



Paul T. Chaput

1933-2016

Paul T. Chaput, Sr., 82, passed away peacefully at his home of natural causes on March 7, 2016. He was a loving father, grandfather and friend who loved to make people laugh. He was born on September 15, 1933, in Chicopee Falls, MA, to Joseph "Waldo" Chaput and Mary Rose Connor. He was the oldest of four and after moving around in his younger years (Massachusetts, New York and Maine), his family put their few belongings in a pickup truck and moved to Houston when he was 16 years old. He graduated from Galena Park H.S.

Coming from humble beginnings, the U.S. Air Force changed his life forever after high school. It was a special time during the Korean War that the Aviation Cadet Program was accepting applicants with just high school degrees. After passing a battery of qualifying tests and a stringent flight physical, he was accepted in the Program to become a Navigator with training to also be an Officer. He was assigned to Harlingen AFB for training and then was stationed at Donaldson AFB in Greenville, SC. He chose to be in a troop carrier outfit with the latest and largest troop/cargo carrying aircraft in the Air Force—the C-124 Globemaster. From his new base home for three years he would get to see much of the world. He was on active duty from 1954-1958 and in the Reserves from 1958-1976 when he then retired as a Lt. Colonel. During the time in the Air Force Reserves he became a member of the 705th Troop Carrier Squadron at Ellington Field. He navigated C-119 Boxcars until the mid-1960s when they were replaced by the C-130s. After his release of active duty in 1958, he used the Korean Bill to enter college at the University of Houston earning a B. S. in Electrical Engineering. About the same time he started college he met Linda Parker and they married two years later and had three children, Carin (at 1 yr. everyone called her Kiki), Lisa and Paul, Jr. After graduating from U of H, he was hired by NASA in June of 1962 as an engineer.

Most of his early career with NASA was working within the Landing and Recovery Division (LRD) for the Gemini and Apollo Programs. They supported exercises such as water drop tests for the capsules; designed flotation devices and rafts to be used with the Apollo collar; supported NASA on aircraft carriers and helicopters off the coast of Hawaii for splashdowns and returning the crews home safely. They were a tight-knit group who enjoyed playing sports and attending various family outings. The members of LRD to this day still have reunions and keep in touch with each other. It was a unique time and place where special bonds were created by all "the trailblazers" of our Nation's Space Program.

It was very hard for everyone at NASA when the Apollo 'returning to the moon' part of the Program would end with the splashdown of Apollo 17, in 1972. (Three more moon missions had been scheduled but were cancelled.) In the early to mid-70's came Skylab and the Apollo/Soyuz Test Project (ASTP) where Paul was a Recovery Operations Support Room (ROCR) Officer. The ASTP marked the official end of the Apollo Program. It would be nearly six long years before the next launch into space—the first launch of the Space Shuttle on April 12, 1981. Paul supported as a Shuttle Landing Support Officer and worked closely with DOD and KSC. He was also part of a team who traveled overseas to identify military airfields that could fill NASA's needs for Shuttle contingency landing sites. After supporting 12 or 13 Shuttle missions as an LSO, he transferred to a staff position in the Operations Planning Office. After the Challenger accident and with too little to do for an indefinite period into the future, he decided to retire early at the age of 52 from Government service.

Paul decided to focus on raising his second young family when his first marriage ended after 20 years. His second marriage in the early 80's to Linda Sue Morris began with adding two young children to the Chaput Family. He raised his step-children, Jennifer and Ralph Morris, as his own and they are so appreciative of his fatherly guidance and love (as his own children are).

During his 30 years of retirement he also focused on his hobbies of painting (even taking lessons at the Houston Art Institute); stained glass creations such as Tiffany lamps; he enjoy reading and movies, traveling, adopting dogs (including those that Ralph always seem to find) and exercising. In the 70's and 80's he ran many marathons including the Pikes Peak Marathon. He loved keeping in shape even though he had to pause at times because of a lower back pain (from an early in life acrobat and then a wood chopping incident) that would happen from time to time. During his end years he was still walking his two dogs for an hour most days and floor exercises every other day.

Paul had a quick wit (quirky at times) and loved when he could make someone laugh. He was a special, unique person and he touched so many people that he met through the years. He will always be remembered for his kindness to strangers and friends alike. He was a minimalist as far as material things, but was so rich in Spirit... achievement, creativity and love for his family and others. He will be missed so much.

Paul is survived by his sister, Sylvia DelCastillo, his brother, Raymond Chaput; preceded in death was his sister, Janet Godwin. His other survivors include daughters, Kiki Walters (Adam), Lisa Mack (Steve) and son, Paul Chaput, Jr. (Lisa Kay), stepdaughter, Jennifer Murphy (Tim) and stepson Ralph Morris (Amanda); his grandchildren, Natalie Mack Dahlkamp, Charles Mack, Kathryn Mack; Ryan, Christopher and Kelly Chaput; Declan, Finn, Elizabeth, Stella and Rory Murphy; Aaden and Isobel Morris plus 5 great grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews.

Visitation will be Friday, March 11, 2016, 5:00-7:00 p.m., at South Park Funeral Home, 1310 North Main Street (aka Hwy 35), Pearland, TX 77581. Funeral service on Saturday, March 12, 2016, 12:30 p.m. with burial to follow. If you wish and in lieu flowers, please donate to Bay Area Pet Adoptions SPCA or Second Chance Pets.