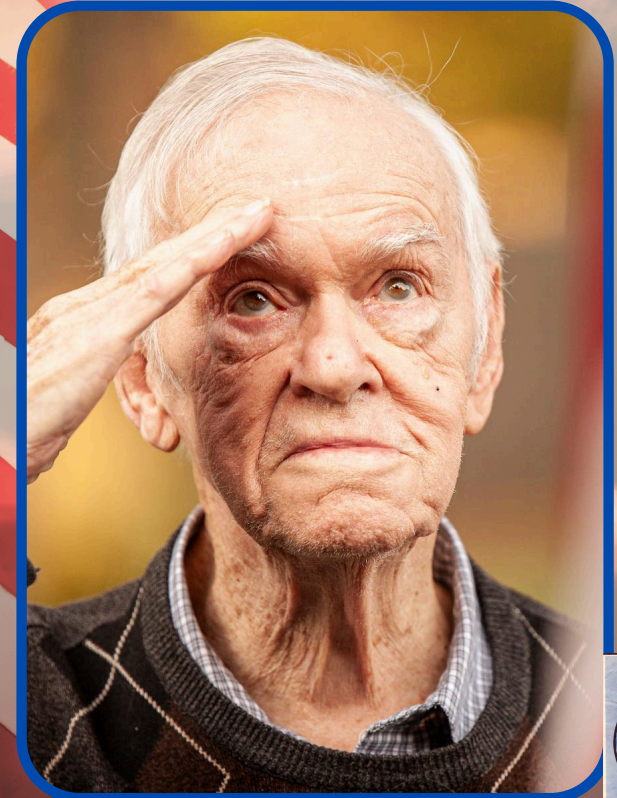


HONORING THE LIFE OF

O say, can you see, by the dawn's
early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the
twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright
stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were
so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs
bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that
our flag was still there.
O say, does that star spangled banner
yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave?



Charles Joseph McGinn

JUNE 9, 1927 - AUGUST 14, 2024

Charles Joseph McGinn (1927-2024)
Lt. Colonel (Retired) United States Air Force

Decorated veteran of three wars, adventurer and free-thinker, Charles (Charlie) McGinn graduated with distinction from West Point, swam the Panama Canal, distinguished himself during the Vietnam War and instilled in his family the importance of independent thought, hard-work and being true to oneself. Married to Jean McGinn for 70 years, Charlie is survived by Jean, his five children, Randi McGinn, Darcy McGinn, Stacie McGinn, Carlin Rafie and Kerry Jordan, nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Early Life and Education

Charles Joseph McGinn was born June 9, 1927, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Edith Bruck-McGinn and Thomas McGinn. Raised in the Panama Canal Zone, where his father was a machinist, Charlie spent the first ten years of his life in Cristobal, before the family moved to Gatun. In junior high at Cristobal High School, Charlie was team captain in every sport, and President of the student council.

In 1943, when Charlie was 16, the Canal Zone was a raging mining town, as troopships passed through the canal on route to the Great War. Charlie was shipped off to St. Vincent's Preparatory School, an all-boys school in Philadelphia. Under an accelerated program, Charlie graduated high school at 17.

Charlie returned to the Canal, where he worked in his father's old outfit for a time, before joining the merchant marines, the most direct route available to the Pacific theater. Christmas day 1945 was spent in Hiroshima, which had been destroyed by The Bomb four months earlier.

When his merchant ship was given to the Japanese at the end of the war, Charlie joined the Army in Yokohama. Smart, respectful and able to spell and type, young Charlie went from private to staff sergeant in his first year. Japan: the adventurer, Charlie excelled at parachute jump school while in Japan; and he climbed Mt. Fuji, from the base at 4,000 feet to the 12,000-foot summit, in 7 hours.

Upon completion of his first year at West Point, Charlie followed in the footsteps of the mid-century explorer and adventurer, Richard Halliburton, and swam the Panama Canal. Starting at the docks in Cristobal, he swam up the canal, which was teeming with sharks and barracuda, at 2.5 miles per hour, often in the dark, passing through the locks, and ending at the docks in Gamboa. Among the guests at his celebratory dinner was young Jean Ann White, an architect student at Rice University. The two would be married four years later.

Vietnam War Veteran and Missile Pioneer

Upon graduating from West Point in 1953, Charlie joined the Army Air Corps and attended flight school in Harlingen, Texas. He was one of 3,000 Strategic Air Command (SAC) crewmembers flying the B-47, the only plane at the time able to fly from the U.S. to the U.S.S.R. This was the front line—or tip of the spear—during the Cold War. Every test flight was run as a war mission—crews flew at night, at low-levels, hitting two targets with electronic bombings. There were few commercial airlines at the time, so military flight crews had the night skies to themselves.

The Russians launched Sputnik into orbit, which meant they had ICBMs; and the U.S. had none. SAC responded by putting crews on alert full-time, and crews worked up to 100 hours each week. Under "reflex," crews were stationed in 5-week trips to key strategic regions, like Spain, four times per year. Charlie thrived, receiving one of very few 'spot' promotions, to Major as a result of developing and implementing processes within his wing that ultimately were adopted throughout SAC. He was sent to Command and Staff College at Maxwell Air Base in Montgomery, Alabama.

After completing his master's degree at UC Boulder in aeronautical engineering, Charlie was assigned to work on the Titan missile program in California. He successfully implemented the Air Force contract to build the Titan 3-B, with the Martin Company and Lockheed, two highly competitive contractors. The program hit all development deliverables, without any launch mishaps or contract disputes.

He successfully completed a tour of duty in Vietnam. Serving as a forward air controller, Charlie flew over 150 missions, most at only 2,000 feet (within a rifle shot) over North Vietnam and the Ho Chi Minh trail in a Cessna airplane. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, one of the Air Force's highest honors, for his "...great courage in the face of considerable visible fire...".

Despite these accomplishments, he returned from the war a bit disillusioned, as he believed the U.S. was not in the war to win it. He hated what he thought was an avoidable loss of life. Ten years later, he wrote a book about his experience, "Victory Without War." He viewed his Vietnam tour, nonetheless, as a great adventure, and the highlight of his career. The family moved to Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico, where he managed troops testing the latest guidance systems. He retired with 30 years of military service.

Inventor and Thought-Leader

Released from military life, Charlie began a period of extraordinary adventure and experimentation. The family moved to the town of Alamogordo, New Mexico in 1973, and then Las Cruces, New Mexico, where Charlie started a small business and ran unsuccessfully for state representative. He wrote two other books and two songs, as well as over 50 articles. He pioneered the 'podcast,' hosting a show on a local radio station. He encouraged his wife in her mid-life career as an architect, happily serving as camp-follower, as she steadily climbed the government civil service ladder. While in Nebraska, he started Wheat for Poland, a program where U.S. farmers shipped wheat to polish people struggling with the ravages of draught. He invented "thumb things," and developed a travel business called "Go Great Circle." Well into his 90's, Charlie retained a burning desire to serve a higher purpose than himself.

Personal Life

While home in the Panama Canal Zone for Christmas in 1952, Charlie took the train from Gatun to Gamboa to meet with long-time family friends, Alton and Mattielee White, and their daughter, Jean White, an architect student at Rice University, who was home for the holidays. Always impulsive, he proposed to Jean that night, and she returned to college wearing his ring. The two were married in Houston in June 1954 and have remained married ever since. Having grown up with three brothers, attended an all-boys high school and West Point, and joined the military, Charlie's experience with the opposite sex was "somewhat limited," and his marriage produced four daughters (as well as a son), which "proves God has a sense of humor," according to Chaz.

Charlie and Jean went to Europe in 1972 with the book "Europe on \$5 a Day" clutched under their arms. The month-long trip cost only \$2,000. Once Jean retired, the pair traveled extensively, including to Istanbul, Egypt, South America and other exotic locales. In retirement they made their homes in the Washington D.C. area, Charlotte, North Carolina and Conway, Arkansas.

In lieu of flowers please consider making a donation to the University of Central Arkansas Student Led Therapeutic Activity Program (s-TAP) through the Michael Hares Memorial Fund.

S-TAP meets critical needs of caregivers and people living with dementia in the Central Arkansas Area by engaging students to provide evidence based services. Please designate the gift as a Honor/Memorial gift for Charles McGinn. <https://bit.ly/46OfrSQ>