



Wesley "Wes" Walker

September 27, 1935 - August 26, 2016

Wesley Elton Walker was born September 27, 1935 in Danville, the only son of Loran B. & Gladys A. Pugh Walker.

Wes was a graduate of Danville High School, where he excelled in track and swimming.

As a graduate of Eastern Illinois University, he again excelled in track, cross-country, and swimming. He was also a proud member of the TKE Fraternity, where he became president during his senior year.

Upon graduation from Eastern, he started his first job in Kankakee as the youth & physical director of the Kankakee YMCA on Court Street. It was there he met his wife, the former Connie Deaver. They married April 5, 1958 in Baltimore, Maryland.

In 1962, they moved to Racine, Wisconsin, where Wes became the physical director. He also earned the Wisconsin Physical Director of the Year.

In 1970, Wes was called to return to the new YMCA on Kennedy Drive in Kankakee, where he served as director until 1993. Under his leadership, the Y expanded; memberships tripled and 13 of those he hired as directors went on to run YMCA's on their own. He retired in 1995.

He and his wife, Connie are the parents of four boys, Rusty (Donna) Walker, Rick (Eileen) Walker, Robin (Leslie) Walker, and Scott (Melanie) Walker. All four boys became All-American swimmers and captains of their swim teams in both high school and college.

Wes was the proud grandfather to Jessica, Natalie, Shannon, Bryne, Kyle, Kelsie, and Spencer Walker. He is also survived by five great-grandchildren who have brought him great joy.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Visitation will be held 4:00 -8:00 p.m. Friday, September 9, 2016 at Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home; 1480 W. Court St., in Kankakee.

Funeral Services will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 10, 2016 at Asbury United Methodist Church. Rev. Scott Henley will officiate the service.

Private family interment will follow at Aroma Park Cemetery.

A gathering of friends and family will be held at the Elk's Country Club following the private interment.

Cemetery Details

Aroma Park Cemetery

2585 S. Sandbar Rd
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 933-8638

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 9. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Kankakee - Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home
1480 W. Court St.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 932-1214
cgfuneral@gmail.com

Funeral Service

SEP 10. 11:00 AM (CT)

Asbury United Methodist Church
196 S. Harrison
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 933-4408
<https://www.kasbury.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ Clancy-Gernon Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Wesley "Wes" Walker



Clancy-Gernon Funeral Homes - September 08, 2016 at 03:58 PM

BD

The most honorable and honest man, that I have ever met in my life.

Bruce Davis - June 12, 2018 at 11:59 AM

DL

“ 1 file added to the album LifeTributes



Dirk Langfoss - September 09, 2016 at 01:08 PM

JM

“ I will never forget, Kentucky Lake and Watermelons for the Ys Men. We have truly lost a great man, that always put others first, and touched so many peoples lives, Wes was one of the few that inspired the youth of our community, and believed in nothing but the best for the youth.

Wes was such a great, father, mentor, contributor and person. Our prayers and thoughts are with you.

We will keep Wes and all of the Walker family in our prayers.

Jeff & Lynne Matheny

Jeff & Lynne Matheny - September 08, 2016 at 10:52 AM

RM

“ Please accept our condolences to Connie and the Walker family. Wes was an excellent advocate for the YMCA, Kankakee United Way, and the families that were active in the organizations. We experienced his professional leadership and service to the community.

May happy memories replace the sadness in your heart.

Rodger, Gladys Macy & Family

Rodger Macy - September 08, 2016 at 09:03 AM



“ 111 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Clancy-Gernon Funeral Homes - September 07, 2016 at 11:41 AM

PB

“ *our community has lost one of it's all time biggest contributors*

paul blanke - September 06, 2016 at 08:38 AM

TC

“ *My deepest sympathy to the Walker families. Your dad started me on my path as a swimmer, swimming coach, teacher and a life long love of the water. Tim Caldwell*

Tim Caldwell - September 05, 2016 at 12:11 AM

LB

“ To dearest Connie and Family-

I first met Wesley Walker with my ventriloquist dummy long ago at the old YMCA in Kankakee. He had asked me to entertain at the first big YMCA Christmas Party after rehearsing there with the Red Cross. There were many others after that one---but I when I headed off to Illinois Wesleyan for undergrad college, I remember writing a paper on Wesley Walker, recanting my theory that I had met John Wesley in a man I knew as Wesley Walker. I had no idea that I would have the privilege of serving on his Board of Directors of the YMCA for 12 years or that my husband would coach basketball for his Y Family. Wes Walker was my greatest professor. He taught me what authentic leadership really is --the innate kind that is born in the soul and never misses a beat. Today, there is not a day that passes that I do not try to use one of his many lessons in leadership in my work or my home. His amazing lessons were far beyond organizational leadership, capturing a Walkeresque kind of Grace that reflected his faith in Christ and his understanding and relationship with humanity ---all at once. He personified unconditional goodness and kindness which were both sweetened every day with his profound relationship with humor---a gift he used to communicate his both his message and model always.

Please know I am thinking of you, dear Connie---and praying for strength and soulful comfort of God's Love to your beautiful family on the journey ahead.

Heaven just got the Best of Bests. Lucky heaven.

Lana Weiss Brown

Lana Weiss Brown - September 04, 2016 at 01:10 PM

JW

“ *Judy Whitis lit a candle in memory of Wesley "Wes" Walker*



Judy Whitis - September 02, 2016 at 10:03 PM

RB

“ *Rebecca Belcher-Rankin lit a candle in memory of Wesley "Wes" Walker*



Rebecca Belcher-Rankin - September 02, 2016 at 04:26 PM

RB

Dear Connie and all the family, I was saddened to see that Wes had passed. He was such a great, kind man--always gentle with others, always a good word for every situation. I will be praying for you during this time of loss. I trust that the memories will ease your pain.

Rebecca Belcher-Rankin - September 02, 2016 at 04:29 PM

CP

“ To the whole Walker clan:

So sad to hear of Wes' passing. Christmas at the Colorado Walker family will not be the same without him. What a wonderful, constant, caring presence he provided.

Our deepest condolences to all of you for your loss.

With love,

Cheryl & Emma Pugliese

Cheryl Pugliese - September 02, 2016 at 10:29 AM

RS

“ *Connie, Rusty, Rick, Robin and Scott words cannot adequately describe the heart felt feelings I have for the loss of your husband and father. In the seventies Wes Walker taught me about leadership, goal setting and goal achievement through hard work. I carried on those assets through my Marine Core years and later going to medical school and a successful career in both. I am ever grateful for the wisdom and kindness your father showed to me during my brig stay in Kankakee. May God hold you in the palm of his hand during this difficult time. Dr Ron Shepherd*

Ron Shepherd - September 01, 2016 at 09:40 PM



“ *To be a part of the Kankakee YMCA meant you were also joining Wes's family with open and nurturing arms. If it weren't for the way Wes headed the Y many would not have joined. We had a great team while he was in charge. No one will ever bring what he did to the community. We are grateful for his service. Pete and Rose Velatini*

Rose Wilkins Velatini - September 01, 2016 at 12:03 PM



“ *Sincerest sympathy to you and your family.*
Merrit Hansen

Rose Wilkins Velatini - September 01, 2016 at 11:59 AM

MT

“ *Dear Connie and Family, Please accept our heartfelt condolences at this difficult time. There are many memories to share with you: one is whenever I would see or call Wes, he was ALWAYS joyous, enthusiastic, welcoming, kind, encouraging, supportive and excited to share stories of the YMCA and his family. We would laugh and work together for YMCA World Service, as he shared fun stories of his experiences. Thank you for sharing him with all of us. He was a great mentor, colleague and friend and I am forever grateful for all I was allowed to learn from Wes. His spirit of loving kindness and passion for service and the YMCA - and the world, will live on in us. You are all in my loving thoughts and prayers and I am sure Wes will be watching over us from above. Love and God bless you, Mary Tikalsky, YMCA of the USA - International Group*



Mary Tikalsky - August 31, 2016 at 04:21 PM

CA

“ *I've been a member of the YMCA family for 35 years. Wes was truly a legend in the YMCA community, a "cause-driven" leader before the term was invoked. I am blessed to have known Wes and I'm praying for your family.*

Cathleen Adams - August 31, 2016 at 03:54 PM

JR

“ *Didn't personally know him, but he must have been a great father, i did have a chance to spend time with his wife and sons, at Eastridge. rest in peace.*
Jesse Rodriguez

Jesse Rodriguez - August 31, 2016 at 12:22 PM

DK

“ *Dewey Kilbride lit a candle in memory of Wesley "Wes" Walker*



Dewey Kilbride - August 30, 2016 at 10:21 AM

DK

*Connie,
So sorry to hear of Wes's passing. The very best to you and your family at this most difficult time.*

Dewey Kilbride - August 30, 2016 at 10:22 AM

TZ

Connie and all of he family- our thoughts and prayers are with you at this sad time. It was truly a blessing for me to have known and worked with Wes. I am certain that not other person ever gave more of himself to a community than he did. He will be sorely missed bay all. God Bless! Tom and Bev Zwetschke

Tom Zwetschke - September 01, 2016 at 01:26 PM

JR

“ *Rest in paradise good sir.*



jules ruel - August 29, 2016 at 10:22 PM

GP

“ *This is a man who impacted so many lives, in Kankakee and beyond. And his memory will always be there to continue that impact. Thank you, Connie and family, for sharing this amazing and caring human being with the rest of us who knew him.... There is no doubt joy in his Heavenly home tonight as he has been welcomed home.....*

Jane & George Potter

George & Jane Potter - August 29, 2016 at 08:45 PM

BW

“ *I first met Wes in 1984 when I joined the YMCA and became a YMCA Junior Leader. Little did I know how much he, or the Y, or that club would impact my life. Now, 32 years later, I can honestly say that Wes by example, and the Y shaped who I am today, helped me find friendships that have lasted a lifetime, and instilled in me a commitment to voluntarism and making the community better. I will be forever grateful for his role in my life, and all that he and the Y brought to it. Go with God, Wes, I truly believe the verse "Well done, good and faithful servant" couldn't be more fitting than it is for you. You truly have left a legacy that will live on for many years to come.*

Becky Wilder - August 29, 2016 at 12:38 PM

Steve West

“ Steve West lit a candle in memory of Wesley "Wes" Walker



Steve West - August 29, 2016 at 08:25 AM

Steve West

r i p wes - steve alice and noah

Steve West - August 29, 2016 at 08:26 AM

CC

“ Cheryl Chinski lit a candle in memory of Wesley "Wes" Walker



Cheryl Chinski - August 28, 2016 at 09:36 PM

JP

“ All my sympathy to the Walker family, and to all of Kankakee for the loss of of one it's finest citizens. If parents desire to have their sons grow into examples of whats best they need look no farther than the life that Wes lived. He'll be deeply missed.

Jim Puswaskis - August 28, 2016 at 03:16 PM