

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lt. Col. Roger Walden

PERSON

Walden, Roger, 1922-2013

Alternative Names: Lt. Col. Roger Walden;

Life Dates: May 21, 1922-September 17, 2013

Place of Birth: Des Moines, Iowa, USA

Residence: Detroit, MI

Occupations: Paratrooper

Biographical Note

Pioneering paratrooper Roger Stanley Walden was born on May 21, 1922 in Des Moines, Iowa. Attending St. Anselm's School in Chicago and Barber Intermediate School, Munger School, and Chadsey Schools in Detroit, Walden graduated from Eastern High School in 1941.

A tool apprentice at Ford at the onset of World War II, Walden enlisted on December 7, 1942. Assigned to the 365th Infantry Regiment, Walden volunteered for the

first black test platoon of 20 paratroopers. At Parachute School in Fort Benning, Georgia, Walden and fifteen others earned their parachute wings as the Sweet Sixteen in February of 1944, becoming the first African American paratroopers in United States military history. Promoted to sergeant in the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion, Walden and his group were transferred to Camp Mackall, North Carolina. Walden received his commission as a second lieutenant of infantry in March of 1945 when he finished Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. After receiving special training to combat Japanese balloon bombs at Camp Pendleton, Oregon, the 555th was soon deployed as Army fire jumpers. Shipped to Gifu, Honshu, Japan in 1949, Walden served as commander of Company A of the 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division of the Far East Command. In 1950, Walden as a captain commanded Company F in Pusan, Korea and he was made a Battalion S4 before being rotated back to the United States. Promoted to Major, Walden served in Europe from 1957 to 1960 with the 3rd Armored Rifle Battalion, 51st Infantry, 4th Armored Group.

Earning his B.A. degree in social studies from San Francisco State University under the Army's Bootstrap Program, Walden was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He taught military science at Central State University until his retirement in 1966. Walden worked as manager of the City of Detroit's Vacant Housing Rehabilitation Program until 1984.

Walden passed away on September 17, 2013.

Related Entries

Eastern High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

St. Anselm's Catholic School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Barbour Magnet Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Munford High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Chadsey High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Barbour Magnet Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Martin Luther King Jr. Sr High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Munger Middle School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

San Francisco State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

City of Detroit [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1938 to 1940]

Mechanics Helper

Ford Motor Company [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1940 to 1942]

Apprentice

United States Army [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1942 to 1966]

Lieutenant Colonel

City of Detroit [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1966 to ?]

Urban Renewal Assistant

555th Parachute Infantry Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member, Bridges-Walden Chapter