

Bill Walker



August 4, 2025

Honorable Mayor Fleming and City Council Members

I recently had the honor of giving the eulogy for a man who demonstrated time and again his love for Valdez, Ryan J. Sontag. In preparation for delivering Ryan's eulogy, I learned much from the Sontag family about Ryan, even though I first met Ryan in 1961.

Born in Valdez, he had the distinction of living in Dayville, the Old Town and the New Town of Valdez. Having attended school in Dayville and then in Valdez, Ryan spent every year of his adult life in Valdez up until the need for closer proximity to additional medical services, he and his wife Sue moved to Anchorage.

Following Ryan's service to our country in the Navy in Vietnam, Ryan returned home to Valdez and never left.

What is most telling of his commitment to Valdez is that after the devastating 1964 earthquake, while we saw many families leave Valdez never to return, not the Sontags. He lost two uncles on the dock during the quake. Ryan, working alongside his dad Herman Sontag, working with the Army Corps of Engineers, built a desperately needed temporary dock in Old Town post-quake. With our entire waterfront wiped out, that temporary dock was a lifesaver.

During the TAPS construction, Ryan worked long hours on the dock to help unload approximately 500 miles of 48" pipe. He also worked as a tug boat captain for many years.

In 1980, Ryan went to work for North Star Terminal & Stevedore Company, where he remained until his retirement 30 years later.

Ryan's work at the Valdez Container Terminal during the Exxon Valdez oil spill cleanup operations was nothing short of amazing. The pressure put on the Valdez Container Terminal was unprecedented and Ryan handled it masterfully.

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Ryan served his community as a longstanding member of the Transportation Commission and on the City Council.

It is with this backdrop of a great man who devoted his life to serving Valdez and worked in every capacity on the docks in Valdez, that I request that you consider renaming the Valdez Container Terminal the Ryan J. Sontag Dock.

I also wanted to thank each of you for your role in guiding Valdez as elected officials. Valdez is a better community because of your stepping forward to serve this place we all love.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bill Walker".

Bill Walker
11th Governor of Alaska

CC: Valdez City Manager Nathan Duval
Valdez City Clerk Sheri Pierce
Port Director Jeremy Talbott
Ports and Harbor Commission