



Chester McKee

November 7, 1942 - March 19, 2008

Chester McKee was born in 1942 in East Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, to working-class parents of Irish and Slovak origin. Vandergrift, a small community with a high immigrant population, was sustained by the local steel mill. Chester's father worked at the steel mill while his mother cleaned houses to help support the family. Neither one had a high school education. As an adolescent, Chester, like his father, worked at the local foundry during the summers. Meanwhile, his interest in science and philosophy took root. One of his more famous projects at that time was a medium-sized fan-boat with a five-foot propeller and an old gas engine. With this boat, designed and built with his friends, Chester explored the large Kiskiminetas River next to his house. This and other projects showed his early interest in working with people, his entrepreneurial resourcefulness and his ability to take on complex tasks without hesitation. Upon graduating from high school, he decided to attend Duquesne University in nearby Pittsburgh where he studied Chemistry and Physics and where he met his future wife, Carol Santoro. Shortly after graduating with a bachelor's degree in Physics, he and Carol moved to New Mexico where he finished his PhD in Astrophysics and did some of the first work in the simulation of supernovae explosions with the early computers of the time. As a result of this work, he is still cited in current books as one of the pioneers in the field. It was during this period that he started his first company with several colleagues and that he and Carol began a family and raised four children. After obtaining his PhD in 1973, the family moved to California where Chester began a research position at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. But his dream of creating another company continued, and shortly thereafter in 1976, he and the family moved to Laramie, Wyoming, where he taught part-time at the University of Wyoming and started In-Situ Inc. in the basement of the family home. In-Situ Inc. soon grew to 60 employees, specializing in the design, manufacture, and worldwide sales of scientific equipment for the environmental and water-monitoring markets, and continues to prosper today. Always interested in a wide variety of subjects including philosophy, history, religion, the environment, and writing, Chester was in the process of starting work on his latest book, about the dangers of global warming, in 1997 when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Not to be deterred by the diagnosis and determined to overcome this hurdle, he threw himself into the research and study of the disease with a fervor that

amazed his family and friends. Throughout this time, he continued to maintain his positive, can-do attitude, making new friends, helping the community through his local church, delivering a lecture on the existence of God, keeping current with the scientific literature on his condition and continuing research on his book. Even during this period, 20 years after he held a teaching position at a university, former students contacted him to express their gratitude for having made a positive impact on their lives. Chester epitomized in many ways the American dream. He was a self-made man who came from a humble background and achieved success in many areas through his talent and hard work. He will be remembered most of all for his enthusiasm for life and belief that he should help make the world a better place. His ideals, life's work, and his actions will continue to inspire people that he touched now that he has left us. Chester is survived by Carol and his four children, Christopher, Craig, Colleen, and Angela, his mother, Rose, his sister, Sandy Ahlquist, as well as his two grandchildren, Liza and Isaiah. A Funeral Mass will be held at 10:00am on Saturday, March 29th at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in East Vandergrift, Pennsylvania. Viewing and parting prayers will be held beforehand at the church from 9:00-10:00am. The family requests that any memorial donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association (for research) in care of Goes Funeral Care, 3665 Canal Drive, Fort Collins, Colorado 80524.

Comments



“ CHESTER WAS MY ROOM MATE WHILE AT DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY,,
ONLY ONCE IN A LIFE TIME WILL SOMEONE LIKE CHET TOUCH YOUR LIFE

TALL,, ALWAYS QUIET,, GIVING,, CONSIDERATE,, PHILOSOPICAL,, FAIR,,
CARING

ONLY ONCE DID I SEE CHET GET ANGRY WITH SOMEONE,, AND ALL HE SAID

WITH A BRIGHT RED FACE IS ,,,, DONT DO THAT AGAIN

ONCE WE WERE STUDYING ON A WEEKEND IN THE FALL,, CHET SAID,,
LOU,,

LETS GO FLY A PLANE,, I SAID WHERE DO WE GET THE PLANE

WELL,, WE WENT DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH TO A HOBBY STORE,, BOUGHT

THE PARTS,, IN FOUR HOURS WE WERE OUT IN SCHENLEY PARK FLYING

AN AIRPLANE,, THAT IS CHET ,, LOL

I CAN WRITE A BOOK ABOUT CHET,, ALL GOOD,,

IF THE WORLD HAD MORE CHESTERS,, IT WOULD BE A WONDERFUL
WORLD

FOREVER IN MY THOUGHTS,,

LOU KORPICS

LOUIS KORPICS - October 11 at 11:24 AM



“ Chester will always be remembered in Laramie as a good man that cared

Ron Glaser - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ I knew Chester as an innovator and wonderful man from In-Situ but after reading his obituary I never realized that he was born and raised just a few miles up the Kiski river from me. The stories about Vandergrift got me choking. My warmest regards and deep sympathies to Chester's family.



“ Chester was my life long friend. We were best friends through grade school, high school, college and beyond. We spent many hours together doing chemistry experiments, playing basketball, double dating, talking and solving world problems, and doing all the things which good friends do.

Chester was kind, considerate, and a truly a manifestation of the American dream. He was a good man and we will all miss him and that fabulous grin.

God bless you "Chet".

Your good friend,

Rich

Richard Zanewicz - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ May God's peace be with all of you during this time of sorrow. Chester brought such dignity to his terrible vulnerability.

Mary E Halpin - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Chester was a good friend and a great individual.

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Luisi - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ I enjoyed working with Chet at the University. He was such a kind person. My heartfelt condolences to the family.

C. Ardell Jarratt - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Carol and family. We are so sorry to hear of the loss of Chester. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. He led a great life and you were the most beloved part of that life.

Juanita and Antone Novak - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ I have enjoyed Chester's wit for almost 30 years. In 1998, while representing a client who had worked for In Situ, I discovered that Chester McKee was a man who really lived his convictions and values. He lived his tragic illness with the same sense of humor, dignity, and morality with which he lived his life -- even when he made choices which, because of his illness, were sometimes challenging for his family, those choices sprang from his love of life and the people he cared about. To Angela, whom I have known all her life, I grieve for you and your family at his death, but I also know that the indignity of having his choices taken from him by his illness is now at an end.

Love, Maribeth

Maribeth Galvan - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ WE KNOW HOW DIFFICULT CHESTER'S ILLNESS HAS BEEN ON HIS FAMILY AND ADMIRE THE MANOR IN WHICH HE HAS LIVED AND THEY WITH HIM DURING THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. CHESTER WAS A GREAT ADDITION TO THE TOWN OF LARAMIE; HIS COMPANY PROVIDING MANY JOBS AND PUTTING LARAMIE ON THE MAP FOR THE OUTSTANDING WORK THE COMPANY DID. THE FAMILY HAS OUR SYMPATHY AND PLEASER KNOW WE WILL NEVER FORGET CHESTER OR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS COMMUNITY AND ELSEWHERE. TAKE CARE. DIANNE AND DICK VAN PELT

Dianne & Dick Van Pelt - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ My condolences to the entire McKee family.

mickey patterson - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Carol,
Please accept my deepest sympathy. I loved Chester and have often thought of both of you through the years. I will never forget your kindness to me when Roger died. I can't be there for you but please know you are in my prayers.
My mom also has Alzheimer's. She has been living with me for the past three years so I understand a lot of what you have experienced. The Blessing is that Chester is in Heaven now.

Love,
Carmen

Carmen Lewis - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Dear Carol and family,
I was so sorry to read of Chester's death. He was an brilliant man who put up a gallant fight. I will always be in awe of him. Please know you are in my heart and prayers at this difficult time. God bless you all.

Karen Stapp

Karen Stapp - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. My thoughts and prayers are with each of you.

Reneta Bird-Santoro - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Carol and Family,
I was truly saddened to hear of Chester's passing. He left a great impression on me for his love of this world. My work at In-Situ gave me an opportunity to expand my interests by his example and support. I will always be grateful for that. My prayers go out to you and your family for the Lord's comfort and support. He will be missed. It was really a privelege for me to have been a friend. Gob bless you.

Steve Banks - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ To Chester's family,
Our thoughts are with you as this brilliant, warm, and giving man finds his peace. Because of Chester' business spirit, he taught many how to find success and learn the joy of giving back. Please count us among the many who have you in their hearts and who will remember Chester always.

Pennie and Gary Espeland - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Having dealt with Chester professionally (as In-Situ was getting going) as well as personally over many years of active participation in Laramie's Newman Center parish, I grew to care deeply for him and to respect him immensely. Chetâ??s decline from the Alzheimerâ??s was such a tragic thing to witness. However, his character in the face of this decline was truly awe-inspiring. May the good and gracious Lord have a special place for Chet at His eternal table. My heartfelt condolences and best wishes to his family and friends.



“ I can't find the suitable word of comfort. I have never met Mr. Chester, but I can feel his kindness through Mr. Craig, his second son who is one of best friend and business partner.
Owing to his good activities for many peoples, God will care him and he will stay with God forever.

God bless Mr. Chester

Tim & Robyne Arata - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Our Deepest condolences to Chester McKee

Subchan Eko - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ My heartfelt regards to Colleen and all the McKee family. Last summer I was driving across the country when my car broke down in Fort Collins and I was waylaid there for two days. I fell in love with Fort Collins then, and during some idle web surfing just now I checked in with the Coloradoan.com to see how life in the town is going. Is it a coincidence that I should be checking up on the town on a day when your father's obituary appeared there? It's been a long time, but not so long a time that I can't deeply sympathize with you and your family, for I have lost my parents too, and there is no other pain like it. I met your father only one time, but my memory of him is clear. He has obviously touched many lives and left this world a better place for his presence in it. In my own moments of grief, I've found the outpouring of sympathy from friends to be very comforting. I hope you will too, even if that sympathy comes from someone you knew long ago.

Sterling Kinnell - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ My deepest sympathy to the McKee family that I respect and remember as a kid growing up in EV. Also my sincere sympathy to Sandy. Lots of great memories. Lou

Lou Gurecka - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Dear McKees,

We are sorry to learn about the passing of a great man from our time, Mr Chester McKee.

Our deepest condolences to you and your loved ones at this difficult time of loss.

Yours sincerely,

The Management & Staff of Elcee

Elcee Instrumentation & Services - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Dearest Carol and family,
With my deepest and most heartfelt sympathy. God's peace be with you.
Much love and prayers.
Charlotte Barela

Charlotte Barela - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ I am honored to have known and worked with Chester. My sincerest condolences to his family.

Zachary Gray - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family, Carol. You and your family have taught us all what love and caring is about.

Margie Reis & Tom Raines - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ I was one of Chet's project managers when ISI did research for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on groundwater flow and transport in saturated fractured rocks as part of our radioactive waste research program. I visited Chet and his colleagues at ISI and spent time with him in Laramie and Maryland. He struck me as as extraordinarily kind and generous man, as well as an outstanding scientist.

I offer my condolences to the McKee family.

John Randall - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ My family and I wish all of the McKee family the best and have our heart felt sympathy and condolences for your loss.

Art Toews - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Dear Carol, Christopher, Colleen, Craig and Angela,

To tell you that I think about you today and will pray for Chester and your family in this very sad moment. I spent in Wyoming one of the nicest year of my life and I will always remember my discussions with Chester and all the good moments I have had with all of you. I send you a lot of love.

Sincerely,

Olivier

Olivier POIX - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Although I never met Chester, I know his family, especially his beautiful, loving and caring daughter, Colleen. As Colleen's father-in-law I have seen the beautiful family Chester and Carol created together. What a talented and creative man Chester was. But his real beauty is in the brilliant, loving and talented children he fathered. Even those of us that did not know him will surely miss him.

Tom Parks

Tom Parks - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM



“ Chester amazed, challenged, and delighted us with his intelligence and his appreciation of humanity. I fondly remember the weekly Sunday discussions at the Newman Center in Laramie where he would question and encourage thought. I keep him and his family in my prayers.

Sandy Clark

Sandra Clark - March 19, 2008 at 12:00 AM