

## BRIGADIER GENERAL KENNETH NEWTON WALKER, USAAC

### 17 JUL 1898 - 5 JAN 1943

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**004609** visits since 20 May 2000

Brigadier General Walker arrived in Australia with Brigadier General Enis C. Whitehead in July 1942 (arrived the Saturday before 18 July 1942). On arrival, [Lt. General George H. Brett](#) sent Walker on an inspection tour of the [5th Air Force](#) bases. [Brett](#) asked Walker to carry out a study of the existing bombardment methods being used.

At the time that Walker had arrived, there were three fighter groups, 5 bombardments groups, two transport squadrons and one photographic squadron operational in the [South West Pacific Area](#) (SWPA) comprising 1,602 officers and 18,116 men.











FIGHTER GROUPS	BOMBER GROUPS
<a href="#">8th FG</a> (P-39's) in Australia	<a href="#">3rd BG</a> (B-25's, A-20's, & A-24's)
<a href="#">49th FG</a> (P-40's) in Australia	<a href="#">19th BG</a> (battle scarred from Philippines & Java)
<a href="#">35th FG</a> (P-40's) in Port Moresby	<a href="#">22nd BG</a> (B-26's)
	<a href="#">43rd BG</a> (no planes)
	<a href="#">38th BG</a> (B-25's not operational yet)

Walker visited the [19th Bomb Group](#) in [Townsville](#). He joined a B-17 Flying Fortress as an observer on an unaccompanied reconnaissance mission to search for a Japanese convoy. They found the convoy and climbed from 6,000 to 10,000 feet. They were hit in the right wing by some anti-aircraft fire. Walker flew on two other combat missions with the [19th Bomb Group](#).

His inspection tour took him to places such as Torrens Creek, [Fenton](#), Iron Range and Horn Island. By the time he returned from his tour, [General George C. Kenney](#) had taken over command of the [5th Air Force](#) from [Brett](#).

The following photos were supplied by Paige A. Harris

	<p>Article from Seattle Times</p>
	<p>Brigadier General Kenneth Walker on the right</p>
	<p>Brigadier General Kenneth Walker with stick</p>
	<p>David and Catherine Oastler, Eva and Arthur Overturf, Harrison Overturf, Ethel and Charles Overturf</p>
	<p>John, Ethel and Harrison Overturf</p>
	<p>Capt. Freddie Donnerberg, and Major Harrison Overturf, and General Kenneth Walker in the South West Pacific. It is believed that Harrison is Walker's cousin. Donnerberg and Overturf were General Walker's Aides.</p>
	<p>Brigadier General Kenneth Walker in the chow line (5th from the left)</p>
	<p></p>



Major Harrison Overturf

Kenney ordered Walker to command the Allied Air Forces in the North-Eastern area with the assistance of [Group Captain Garing](#) of the RAAF. The RAAF combat units at [Townsville](#), Cairns and Horn Island were attached to Walker for operational control. Kenney asked Walker to reorganise the [North-Eastern Area Command](#) which Kenney described as a "scrambled outfit of Australians and Americans that resembled a can of worms". [North-Eastern Area command headquarters were located in the Commonwealth Building in Sturt Street in Townsville](#). Kenneth Walker was also made the Commanding Officer of the [Fifth Bomber Command](#), officially started in [Townsville](#) on 3 September 1942. General Walker soon clashed with Kenney over bombing tactics and procedures.

While he was in [Townsville](#), General Walker's regular driver was a WAAAF driver called [Jan Arthur \(100044\)](#) who served, mostly in [Townsville](#) as a transport driver. She was assigned to the Americans as personal driver to various General's. She was [General MacArthur's](#) driver during his stay in [Townsville](#), something she has been very proud of to this day. Jan Arthur turned 90 on 13 July 2004.

[Jan Arthur](#) remembers driving [General Douglas MacArthur](#), along with [General Kenney](#), and General Walker to the 'Cream House', the Headquarters on top of the hill in [Townsville](#). *(Does anyone know where this was?)*. Perhaps it was ["Duncragen" at 4 Cleveland Terrace, Melton Hill, Townsville](#) which is a house used by at least one unknown US Army General.



Inspection of some of the [Townsville recruits](#) on the tennis court at [St. Anne's Barracks](#), in 1942.

**Left to Right** in the lineup of recruits:- Lorna Mittelheuser, Betty Donaghue, Isobel Short, ?, Marjorie Cale, and [Jan Arthur](#).

### [5th Bomber Command](#)

#### [Personal Account of Bomber Command Station Life](#)

Prepared by Major Morternson - Historical Officer, V Bomber Command, 1942-1944

#### [General Walker inspects Uranium deposits in the Northern Territory](#)

General Walker was later killed on an operational mission to Rabaul on 5 January 1943. Their B-17 Flying Fortress #41-24453 from the 64th Squadron of the [43rd Bomb Group](#), was shot down by Japanese fighter aircraft.

The whole crew were killed as follows:-

Brigadier General Kenneth N. Walker	Mrs. Marguerite P. Walker (former wife) 1009 East Windsor Street Glendale, California
?? Walter	Dr. J. Walter (Father) U.S. Veterans Hospital San Fernando, California
Major Jack W. Bleasdal	Mrs. Jack W. Bleasdal (Wife) 215 West Mulberry San Antonio, Texas
Major Allan Lindbergh	Mr. Otto G. Lindbergh (Father) 21 West Street New York 6, New York
Captain Benton H. Daniel	Mrs. Eva M. Daniel (Wife) Box 71 Hallis, Oklahoma
2nd Lt. John W. Hanson	Mr. Jack W. Hanson (Father) 420 Roosevelt Street Missoula, Montana
2nd Lt. Robert L. Hand	Mrs. Ora E. Hand (Mother) Hampstead, Texas
T/Sgt. Dennis Craig	Mrs. Goldie Nelson (Mother) 780 Grand Concourse New York, New York
Sgt. Leslie A. Stewart	Mrs. Anis Stewart (Mother) 206 150th Street East Chicago, Illinois
Pfc. William G. Fraser	Mr. William G. Fraser (Father) 700 Cambridge San Antonio, Texas
Pvt. Liland W. Stone	Mrs. Lida Stine (Mother) 5806 Grove Oakland, California
Pvt. Quentin W. Blakely	Mrs. Quentin W. Blakely (Wife) 711 Randolph Street N.E. Apt. #2 Washington 17, D.C.

The above list shows Marguerite P. Walker as his next of kin. She was actually Kenneth Walker's first wife. They were divorced shortly after their son Douglas was born. General Walker's home base at the time of his death would really have been Washington, DC not Glendale, CA which was where his former wife lived with their two sons.

[Michael Moskow](#) sent me the following crew list details that he obtained from the MACR records:-

64th B-17F 41-24458 Jan. 5, 1943 MACR 15359 "San Antonio Rose"			
Eleven in crew; at least two prisoners; no survivors.			
Walker, Kenneth N.	Brig. Gen.	Observer	Glendale, Ca.
Bleasdale, Jack W.	Major	Observer	San Fernando, Ca.
Lindbergh, Allan	Major	Pilot	New York, N.Y.
Daniel, Benton H.	Capt	Co-Pilot	Hollis, Ok.
Hanson, John W.	1 Lt.	Navigator	Missoula, Mt.

Hand, Robert L.	2 Lt.	Bombardier	Hampstead, Tx.
Craig, Dennis	T/Sgt.	Flight Engineer	New York, N.Y.
Blakely, Quentin W.	S/Sgt.	Radio Operator	Washington, D.C.
Stewart, Leslie A.	Sgt.	Gunner	East Chicago, Il.
Stone, Leland W.	Pvt.	Gunner	Oakland, Ca.
Fraser, William G.	PFC	Gunner	San Antonio, Tx.
<b>Statement in MACR:</b> Departed on mission 4L, at 0848/L flying B-17F, #41-24458, to attack shipping at Rabaul. Last seen going into clouds, closely pursued by four (4) to five (5) Zeros. Left outboard engine seen temporarily smoking.			

There were varying reports as to the fate of the crew. Some reports suggested that they all died in the plane crash, others had some surviving and being captured by the Japs and placed in prisoner of war camps.

In mid 2001, Drew Wesche's father, Fred Wesche, dictated his reminiscences of WW2 for the Rutgers Oral History of WW2 site. This included some information on the mission that General Walker was killed in. Unfortunately Fred Wesche passed away in late 2001.

Fred Wesche was with the [43rd Bomb Group](#) and [19th Bomb Group](#) in New Guinea in '42 and '43. Fred was on the January 5th mission over Rabaul and his plane followed General Walker's plane after it was hit. Drew's father's crew were the last to see the plane before it disappeared. He stated:-

*"On January 5th of 1943, I was on one of what most of us thought was a suicide mission. This is a formation of six planes and I was one of them (he is referring to a photograph during his interview) The Japanese were getting ready to mount a large expeditionary force to relieve their garrisons on New Guinea, and Brigadier General Walker, who was the commanding general of the Fifth Bomber Command there was flying in the lead ship, and I was flying on his wing. When it was announced that it was going to be done in broad daylight at noontime, as a matter-of-fact, at low altitude, something like 5000 feet over the most heavily defended target in the Pacific almost...most of us went away shaking our heads. Many of us believed we wouldn't come back from it. Anyway, we went over the target and all of us got attacked. I was shot up. Nobody was injured, fortunately, but the airplane was kind of banged up a little bit. We had to break formation over the target to bomb individually and then we were supposed to form up immediately after crossing the target., but no sooner had we dropped our bombs that my tail gunner says, "Hey, there's somebody in trouble behind us" So we made a turn and looked back and here was an airplane, one of our airplanes, going down, smoking and on fire, not necessarily fire, but smoke anyway, and headed down obviously for a cloud bank with a whole cloud of fighters on top of him. There must have been 15 or 20 fighters. Of course they gang up on a cripple, you know, polish that one off with no trouble, but he disappeared into a cloud bank and we never saw him again. It turns out it was the general. General Walker was on board."*

There were a number of B-17's called San Antonio Rose. This has lead to a certain amount of confusion for researchers like myself. As best I can determine here are the details:-

Aircraft	Serial No.	Type	Crashed at	Date	Remarks
<a href="#">San Antonio Rose</a>	#41-2416	B-17E	Townsville	22 Feb 1942	40 BS of 19th BG. One source shows 2416 as "San Antonio Rose I"
San Antonio Rose	#41-24458	B-17F		5 Jan 1943	64th BS of 43rd BG, General Kenneth Walker killed in this crash
San Antonio Rose II	#41-2447	B-17E	bombed at Del Monte	??	40 BS of 19 BG.

Brigadier General Kenneth N. Walker was awarded the Medal of Honor which is bestowed by the President of the United States in the name of Congress for deeds of surpassing valour, of devotion far above the call of duty. The book "The Official World War II Guide to the Army Air Forces AAF" describes Walker as follows:-

**BRIG. GEN. KENNETH N. WALKER**  
(reported missing in this action)

SEPT. 5, 1942 - JAN. 5, 1943: During the months he was chief of the [5th Bomber Command](#), Brig.Gen. Kenneth N. Walker habitually accompanied his fliers on missions deep into enemy territory. From personal combat experience he developed a highly efficient technique of bombing in the face of enemy fighters and anti-aircraft fire.

On Jan. 5, 1943, Gen. Walker led a daylight bombing attack on Rabaul. In spite of swarms of Jap interceptors which rose over the harbor to meet them, Gen. Walker's bombers shouldered their way through to the target, planted their bombs squarely on 9 enemy ships.

The Japs turned the full force of their attack on Gen. Walker's airplane. There were too many. His plane went crashing down.



Headstone at Arlington Memorial Cemetery

A Memorial Service for Brigadier General Kenneth Newton Walker was scheduled to be held at Arlington Memorial Cemetery on Friday 7 December 2001 at 1PM. The service will include full military honours. A "fly over" was originally planned as part of the ceremony, but this was cancelled for security reasons as a result of the tragic terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001.

There have been some suggestions that a documentary may be made that would include the search for "San Antonio Rose", the aircraft in which General Kenneth Walker and the crew were either killed or taken prisoner by the Japanese on 5 January 1943.



**Left-to-right:** Mr F.M. Forde (Minister for the Army); General Douglas MacArthur; [General Sir Thomas Blamey](#); General George C. Kenney; Major-General C.A. Clowes; Brigadier General Kenneth Walker.



**Left-to-right:** Mr F.M. Forde (Minister for the Army); General Douglas MacArthur; [General Sir Thomas Blamey](#); General George C. Kenney; Unidentified, Major-General C.A. Clowes; Brigadier General Kenneth Walker.

The above two photos were sent to me by Douglas Walker, son of Brigadier General Kenneth Walker. They show [General Douglas MacArthur](#) arriving with Australian Allied Commanders, Gen. George C. Kenny, Comdr. [5th AF](#), with General Kenneth Walker at the far right.



Mr. James Zobel at the MacArthur Memorial has identified that the above photos were taken in September 1942 at Seven Mile Drome at Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.



Brigadier General Kenneth Walker possibly taken in Queensland. There is a eucalyptus tree in the background. Could it be at Mareeba or Townsville?

**Can anyone identify where this photo was taken?**

**Photos taken in the Northeastern Area HQ officer's mess**



2nd from the right in the front row is Air Commodore F.W.F. Lukis

3rd from the right is Air Commodore A.H. Cobby

4th from right is Brigadier General Walker

**Can you identify anyone else in the photo for me please?**



Closeup of the photograph on the left

**Are you in this photograph?**



Air Commodore A.H. Cobby with the pipe



Kenneth Walker's honorary membership of the North Eastern Area Headquarters Officers Mess



**Is Group Captain Garing in one of the above photographs?**

**Does anyone know where the  
North Eastern Area Headquarters Officers Mess  
was located?**

**REFERENCE**

"Kenneth N. WALKER"  
"Airpower's Untempered Crusader"  
By Martha Byrd

"The Official World War II Guide to the Army Air Forces AAF"  
by Bonanza Book, New York

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I'd like to thank Douglas Walker, son of General Kenneth Walker for his assistance with the information and photographs which appear on this home page. I'd also like to thank Drew Wesche for his assistance with this home page.

I'd like to thank Paige A. Harris for assistance with this home page and the above photographs. The photos were from Paige's Aunt Marion Overturf. It is believed that Harrison Overturf, who is pictured with Walker, is his cousin.

I'd like to thanks Juliet Reynold's, daughter of Jan Arthur.



Heaps of WW2  
books available at  
Amazon.com

**"Australia @ War"**



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<p style="text-align: center;">Peter Dunn's</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AUSTRALIA @ WAR</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="http://WWW.OZATWAR.COM">WWW.OZATWAR.COM</a></p>		
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