

Aerospace engineer Tom Waller dies

By Lou Simpson
FLORIDA TODAY

SATELLITE BEACH — Thomas S. "Tom" Waller, an aerospace engineer and aviation history buff, died Tuesday, Jan. 2, at home.

Mr. Waller, 53, was born and raised in Pensacola. He attended Pensacola Junior College for two years and was a participant in the Aviation Cadet Program, which was sponsored by the Air Force at that time. A pilot, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, later attaining the rank of captain. He eventually was sent to Vietnam.

During a notable career in which he flew more than 100 combat missions, Capt. Waller earned the Distinguished Flying Cross

with one oak leaf cluster, Air Medal with 10 oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with four oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars, Air Force Presidential Unit Citation, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with one oak leaf cluster, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Air Force Good Conduct Medal with one oak leaf cluster.

Capt. Waller came to Brevard County in 1983 from Clovis, N.M., after retiring from the Air Force with 20 years of service.

He went to work for Pan American World Services for a short time, then accepted a job with McDonnell Douglas after Pan Am lost its contract, said his wife, Linda Waller of Satellite Beach.

"He worked for McDonnell Douglas for seven years, and in December accepted a position with Trident Data Systems," Mrs. Waller added.

He was a member of First Baptist Church of Melbourne and enjoyed reading. He also was a military aircraft historian.

"He loved aviation," Mrs. Waller said. "He had millions of books and slides about all kinds of aircrafts, and he knew the history well."

"He was a kind, generous,

thoughtful man," she added.

Other survivors include his sons, Michael Waller of Birmingham, Ala., and Robert Waller with a mission in Kenya, Africa; daughter, Jennifer Blumberg of Melbourne; sister, Frances Skaggs of Pensacola; and four grandchildren.

No calling hours are scheduled. Memorial services will be 11 a.m. Saturday at First Baptist Church of Melbourne. Graveside services will be at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. Davis Funeral Home in Melbourne is in charge of arrangements.

Donations may be made to First Baptist Church of Melbourne for the Robert Waller Missionary Fund, P.O. Box 366, Melbourne, FL 32902.