



Charles Grooms O'Brien Sr.

March 9, 1931 - December 19, 2022

CHARLES GROOMS O'BRIEN, Sr.

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Charles (Charley) Grooms O'Brien, Sr. (91) of Blacksburg, VA, died on Monday, December 19, 2022. Charles was born in Gastonia, NC on March 9, 1931. His parents, Troy Eric O'Brien and Hester Grooms O'Brien, and his brother Troy Eric O'Brien, Jr. preceded him in death.

Charles grew up in Schoolfield, VA. He graduated from Schoolfield High School in 1948, and served 1948-1952 in US Naval Aviation. He attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute under the Korean War GI Bill, and received a BS in Industrial Engineering in 1956. He married Elizabeth (Betsy) Kenney on June 12, 1956 in Christ Episcopal Church, Blacksburg, VA. Betsy was his first and only serious girlfriend. He was struck by her beauty, intelligence and caring personality. After he was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, Betsy became his faithful caregiver. Charles was the happy and grateful parent of two sons, Charles Jr. (Coby) born in 1959 and Christopher (Chris) born in 1961. Grandson Tristan, born in 2015, was a welcomed and blessed addition.

Charles had a 37-year career with Armstrong World Industries. He served in management positions in Pensacola, FL, Macon, GA, Fulton, NY and Thomasville, NC. He retired as Executive Vice President of Thomasville Furniture Industries, an Armstrong subsidiary. Following retirement, Charles was a volunteer with International Executive Service Corp. and Citizens Democracy Corp, with assignments in Tema and Takoradi, Ghana; Taganrog, Russia; Simferopol, Ukraine; Gdynia, Poland; Zilina, Slovakia and Varna, Bulgaria.

Charles was an Elder in the Presbyterian Church and a member of numerous boards (including Thomasville Furniture Industries, NationsBank, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, Chamber of Commerce and Davidson County Community College). He was chairman of the Thomasville Community Foundation and Community Hospital Boards. He was a member of Rotary International.

Charles considered the Ut Prosim ideal Of Virginia Tech and his education there inspirations throughout his life. He was a member of the Ut Prosim Society and the College of Engineering Committee of 100. He was a past Chairman of the Industrial & Systems Engineering Advisory Board and also served on the College of Engineering Board and the German Club Alumni Foundation Board. He was a member of the COE Academy of Excellence and the ISE Academy of Distinguished Alumni. He was the recipient of ISE's Marvin Agee Distinguished Alumni Award.

Charles was always a leader, honest, trustworthy, hardworking, wise and funny. He was an excellent speaker and was a valued advisor to many groups and many younger people. He was a wonderful husband, father, father-in-law and grandfather. He had a boundless love for his family and was as proud of the kind, successful and helpful individuals they became as they were of him. He was especially happy to become a grandfather late in life. Charles enjoyed many happy years among friends at Warm Hearth Village and the support of his Rock Steady Boxing group.

Charles is survived by his wife, Betsy, his sons and daughters-in-law Charles Jr. (Jennifer) of Temple Terrace, Fl, Christopher (Virginia) of Brooklyn Heights, NY, and grandson, Tristan of Temple Terrace, Fl.

Charles's cremains will be interred in the Virginia Tech Columbarium. There will be a memorial service at a later date.

If you wish to honor his memory, he would have been happy with contributions to the Charles and Betsy O'Brien ISE Scholarship Fund, Virginia Tech Foundation, 902 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA 24061 or to Neighbors in Need Fund, Warm Hearth Foundation, 2607 Warm Hearth Drive, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Tribute Wall

CO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Chris O'Brien - January 25, 2023 at 07:13 PM

EG

“ I greatly admired Charley's discipline and resolve in facing Parkinson's disease, such a cruel affliction. My love and sympathies to you, Betsy, Coby, and Chris. Liz

Elizabeth Whitehead George - December 21, 2022 at 12:10 PM

MP

“ Uncle Charlie was a loving, kind, and funny uncle! He will be missed by many. Love to the extended family! Marcus Whitehead Partlow

Marcus W Partlow - December 21, 2022 at 10:05 AM

JO

“ Charley was a lifelong father figure, steadfast throughout our lives. He was a role model for me, considerate, kind, honest, tenacious, composed, and good-humored. He always gave of himself to everyone, whether in his hometown or in a country where he volunteered. He will always be an inspiration. I will miss him at our table every Christmas and Thanksgiving in particular. And miss those intensely competitive games of Hand & Foot he hosted on long pleasant evenings.

John - December 20, 2022 at 08:45 PM

JO

“ 4 files added to the album Charley



John - December 20, 2022 at 08:43 PM

CL

“ Charlie was a senior operations executive at Thomasville Furniture, and I was a young upstart in production control. Charlie took me under his wing and was not embarrassed to spend time with me as a mentor and tour me around his huge company several times. I loved it and I was always in awe of his executive stature and employee's respect. He was always encouraging me and interested in my career. I can truly say that I was inspired to be like him, and because of his inspiration, I was eventually successful. Therefore, I owe a significant portion of my personal success to Charlie O'Brien. I loved him and will always admire his character and intellect.

Crawford (Scooter) Lipsey - December 20, 2022 at 04:56 PM

CO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Coby O'Brien - December 20, 2022 at 02:55 PM

CL

Just how I remember him. Confident and strong

Crawford C. Lipsey - December 20, 2022 at 06:25 PM

WE

I am so sorry to hear of Charlie's passing. I will always think of Charlie as a true gentleman. Not just the look or the impression of one, but a true "Gentleman's" Gentleman. Rest In Peace Charlie.

Ward Elliott - December 22, 2022 at 10:45 AM