

Please
Remember
in Your
Prayers. . .

George
Walsh, Jr.,
1928-2002

By
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George Walsh, CCCE, with his wife, Mary, top; and at an NCCC Convention with Bud Mease, left, and Dennis Fairbank, CCCE, right.

George Walsh, Jr., CCCE, member of the NCCC Board of Directors 1994-1998, died January 26, 2002 at the age of 74.

During the celebration of his Funeral Mass at Holy Cross mausoleum chapel on Saturday, February 2, Fr. Matthew Spahr, pastor of Queen of Angels parish, Alpine, recounted a conversation that George had some time ago with his eldest daughter Colleen.

George and Colleen were traveling on Interstate 8 between Alpine and San Diego, a route that George regularly used on his commute to Holy Cross. George said it was a good place and time to pray (*Anyone who drives that route regularly knows that one probably ought to be praying to just survive the trip!*) George used the time in the car to pray, but what is significant is that he did not pray for anything. He said that by the time that he completed the trip in either direction, all that he had time for was to **pray in thanksgiving.**

George felt he had plenty in his life for which to be thankful. His family includes his wonderful wife of over 50 years, Mary, his daughters Colleen and Shawn, and his son Patrick, his young grandchildren, his brother and three sisters, all of whom survive him. George had a wonderful career in the United States Navy that spanned 30 years and he retired in 1975 as a Senior Chief Photographer's Mate. At his funeral, many of his Navy mates were present to celebrate his passage to eternal life and all of them spoke of being George's "second family." Relationships forged in that family continued through George and Mary's involvement in the motor home clubs and annual Chief

Photographers' Roundup.

Deciding to settle in San Diego upon retirement from the Navy, George defined his belief in cemetery pre-need sales by venturing to Holy Cross Cemetery to select graves. He came home from that trip and told Mary and his family of his new career as a counselor. He quickly advanced to Executive Director. His cemetery work became his second career and his cemetery associates became his "third family."

At Holy Cross, George was always thinking ahead to maximize the use of a large cemetery that is challenged by limited available land. He built mausoleums, installed multiple-level lawn crypts, added cremation gardens and niches, enhanced both pre-need and family service, all the while challenging and being a mentor to the staff. Being at Holy Cross was an opportunity to watch a "mutual admiration society" in action. There was nothing this group would not do for George because he would do everything in his power to assure that they were in love with their ministry and time at Holy Cross.

George also found "family" in his parish. He was a 4th Degree member of the Knights of Columbus and a member of the Queen of Angels Lay Pastor Society. The manner in which his Funeral Mass was celebrated was a tribute to his parish involvement and his life in faith.

Upon meeting George for the first time, many found him somewhat gruff and perhaps strongly opinionated. Those attributes were certainly "true George." How unfortunate, however, if one did not

take the opportunity to get past those characteristics and discover the kind, supportive, warm, intelligent, humorous, generous, insightful and totally accepting George . . . those of us who did were part of George's NCCC "family."

George was heavily involved in NCCC. He served on the NCCC Board of Directors from 1994 to 1998, and served on several committees, including the Membership Committee from 1991-1994. He participated in several NCCC Seminars and was featured as a panel member at several NCCC Conventions. He wrote for the magazine, *Catholic Cemetery*; earned his CCCE designation in 1995; was made Honorary Member in 1998; and was honored as a 25 Year Member of the Conference in 2001. What these facts do not recount is that George was a mentor as well, always available to the membership and willing to question and discuss, continuing to both learn and teach.

George supported the formation of Catholic Cemeteries of the West in 1986, and served a three-year term on its governing board beginning in 1990. He was particularly committed to his counterparts in California and the western United States and could always be counted upon to provide a "western perspective" to any issue that might be facing a Catholic ceterian. He firmly believed that solving problems in the west would eventually benefit his counterparts throughout the country, as he saw trends such as rapidly increasing cremation move inland from the west coast.

In addition to the Navy Hymn, another of the hymns sung at George's funeral was "On Eagles' Wings." Shortly after he retired in 1998, George had a heart attack from which he fully recovered. Not long after that, his battle with cancer began with the amputation of his leg and hip. Fr. Spahr remarked that the health problems that confronted George were simply bumps in the road, nothing about which to be too excited, nothing major to dwell upon. George never complained. It was the eagle's wings ... his faith ... that kept him positive, optimistic, a pleasure to know, to be with, to call friend.

The gospel text selected for his funeral, "...for my yoke is easy and my burden light" was the perfect summary for George's life, his careers, his family and extended "families." Those of us who were blest to know him, his loves and his passions, will miss him. But with the same sure faith which guided him, a convert to the Catholic Church, to his eternal reward, we know that one day we will see him again. Until that time, eternal rest grant him, Lord. May Your perpetual light shine on him and may he rest in peace. ■

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