting and greeting, stopping to chat, picking up information, and answering questions—recognizable by his trademark shock of thick silver hair.

Beyond his roles at Tektronix, Bill's other positions included: president, ESI; president and chair, Planar Systems; director, Gilmore Entertainment; trustee, Oregon Graduate Center; trustee, Golden Gate Seminary; trustee, Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission; advisor, National Science Foundation; advisor, Oregon Higher Education Commission. In 1999 Bill received his honorary Doctorate degree in Engineering from UMR, recognizing his achievements in the field.

When Bill was called upon to present to the New York Stock Exchange on the occasion of Tektronix's initial listing, he stood before that elite group of financiers and business movers and shakers, hooked his thumb in his pants, slouched a little, and with typical self-deprecating humor, said: "If you've never seen an Ozark hillbilly before, take a good look." His speech was a rousing success.

Bill's career led him to meet countless people throughout Oregon and the rest of the United States as well as Asia and Europe. His genuine down-home "Ozarks" warmth earned him many close friends and admirers, establishing relationships that continued long after he retired.

As important as his career was to him, Bill was equally passionate about his role at the First Baptist Church of Beaverton. For over 50 years, beginning in November of 1958, FBCB (now Parkside Fellowship) was the center of personal interest and effort for both him and Lu. Bill almost always led a study group or class of some type, and his personal engagement there impacted more lives than can be recounted. Though he will be widely remembered as a successful executive, folks who knew him best, knew that the times and events he most treasured were through the church, where he was able to help individuals facing the deepest questions and most difficult challenges in life. Bill's book, *Roots and Wings*, tells some of the stories of the life of the church and the people who made it their family.

Bill traveled extensively both for work and for pleasure, but his happiest travel times were the several months each year spent at the old farmhouse where he was born and which he and Lu owned. A highlight of "the Farm" was the annual Independence Day celebration held with siblings, extended family, and friends, the gathering numbering over 150 people in the good years. Imagine the most delightful family reunion possible, capped with a fireworks display under the stars of a warm, dark, Ozark night, and you will have some feel for the magic of those events. What you will not be able to imagine was the legacy of love handed down to the family by Earl and Grace. At the Farm, with the family gathered, it was palpable. No one who ever had the pleasure of attending will forget the experience.

As his work life wound down, Bill's favorite hobbies were tennis with friends from West Hills Racquet Club, and writing poetry. In 2012, his book of poetry, *My Path*, was published by Post Alley Press. He also loved pottering in his yard, dinner out with friends, and napping in his big recliner in front of an old episode of *Gunsmoke*, *Andy Griffith*, or *MASH*.

Bill was preceded in death by his wife Lu (2016), also in Beaverton, Oregon; brother Donald (Ruth) Walker; sister Mary (Elmer) Wells; sister Phyllis (Herbert "Buster") Easton; sister Doyne (L. D. "Monk") Smith; brother Newell B. "Jack" (Lola); and brother Leon (Ozella) Walker.

Surviving Bill are his two children, Janis (Calvin) Gilmore, of Pawleys Island, SC; and Scott (Cindy) Walker, of Boise, Idaho. Four grandchildren Jeffrey (Carrie) Gilmore, Pawleys Island, SC; Jordan (Russell) Watkins, Pawleys Island, SC; Mack Walker, Portland, Ore.; Natalie Walker, Boise, Idaho. And great-grandchildren Evie, Walker, Rudd, and Gilmore. Also sister Irene Hansen, Willow Springs, Mo.; brother Max (Kay) Walker, Cabool, Mo.; and brother Paul Walker, Burleson, Texas. He was predeceased by Lu's sister Jaunita Cross, but is survived by his much-loved in-law siblings Cora Leah Henshaw, Donald DeBoard, Edwin DeBoard, Snoden DeBoard, and Bill DeBoard.

Arrangements are by Pegg, Paxson, and Springer of Beaverton; funeral service 10:30 a.m., Saturday, 25 September, at Parkside Fellowship (formerly First Baptist Church of Beaverton), 5755 SW Erickson, Beaverton; interment in Hood River, at Pine Grove Butte Cemetery.