

Edwin Walker

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Major General **Edwin Anderson Walker** (November 10, 1909 – October 31, 1993) of the U.S. Army was known for his conservative political views and for being an attempted assassination target of Lee Harvey Oswald.

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Early life and military career

Edwin "Ted" Walker was born in Center Point, Texas and graduated from the New Mexico Military Institute in 1927. He then attended the United States Military Academy, where he graduated in 1931.^[1]

During World War II, Walker commanded a subunit of the Canadian-American First Special Service Force in the invasion of Anzio, Italy in January 1944. In August 1944, Walker succeeded Robert T. Frederick as the unit's commanding officer. The FSSF landed on the Hyeres Islands off of the French Riviera, taking out a strong German garrison.

Walker again saw combat in the Korean War, commanding the Third Infantry Division's Seventh Infantry and was senior advisor to the First Korean Corps. He next became the commander of the Arkansas Military district in Little Rock, Arkansas. During his years in Arkansas, he implemented an order from President Eisenhower in 1957 to quell civil disturbances during the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock.

In 1959, General Walker was sent to Germany to command the 24th Infantry Division. In 1961, however, he became involved in controversy. Walker initiated an anti-communist indoctrination program for troops called "Pro Blue" (due to Free World troops being coloured blue on maps)^[2] and was accused of distributing right-wing literature from the John Birch Society to the soldiers of his division. He was also quoted by a newspaper, the *Overseas Weekly*, as saying that Harry S. Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Dean Acheson were "definitely pink." Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara relieved Walker of his command, while an inquiry was conducted, and in October Walker was reassigned to Hawaii to become assistant chief of staff for training and operations in the Pacific. Instead, Walker

Edwin Anderson Walker

November 10, 1909 – October 31, 1993 (aged 83)



Colonel Edwin A. Walker

Place of birth	Center Point, Texas
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Army
Rank	Major General
Commands held	24th Infantry Division
Battles/wars	World War II Korean War

resigned from the Army on November 2, 1961. Said Walker: "It will be my purpose now, as a civilian, to attempt to do what I have found it no longer possible to do in uniform."^[3]

In February 1962, Walker entered the race for Governor of Texas, but finished last among six candidates in a Democratic primary election that was won in a runoff election by John B. Connally, Jr. Other contenders were the sitting Governor Price Daniel, highway commissioner Marshall Formby of Plainview, Attorney General Will Wilson, and Houston lawyer Don Yarborough, the favorite of liberals and organized labor. After winning the nomination in a close vote over Yarborough, Connally defeated Republican Jack Cox, an oil equipment executive, also from Houston, who ran stronger than past nominees of his party.^[4]

Walker organized protests in September 1962 against the use of federal troops to enforce the enrollment of African-American James Meredith at the racially segregated University of Mississippi. His public statement on September 29:

This is Edwin A. Walker. I am in Mississippi beside Gov. Ross Barnett. I call for a national protest against the conspiracy from within. Rally to the cause of freedom in righteous indignation, violent vocal protest, and bitter silence under the flag of Mississippi at the use of Federal troops. This today is a disgrace to the nation in 'dire peril,' a disgrace beyond the capacity of anyone except its enemies. This is the conspiracy of the crucifixion by anti-Christ conspirators of the Supreme Court in their denial of prayer and their betrayal of a nation.^[5]

After a violent, 15-hour riot broke out on the campus, on September 30, in which two people were killed and six federal marshals were shot, Walker was arrested on four federal charges, including insurrection against the United States. Walker posted bond and returned home to Dallas, where he was greeted by a crowd of 200 supporters.^[6] After a federal grand jury adjourned in January 1963 without indicting him, the charges were dropped. Because the dismissal of the charges was without prejudice, the charges could have been reinstated within five years.^[7]

That same year Bob Jones University invited Walker to speak to its student body.^[8]

Assassination attempt

It was around this time that Walker got Lee Harvey Oswald's attention. Oswald, a self-proclaimed Marxist,^[9] considered Walker a "fascist" and the leader of a "fascist organization."^[10] A front page story on Walker in the October 7, 1962, issue of the *Worker*, a Communist Party newspaper to which Oswald subscribed, warned "the Kennedy administration and the American people of the need for action against [Walker] and his allies." On October 8, Oswald quit his job and moved to Dallas, with no explanation. Five days after the front page news on January 22, 1963 that Walker's federal charges had been dropped,^[11] Oswald ordered a revolver by mail, using the alias "A.J. Hidell."^[12]

In February 1963, Walker was making news by joining forces with evangelist Billy James Hargis in an anti-communist tour called "Operation Midnight Ride".^[13] In a speech Walker made on March 5, reported in the *Dallas Times Herald*, he called on the United States military to "liquidate the scourge that has descended upon the island of Cuba."^[14] Seven days later, Oswald ordered by mail a Carcano rifle, using the alias "A. Hidell."^[15]

Oswald began to put Walker under surveillance, taking pictures of Walker's Dallas home on the weekend of March 9–10.^[16] He planned the assassination for April 10, ten days after he was fired from

*Marcia
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the photography firm where he worked. He told his wife later that he chose a Wednesday evening because the neighborhood would be relatively crowded because of services in a church adjacent to Walker's home; he would not stand out and could mingle with the crowds if necessary to make his escape. He left a note in Russian for his wife Marina with instructions should he be caught.^[17] Walker was sitting at a desk in his dining room when Oswald fired at him from less than a hundred feet (30 m) away. Walker survived only because the bullet struck the wooden frame of the window, which deflected its path. However, he was injured in the forearm by fragments.

At the time, authorities had no idea who attempted to kill Walker. A police detective, D.E. McElroy, commented that "Whoever shot at the general was playing for keeps. The sniper wasn't trying to scare him. He was shooting to kill."

Marina Oswald stated later that she had seen Oswald burn most of his plans in the bathtub, though she hid the note he left her in a cookbook, with the intention of bringing it to the police should Oswald again attempt to kill Walker or anyone else. Marina later quoted her husband as saying, "Well, what would you say if somebody got rid of Hitler at the right time? So if you don't know about General Walker, how can you speak up on his behalf?"^[18] Oswald's involvement in the attempt on Walker's life was suspected within hours of his arrest on November 22, 1963, following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.^[19] But police thought that they had no evidence of Oswald's involvement in the Walker attempt, until early December 1963, when the note was found and turned over to authorities, at which time Marina Oswald confessed what she knew of the Walker shooting.^{[20][21]} The bullet was too badly damaged to run conclusive ballistics tests, but neutron activation tests later determined that it was "extremely likely" the bullet was a Carcano bullet manufactured by the Western Cartridge Company, the same ammunition used in the Kennedy assassination.^[22]

Oswald later wrote to Arnold Johnson of the Communist Party, U.S.A., that on the evening of October 23, 1963 he had attended an "ultra right" meeting headed by Gen. Edwin A. Walker.^[23]

Associated Press v. Walker

Angered by negative publicity he was receiving for his conservative political views, Walker began to file libel lawsuits against various media outlets. One of these suits was in response to coverage of his participation in the University of Mississippi riot, specifically that he had "led a charge of students against federal marshals" and that he had "assumed command of the crowd."^[24] A Texas trial court in 1964 found the statements false and defamatory.^[25] The decision was appealed, as *Associated Press v. Walker*, all the way to the United States Supreme Court,^[26] but the Court ruled against Walker and found that although the statements may have been false, the Associated Press was not guilty of reckless disregard in their reporting about Walker. The Court, which had previously said that public officials could not recover damages unless they could prove actual malice, extended this to public figures as well.

Later life

By resigning instead of retiring, Walker was unable to draw a pension from the Army. He made statements at the time to the *Dallas Morning News* that he had "refused" to take his pension. The Army restored his pension rights in 1982. He had made several previous requests for his pension dating back to 1973.^[27]

*to be used
to report
Oswald
check
him
source*