



Charles Herbert Zilch

NOV 15, 1928 - OCT 17, 2021



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Commander Charles Herbert Zilch, US Navy (Ret.)
11/15/1928 - 10/17/2021

CDR Charles (Chuck) Zilch, aged 92 years old, passed away on October 17, 2021. Chuck lived his life always demonstrating his love and devotion to his family, friends, country, duty and service to others.

Chuck was preceded in death by his parents, sisters Susan and Barbara, brother Don & his wife Patricia, and his beloved niece Jennifer. He departed this world in the company of Lyn, his wife of nearly 66 years, and surrounded by many members of his family at Spectrum Health Butterworth Hospital in Grand Rapids. He simply lost his battle with time.

Chuck was the oldest child of Herbert & Margaret (Steele) Zilch, born in Johnstown, PA. He graduated from Taylor Township High School (Hustontown, PA) in 1946, Lycoming College (Williamsport, PA) in 1948, received his Bachelor of Arts (History) from Michigan State College in June 1954, Bachelor of Science (Meteorology) from the US Navy Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA in 1961 and his Master of Arts (Education) from Central Michigan University in December 1976. He also earned certifications in Aviation Mechanics, Automotive Mechanics and truck driving.

Aviation was Chuck's lifelong passion. Chuck enlisted in the U.S. Navy as one of less than 3,000 Americans chosen to become a Naval Aviator through the "Flying Midshipmen" program in the late 1940's, earning his Navy Aviator wings in February 1950, and was commissioned as an Ensign in June, 1950. While serving in the Korean war, Chuck became a Patrol Plane Commander flying countless combat missions from US Navy aircraft carriers. In fact, Chuck flew over 45 different kinds of aircraft during his Naval career, everything from multi-engine seaplanes to low level attack jets.



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Chuck left the Navy to finish his education under the terms of the "Flying Midshipmen" program. It was at Michigan State University (then Michigan State College) that he met his future wife, Lyn. He and a MSU pal were trying to get into the premier of the movie "Shane". Because the movie was popular, only couples were being allowed in. So, they hit on the brilliant idea of asking a few passing girls to sit with them. Chuck pled his case to the lovely young Lyn Cole who 2 years later would become his bride. Shortly after getting married, the couple decided that Chuck needed to follow his heart and return to Naval Aviation.

Chuck went on to have many interesting Navy assignments. Some of the more notable included duty aboard USS Randolph (CVS-15) where he was responsible for all fleet weather forecasting duties during the recovery portion of John Glenn's "Friendship 7" mission. Chuck also served 3 tours in Antarctica as Commander of "Operation Deep Freeze" and had the honor of having a section of cliffs there named "Zilch Cliffs". Subsequently he commanded the Fleet Weather Facility in Keflavik, Iceland. He completed his Navy career as the Executive Officer for the Meteorology section for the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet.

Chuck & Lyn retired from the Navy in July 1971. The family moved to his beloved "Flying Z" farm in Stanton. Over the years the family raised Morgan horses and Hereford cattle, while he held a wide variety of post-Navy "jobs": Gentleman farmer, commercial pilot, real estate agent and dispatcher at the Montcalm County Sheriff's office. He taught for a number of years for the Carson City schools and even served as a police officer for the Village of Edmore.

An avid volunteer, Chuck was a 32nd degree Mason and Shriner spending many happy years with his Masonic brothers. He served multiple terms as both a Worshipful Master and Worthy Patron. He was also involved in Order of the Eastern Star, the Boy Scouts of America, Civil Air Patrol, Montcalm County Sheriff's Posse, Kentucky Colonels, American Red Cross, National Rifle Association, life member of the Sheridan VFW Post, the Stanton American Legion, the Fleet Reserve Association, the Military Officers Association of America, the Army/Navy Club, Disabled American Veterans and many others.

He was honored to serve in a wide variety of leadership positions for these organizations, from Chaplain to Commander. Chuck also served countless hours as a Veterans Service Officer, deriving a great deal of satisfaction helping fellow veterans get their earned benefits. An active member of both the VFW and American Legion's Color Guard, he participated in countless parades, funerals and other ceremonies, and also served a number of terms as a representative to



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the state of Michigan's Veteran's Trust Fund, which provides emergency grants to Michigan veterans and dependent family members in need.

These various organizations honored Chuck with many awards over the years. The Boy Scouts of America awarded him both the prestigious Silver Beaver Award and the District Award of Merit. As the Commanding Officer of the Alma squadron of the Civil Air Patrol he flew many search and rescue missions over the years, and as a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association Chuck flew over 500 kids in their Young Eagles program, giving many of those kids their first experience in flying in an airplane.

Finally, it should be noted that Chuck was an avid sportsman. He loved to go fishing and hunting with his friends and family. Deer season was always a major event at the Flying Z Farm, in part because Michigan's annual November 15th opening day fell on his birthday, and he managed to bag his fair share of the "big bucks" over the years. But it was just as important to him to share his love of the outdoors and the natural beauty of the farm with his kids, grandchildren and close family & friends. In his later years, he spent many a contented hour with a cold beer or a cup of coffee, the game on TV, his wife nearby and one of his beloved dogs at his side all while taking a nap in his favorite armchair.

A good, hard working, well-meaning and God-fearing man, Chuck will be deeply missed by his wife of almost 66 years, Carolyn (Lyn); his daughters Cheryl (Rockford, MI), Cathee (Chesapeake, VA), Karen (Highland, CA) and son Rob (Lake Villa, IL); sons-in-law Tom, Bernie & Dennis; his grandchildren Vivian, Adam, David, Michael and Katie; and his brother William & his wife Carmen and their family.

Family visitation will be held at the Sheridan VFW (209 Washington St, Sheridan MI 48884) on Saturday, November 20th from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm and a Celebration of Life Ceremony and Reception will be held on Sunday November 21st beginning at 2:30 pm, also at the Sheridan VFW. His ashes will be interred in the McBride, MI cemetery.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, contributions be made in memory of Chuck to the Shriners Hospital for Children, the Boy Scouts of America or your favorite veterans' organization.



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RW

Richard G. Wheeler posted:

I became acquainted with Chuck through his Masonic affiliations. He and I often talked about how to make the Fraternity better and more attractive to young men. Chuck was a good man and an excellent Mason, a credit to the Fraternity. My heartfelt sympathies to Lyn. and the Family. "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the Joy of Thy Lord". Richard G. Wheeler, P.M. Trufant Lodge #456.

November 19 at 8:00 PM

EW

Elizabeth Meader Wennberg posted:

Cdr. Chuck will always be in our hearts and memories. A dear friend.

October 25 at 8:00 PM

LW

Liz Yamamoto-Wennberg posted:

Dear friends for 60 years! Chuck and Alan were both Navy pilots. Met Lyn at San Diego State as Navy wives. Serendipitously, found a rental house across the street from the Zilches in Norfolk, VA and shared baby sitting, hurricanes and Navy life. Robbie Alan is named after Alan Meader. Friends forever!

October 24 at 8:00 PM

KB

Kathy Beach posted:

Dear Lyn and family, Our family enjoyed spending time with Chuck at game nights at church or Bible studies with Jim. Mitchell spent many hours at deer camp and helping Lyn and Chuck at the farm. Jonathan helped feed the horses a couple of times. And oh the stories that man could tell. My favorite memory will always be how he folded Jims flag at his funeral and gave it me. I felt so honored that he did that. He will be missed.

October 24 at 8:00 PM



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JC

John Takao Collier posted:

I knew Chuck's daughters from high school so I only had a chance to personally meet Chuck a handful of times, but that was enough to leave a lasting impression on me. He told me about flying jets, and once, while trying to land on an aircraft carrier, he had to ditch the plane in the ocean. He spent time in Antarctica. I just learned from his obituary that he was stationed in Iceland. To a teenager living in the farmlands of Montcalm County, Chuck was like some character in an adventure novel who just matter-of-factly stepped off the page. The few times that I visited the "Flying Z" farm, he and his wife Lyn were always kind and gracious. I seem to remember lots of book shelves; the fact that they had not one, but TWO, sets of encyclopedias impressed the heck out of me. This was obviously a family who valued knowledge and learning. It took me a couple more decades before I had 2 sets of encyclopedias under my roof (sadly, I tend to use Wikipedia a lot more nowadays, but that's how things go...). Over his 92 years on Earth, Chuck has touched the lives of many people; I am one of them. John Takao Collier

October 23 at 8:00 PM

TC

Tara Chapko posted:

Loved working with Chuck at the Central Michigan Sportsman Club. He was so dedicated to his country. I enjoyed the many stories he shared and his constant consideration for others. He was a great man and will be missed.

October 23 at 8:00 PM

LA

Leanna And Jim posted:

Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

October 23 at 8:00 PM

TL

Tierney Leanna lit a candle in honor of Charles.

Sending love and light to the entire family! I only knew of Charles through his wonderful daughter, Karen Nadalin. She is smart, kind and a force to be reckoned with, so I can only imagine what a great dad he was. We will plant a tree in his memory. May he rest in his eternal peace.



October 23 at 8:00 PM



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MI

Mitch posted:

Sending thoughts and prayers to the Zilch family. Rest easy Chuck and one final Fire Up Chips

October 23 at 8:00 PM

MR

Margaret Rush posted:

To Lyn and all the family - my sincere condolences to you all. I knew Chuck less than Lyn and the girls (through 4-H), but he was warmhearted and cordial each and every time I saw him. He'll be fondly remembered. My heartfelt sympathy to you all.

October 23 at 8:00 PM

AZ

A Memorial Tree Was Planted For Charles Herbert Zilch posted:

We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Brigham Funeral Chapel - Lakeview

October 22 at 8:00 PM

CG

Cynthia A Gilde lit a candle in honor of Charles.



October 22 at 8:00 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Charles by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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