

Ralph William Schneider was born on June 7, 1926 to William and Louise (Wickboldt) Schneider in the small German-American community at Ash Grove Township, Iroquois County, Illinois. His father, William, taught at the Lutheran parochial school. In 1942 the family moved to Detroit, where William had taken a job in a defense plant. Ralph graduated from Western High School in June 1944. He turned down a chance to play professional baseball with the Brooklyn Dodgers and, instead, was sworn into the US Army on August 21.

In his memoirs "My War Years" Ralph recounts his military and personal experiences (<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~bbertram/Ralph'sBookFinal.pdf>). After training at Camp Wheeler, followed by an abbreviated Christmas home leave, he and other replacements were transported by passenger ship, box car, and truck to the front at Bastogne. Ralph was assigned to 90th Infantry Division, Third Army. Because he could speak some German, Ralph became an unofficial interpreter and was usually assigned to a patrol or first scout position. His memoirs recall Patton's Army crossing the Rhine and other rivers, and fighting from village to village during the Battle of the Bulge, the Rhineland Campaign, and the Central Europe Campaign. Ralph was shot in the right hip while in the process of capturing two Germans in one village. One of his prisoners, a German medic, administered first aid while both were under fire. Ralph's front line action began in January and ended abruptly in March, 1945. He was transported to the rear, then to England where the bullet was removed, and eventually to several hospitals in the US. He was officially discharged on October 12, 1945. For his service Ralph was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, the Good Conduct Medal, and the Victory Medal.

As part of the Army's continuing rehabilitation program, Ralph enrolled at Michigan State College in January 1946 and completed a Degree in Business in June 1949. He became a specialist in the acquisition and production of military vehicles and had a key role in the development of the Hummer. Approximately 90% of all tactical wheeled vehicles used in Viet Nam were built under his administration of government contracts for A M General Corporation in Toledo and South Bend. He retired from A M General in 1983 as Vice President of Government Contracts.

Ralph married Marilyn Jean McCullough (March 14, 1930 – September 30, 1980) on October 28, 1950. Their children were Steven (September 14, 1951), Debra (April 19, 1954), and Carol (May 29, 1956). There are four grandchildren. Later, Ralph married Virginia Van Dyke (September 16, 1919 – January 16, 2003) on July 2, 1977.