

Good morning. Congressman Smith, Mayor Walsifer, District Manager Drummer, Postmaster Mutchler, family and friends. I am Marsha *McAfee* Bera-Morris, the younger (or second) daughter of Walter Samuel and Viola Winston McAfee.

On behalf of the entire McAfee family, I would like to thank Congressman Smith and his staff and “the leaders of the Information Age Learning Center (or InfoAge)” for their efforts and persistence in the honoring of our father/brother/uncle/granduncle/etc. by renaming the Belmar Post Office as the “Dr. Walter S. McAfee Post Office Building.” We all greatly appreciate this honor and the opportunity that this renaming ceremony affords us to celebrate his memory and share our thoughts about his lifelong effort to contribute to science and its service to the nation.

My father was deeply interested in education throughout his entire lifetime. He taught briefly at a Champion Junior High School in Columbus, Ohio. He even taught part-time at a couple of New Jersey colleges, including Monmouth College, while employed by the Army.

I would like to share with you just a bit of my personal perspective on his love of astrophysics. I can remember him waking me up, along with my sister Diane - - at our request [a request that he probably encouraged]- - to see meteor showers or lunar eclipses. Space physics was one of his true loves. The summer I turned 12, a significant age for air fares, the 4 of us traveled to Europe. Three (3) of us were on vacation; he was doing research on what, I think, were large radar installations.

At home, he would often help with homework. But he would never seem to just answer a question. Rather, *he* would ask questions, backtracking until he found

something that I or my sister Diane had mastered. He would then bring us forward to the subject matter about which we had inquired. Sometimes this was interesting; more often, it was quite exasperating. But he instilled in his two daughters a desire to master their selected fields of endeavor. And finally, it was almost impossible to argue with my father; logic and reason had to govern any discussion.

About 15 years ago, I got my hands on a copy of a speech my father had given. His speech concerned his own education and the almost unbelievable hardships he had endured and against which he had struggled. My father was born in 1914 in Ore City, Texas. One of nine children to survive beyond age five (5), he grew up in Marshall, Texas. His parents were both educated and “had strong middle-class values.” All but one of his siblings earned college degrees. He pointed out in his speech that his parents owned a parcel of land. If they had been sharecroppers, then he might not have continued his education, since, in those days, the landowner could “determine the fate” of a sharecropper’s children in the educational sphere.

My father graduated from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, with a bachelors (B.S.) in mathematics, magna cum laude. I think all or most of his siblings also attended Wiley. Second oldest, he assisted with the expenses of some of his younger siblings. He earned an M.S. in Physics from Ohio State University and a Ph.D. in Physics from Cornell University (under Hans Bethe). It is from his speech that I gather that his most trying time was at Ohio State. Black people were not allowed to be teaching assistants at Ohio State at that time, nor could they stay in the dormitories on campus. At times, my father was working three or four jobs simultaneously to cover the cost of tuition and housing and educational expenses. His department chairman actively discouraged pursuit of a Ph.D. and, according to

my father, hollered at him for not taking an Industrial Arts course. He was, after all, only going to be able to go back South to teach in a black school.

Walter McAfee persevered. His family background, his stay at Wiley, his continued communication with one or more of his teachers from Wiley, plus his own awareness of what he had mastered seem to me to be the chief support for this perseverance. My father maintained a lifelong correspondence with his first physics teacher, Professor McCane of Wiley College, and, so far as I can tell, relied heavily on his advice and support while at Ohio State.

In his own speech, my father stressed two things: (1) mastery of your subject matter; and (2) perseverance. Before he went on to Cornell University, but after he left Ohio State, my father worked his way through several physics books. He was determined to master the subject matter whether or not his dream of a Ph.D. was achieved.

My father went to work as a civilian employee of the Army in 1942 or so. He retired in 1985. He died in February of 1995. He is best known, I guess, for his mathematical calculations for Project Diana, which involved bouncing radar off the moon. This success has been said to mark the beginning of the Space Age. As you can see, he had a l-o-n-g career with the Army. I will not try to summarize that career. For one thing, while he could and would talk about physics in general, he couldn't and didn't talk about most of the specifics of his job. I do know that, late in his career with the Army, he did some traveling to NATO, and once he mentioned "night vision."

In the 1950s, my father was recognized by President Eisenhower for his work on Project Diana. In 1997, about two and a half years after my father's death, the Army named a building, actually a complex of buildings, "McAfee Center." McAfee Center was located at Fort Monmouth, N.J., and, we are told, the designation was a first at Fort Monmouth for a *civilian* employee of the Army. After the Fort was scheduled for closure, a cluster of buildings at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland, was named in his honor.

Still, to have his name here in this Post Office, a central *public* building, in the place he called home, raised his family, honed his scientific skills and contributed to major space exploration - - this moment provides a singular pride and satisfaction for so many of his family and friends and colleagues.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.