



Walter M. Plaue

On Friday, July 29, 2016, after a productive 80 years of life, our classmate, brother in arms, and friend joined the ghostly assembly of the United States Military Academy's "Long Grey Line".



Walter Max Plaue was born in the Big Apple in 1935 but grew up less than 30 miles up the Hudson River at Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. He was the eldest son of the late Max and Hildegard Plaue. Upon graduating from Hastings High School, "Walt" attended Colgate University for one year and in 1954 was accepted into the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY. Walt graduated from the USMA with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1958 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the US Army Artillery Corps.

Shortly thereafter, he married Elizabeth A. Cole, also of Hastings. Although this marriage did not endure, they had a son, Mark Douglas, and a daughter, Kirsten Elizabeth.

Walt's military education encompassed the Airborne School, the Artillery Officer Basic Course, the Ballistic Missile Officer Course, and the Command and General Staff College.

A variety of assignments saw him serving in San Francisco, CA, and Thule, Greenland, followed by tours of duty in Germany, Vietnam, Korea, and a variety of installations throughout the US. One of his most enjoyable assignments came as the Deputy Post Commander at Ft. Myer, VA, the home of the "Old Guard Regiment", the Army Band, and Arlington National Cemetery. While stationed there, he met Patsy Hull, a Civilian Personnel Specialist with the Department of the Army. After Walter was transferred to Ft. Bliss, TX, Patsy transferred to the Civilian Personnel Office at the Fort, and shortly thereafter, she became his wife and lifelong partner and truest friend. During this Ft. Bliss assignment, he was dispatched on liaison tours to Iraq and South Korea and later, he would embark on a one-year assignment to Korea. Upon his return, his final assignment was at Ft. Bliss, TX where he had begun his career 20 years earlier. After his military retirement in 1978, he received a Master of Business Administration degree (MBA) from the University of Texas, and later became a Certified Financial Planner and real estate investor.

The couple moved from Texas to Virginia where he obtained a position as a Project Manager for a company doing work for the EPA. When Patsy was offered an opportunity to work for the US government in Germany, the couple moved there and spent over five years in Europe. These assignments gave them the opportunity to travel throughout Europe which they took full advantage of. They referred to these years as "the best of their adult lives". In 1990, Patsy retired and the couple moved to their adopted retirement home in Asheville, NC

Soon after their arrival, the couple became active in numerous civic activities. They joined the Central United Methodist Church, and for several years, he was active in the Asheville Kiwanis Club where he chaired the Terrific Kids Program, served as a "bell ringer" for the Salvation Army at Christmas, and delivered gifts to local nursing homes. Walt had also been a member of the Biltmore Masonic Lodge, the Oasis Shrine Temple, Elks Lodge, and American Legion, Post 2. He also was a member of the VFW, Disabled American Veterans, West Point Alumni Association, West Point Society of WNC. He expressed great concern for those who were unable to afford

decent housing in the high-cost environment of Asheville, often saying, “There but for the Grace of God, go I”. His concern led him to be a frequent attendee at City Council and County Commission meetings where he often addressed the elected officials regarding encouraging participation of the private sector in providing low-cost housing. He served on many related study groups offering the unique viewpoint of the role played by the area’s many small real estate investors. He was an early advocate of a Housing Trust Fund to encourage small developers in the city and county to add to the stock of such housing. As the son of immigrant parents, Mr. Plaue had a deep feeling of responsibility to his country and to his adopted retirement community. For over a decade, on Christmas Eve, Walter and Patsy made it a family tradition to deliver boxes of holiday treats to the crews manning the local police and Fire Departments. Walter and his wife were always conscious of those who might otherwise be forgotten in the bustle of modern-day life.

What may have given Walt his greatest satisfaction occurred in the months following the 9/11 attacks. On his own initiative, Mr. Plaue put together a group of volunteers who planned and conducted the first Memorial Day ceremony in Asheville in recent memory, when he brought in a retired Marine Corps Commandant to be the guest speaker in May 2002. For several more years, Mr. Plaue served and chaired the committee to ensure that it became an annual event on the city calendar. His leadership was evident when he insisted that the Memorial Day Ceremony recognize, in addition to the standard military services, all “First Responders” who gave so much on 9/11/01. As he stepped back from this project, he was recruited to be the Vice-Chairman of the WNC Veteran’s Memorial committee, primarily involved in fund raising and liaison with the city and county and other veteran’s groups. This effort came to fruition in November 2009 when the Western North Carolina Veteran’s Memorial was dedicated in the renovated Pack Plaza.

Walt Plaue was predeceased by his parents and younger brother, Rudolf, and several aunts and uncles. He is survived by his widow and true love, Patsy, son Mark and his wife, Cindy; daughter Kirsten; sister-in-law Janis Plaue, step-children Teresa Burzynski, Pamela Lester and husband Kevin, Timothy Hull and wife Susan, and eleven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Survivors also include several cousins, nieces and nephews. He also leaves behind his beloved and loyal canine companion, Heidi.

Walt had been a resident of Asheville, NC since 1990 and passed away at Mission Hospital in Asheville. His memorial service was held in the Chapel of Morris Funeral Home, 304 Merrimon Avenue.