

WALTER CROWL

Walter Reisinger Crowl, nicknamed Walt, was born to Alfred Roland and Keziah Hudson Crowl in Wilmington, Delaware, on February 6, 1919. The youngest of five children, Walt had fun growing up in a large family and making friends at school, where his major interest was sports.

An average pupil in academic subjects, Walt lived a rich life, learning much from experience and recognizing the value of his careful rearing. Some of this understanding is expressed in a letter written to his mother during his army years:

"Dear Mother,

I'm now 23 years old and it seems to me each year gets shorter and that as a whole, I've lived less time instead of more. I guess that's because you can go back and think of things in the past and know that time is too short to be wasted doing nothing. As I look back over the 23 years I've lived, I can sincerely say I wouldn't change any of them for I feel that everything I've done wrong has taught me enough to more than make up for the mistakes. In other words, you did a good job in seeing that I was brought up right and the mistakes I made because I didn't do what you wanted me to do were made good by what I learned from them."

At the Pierre S. duPont High School, Walt threw himself enthusiastically into athletics. He went out for football, basketball, and track; but basketball was his chief sport. "P.S." considers him one of the best basketball players the school ever developed. At this time, he also enjoyed membership in the Sigma Tau Fraternity.

A good ball player must have courage and good judgment as well as skill. Walt, fortunately, had these qualities, for they saved his life during a harrowing experience he had one summer at Deemer's Beach, where he was staying with his buddy, Frank Campbell. The boys had decided to swim to a buoy in the middle of the Delaware River. Being exceptionally good swimmers, they enjoyed a leisurely sun bath. In the meantime, however, the tide had turned; and when the boys dived into the water for their swim home, they found themselves unable to strive against the swift current moving downstream. They floated for several hours. Darkness was descending. Campbell decided to strike out for shore, but Walt continued to float downstream. After about nine hours in the water, he finally drifted ashore near Fort Penn. His buddy was drowned.

As the war was pending at the time of his high school graduation, he decided to go to Beacom College for a short course. Here he again starred in basketball. He worked temporarily in the Accounting Department of the duPont Company

and then secured what should have been a permanent position with the Remington Arms Company in New York.

But the war intervened and Walt entered the United States Army on February 27, 1942. He started his training at Fort Dix, was assigned next to the Edgewood Arsenal in the Chemical Welfare Service, and later went to Camp Rucker, where he was made a sergeant. The army now called for volunteers for its Air Cadet Program. After careful deliberation, Walt volunteered. He was sent to Nashville, Tennessee, for processing into the Air Corps. At the completion of his training, he was awarded the bars of a second lieutenant and began a period of transfers from field to field in California. At last came a brief furlough, spent at home, then an assignment to Moses Lake, Washington. His bomber crew was made up and he was assigned to the 595th Squadron, and the 396th Bomber Group at Tampa, Florida.

Although he was an officer, Walt kept his respect for the man in the ranks. On February 7, 1943, he wrote:

"If I was I wouldn't let the fact that I was a private bother me for there's plenty of privates that know more about the army and what they're doing than a lot of sergeants and officers but they get put into an outfit that has all its ratings filled and never get a chance to be promoted until someone is transferred out of the outfit. Because some men go into the army and get a rating right off doesn't say they are good men but often indicates it's a poor outfit due

to the fact they can't get any experienced men. Of course, an outfit like this will become good as soon as the men get experience, therefore, a fellow gets a break when he gets into a new outfit if it has enough time to be well trained."

From Florida, Walt was sent via North Africa to Foggia Field, Italy. Then came a bomber mission over Sofia, Bulgaria on March 30, 1944. The bomber was reported fallen. Walt was missing.

Courageous, patriotic, deeply religious Walt faced death calmly. His faith as a Christian and an American sustained him.

"We would all be better off dead than at the mercy of our enemy for they have no mercy, and even if they did, I would rather be dead than beaten."

"If you are a Christian and believe what is to be will be and have faith, why should your heart ever quiver. Death is nothing to fear if you have faith for the Bible will tell you life after death is much better than this life if we do what is right in this life and have faith. Yes, the worst that can happen to any of us is death and the worst is the beginning of the best. So let us have no more quivering over what might happen, for whatever happens will be for the best."
(Excerpt from a letter to his mother on March 1, 1943)

June 14, 2014

Dear Cam,

Winola sent me this incredible write up on Uncle Walt for you. I suspect it was given at his eulogy. Unfortunately, the writer is lost to history. Amazing such a young man had such perspective, values, and commitment. Hope you cherish it.

I found his wings a while ago, and Winola gave me the picture. I can't remember whether you have this one.

It didn't seem right to wrap them as presents as they are much more important than that. I am so acutely aware that I could have been in my grandmother's shoes, and his words comforted me, too. Thank you for your service. I love you.

Mom