



Charles Carol Olasky, Jr.

July 10, 1937 - November 24, 2021

Charles Olasky Jr., 84, died on November 24, 2021 after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease. He was a beloved husband, father, brother, and NASA pioneer in manned space flight simulation. Charles, the son of a US Navy Captain, was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. He also spent time growing up in New Orleans, LA and Charleston, SC. As a young boy, he and his mother set sail on a Navy ship to relocate to China where his father was deployed. Not long after, the two had to return to Charleston as hostilities leading to WWII developed.

Early in life, Charles developed an affection for building and flying model airplanes with gas engines. Strongly influenced by his father's career, a young Charles made the news by selling war bonds to contribute to the war effort. His interests in airplanes and the military led him to join the Air Force ROTC program in high school at which he excelled. Charles would then join the Air Force and attend The Citadel military college of South Carolina where he earned a degree in electrical engineering.

Charles was promoted to Captain and honorably discharged from the Air Force to accept a job at NASA upon graduation. He joined NASA's Space Center Task Group, a working group of engineers tasked with managing America's human spaceflight programs. In 1959 and based at Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, VA, Charles worked on Project Mercury to train astronauts by running simulations for single man spaceflights aboard the Mercury capsule. Charles worked directly with John Glenn to prepare him to be the first American to orbit the Earth aboard the Mercury Friendship 7 spacecraft in 1962. He also traveled to Kauai in Hawaii with other top US space experts to command and communicate with the John Glenn's Mercury mission from the Kokee Tracking Station. These efforts were reported as front-page news in the Hawaii newspaper.

In his personal life, Charles met and fell in love with a nursing student, Joyce, whom he met in Charleston. He would make frequent weekend roundtrips to Charleston from Hampton driving 500 miles each way to see Joyce until she graduated nursing school in 1961 after which the two were married. In 1964, Charles and Joyce would relocate to Houston, TX where NASA was constructing the Johnson Space Center with facilities for providing spaceflight control functions, conducting simulations, and training astronauts for all future spaceflight missions beginning in 1966.

Over 37 years of service at NASA, Charles worked on the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Apollo-Soyuz, Skylab, Space Shuttle, and International Space Station programs as well as serving on a planning committee to shape the new mission control center just prior to his retirement.

Charles received numerous awards including:

- Mercury Program Achievement Award for his role in training John Glenn to be the first American to orbit the Earth.
- The NASA Lunar Landing Team Group Achievement Award for his contributions in flight and landing simulation in the Apollo lunar program.
- The NASA Shuttle Mission Simulator Development Team Award for his contributions to the successful design and construction of the Space Shuttle simulator program.
- The NASA Exceptional Service Medal for his contribution to the Space Shuttle Simulation Program and the success of the first Shuttle (STS-1) flight.

He served as Branch Chief of NASA Spaceflight Simulation in Houston until his retirement in 1996 and remained in Clear Lake City until relocating to Allen, TX in 2005 to be closer to his two sons. In 2021, Charles and Joyce celebrated 60 years of marriage. He will be best remembered as a loving and devoted husband, father, and brother always being a kind and gentle man who provided and cared for his family deeply. These are the roles he treasured the most. In particular, he was close to his sisters Mary Ellen and Christine always willing to drop everything to help his sisters. He loved going to the beach and on fishing expeditions with his NASA friends in the Gulf and had a set of wonderful friends his best friend Israel, Ed, Charlie, Don, Walt, Maury and all his buddies from 37 years at NASA. Charles had a love of all things related to train travel and took several cross-country trips with Joyce. He loved Volvos spending hours under the hood and his mustard color 1970 Volvo which he drove during the NASA years is the stuff of legends. He had a tremendous work ethic and worked hard every step of the way from being a high school ROTC cadet to working on some of man's greatest achievements. He lived a rich and rewarding life and we will miss him dearly.

Charles is survived by his loving wife Joyce Olasky of Allen, TX and their two sons, Charles Olasky III of Plano, TX and Philip Olasky of North Richland Hills, TX; his devoted caregiver Jessica Hearn of Fort Worth, TX; sister Mary Ellen Strongoski of Tampa, FL; sister Christine Lynch and husband Doug of Port Orange, FL; brother-in-law / sister-in-law Kenny and Linda Blakeney of Sunset, NC; brother-in-law / sister-in-law Tim and Jackie Blakeney of Aiken, SC; nephew Scott Strongoski and wife Elizabeth of Washington, DC; niece Susan Leske and husband Brandon of Tampa, FL; niece Christine Wolpert and husband Robert and great niece Ashley Wolpert of Frisco, TX; niece Suzanne Barker of Denver, CO; niece Marianne Kraft and husband Adam of Lexington, SC; nephew Kris Blakeney and wife Janna of Aiken, SC; niece Amy Hutchins and husband Tommy of Lake Wylie, SC as well as numerous great nephews and nieces.

Charles was preceded in death by his beloved parents Charles and Corrine, brother-in-law, Larry Strongoski, MD and brother-in-law Jack Blakeney.

Arrangements for burial at DFW National Cemetery are pending. The family request any tributes to please be directed to the Alzheimer's Association.

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Memorials

Mary and Christine... so sorry for the loss of your brother Charles. Though I

didn't really know him, all that I knew about him was and is Awesome!

DIANE GRASZIK, JANUARY 1, 2022

My deepest sympathy for a great brother in law. Many prayers for Joyce, Chuck and Phil as they go through this difficult period. Much love for each one of them.

TIMOTHY BLAKENEY, NOVEMBER 28, 2021

My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. May Uncle Charles Rest In Peace. We love you all.

SUZANNE BARKER, NOVEMBER 26, 2021

With deep sympathy, words can't wipe away the tears. Hugs can't erase the pain. So hold onto your memories. Forever they'll remain. Those we love can never be more than a thought away. For as long as there's a memory they live in our hearts to stay. After caring for Mr. Charles Olasky, Jr for the past three years my heart is aching. I was honored to be in his presence. And I will truly miss him. My prayers are with the family.



JESSICA HEARNS, NOVEMBER 25, 2021

God be with you! My prayers for my friend Chuck and family!

ANA GALLO , NOVEMBER 25, 2021

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