



MILITARY EVANGELISM

THE MILITARY FELLOWSHIP CENTER

DAVE MASON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

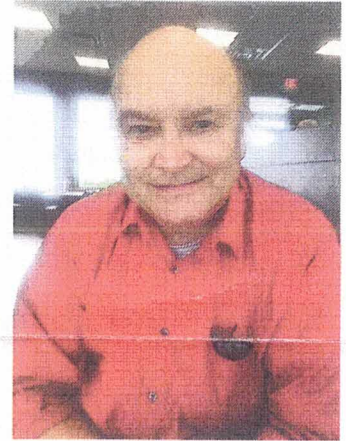
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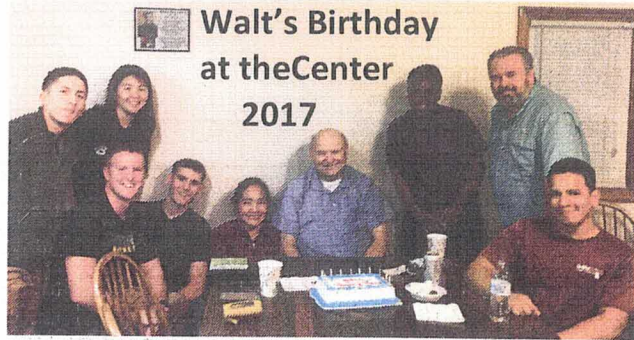
I had a Chapel Bulletin for Camp Johnson to finish, and I needed to study for the Bible Study at the Center. I needed to start building out the body of three articles that have been on my heart to write for some time now.

All of that need screamed to a halt when I opened my Facebook and found that my predecessor at Military Evangelism, Walt Croom, passed into eternity on Tuesday, May 17. I couldn't seem to concentrate on the job at hand. And that's ok. I got to the work a little later. But I needed to write this.

I met Walt on a Tuesday evening in the fall of 1997 when I was a student in the Bible Institute at Emmorton Baptist Church in Bel Air, MD. He came to teach a class in Biblical Counseling and we struck up a conversation afterward. Just an hour after meeting me Walt invited me to come out to the Center in Aberdeen on Saturday and preach for him. That was the first time I stood behind a pulpit, preached the Gospel, and people got saved.



**Walt's Birthday
at the Center
2017**



Walt and I became friends quickly and we would often meet for lunch and he would give me books from his personal collection and from the small bookstore he ran at the Aberdeen Center to support the ministry. Once I was at the Bookstore when he wasn't there. I found a four volume first edition set of Spurgeon Sermon notes from 1891. There was no price on the books and as I was looking Walt walked into the store. He saw me looking at the set and sighed. These were not supposed to be out here. He was saving them for himself. But since I saw them, and obviously wanted them, he let me have them.

In 2007 Walt asked me to sit on the board of directors for Military Evangelism. Walt would drive up from North Carolina, meet me at a rest area on I-95 and we would make the two hour drive to Limerick Chapel in his vehicle. It was these drives that solidified Walt's place as a mentor in my life. We laughed a lot, argued a lot, and agreed a lot about life, doctrine, church polity, missions and more.

About 10 years ago Walt wrote a book called "Exceptional Americans" He asked me to draw portraits of the people he was writing about. George Washington Carver, J.C. Penny, Harriet Beecher Stowe and others. Although I did it as a favor to a friend, he insisted on paying me.

In 2015 Walt announced his imminent retirement and I was chosen as his successor. Walt helped us through the early days, staying on at the mission part time for a while. In 2017 he left Military Evangelism and he returned to his counseling activities while Patty and I ministered at the Center in Jacksonville, NC and saw God grow and bless it.

Walt and I didn't talk much these last few years. He was busy, I was busy, it's a familiar story. I called him when past board members and others from the Ministry's long history went on to Glory. I found out he had a pretty bad battle with COVID and we talked after his recovery a few years ago. The last time we talked was just four weeks ago. We caught up on life. I told him about all my grandchildren, how God is moving at the Center and at Camp Johnson. He told me about his plans to keep publishing books. We promised to get together in May to have lunch and to give him a tour of the new addition to the Center. We won't get to that lunch now. But I'm sure he's reserving a lunch table in Heaven when we meet again.

We thank God for the countless lives that were changed by the Gospel as Walt ministered at Military Evangelism for over 37 years. Walt's Funeral is on Wednesday May 24 here in Jacksonville. Please be in prayer for his family and for all those he touched through his decades of service.

DAVE MASON
Rom 1:16