

Charles F. Riordan

Charles F. Riordan III passed away suddenly from a heart attack on Feb. 27, 2005 at his home in Niceville, Fla.

Chuck was born Oct. 25, 1953 in San Francisco, Calif. He grew up in Roswell, N.M. After his father died of a heart attack at the age of 39, he was raised by his mother. He knew from an early age that he wanted to attend the Air Force Academy, and after graduating from Goddard High School in 1971, he came to USAFA under a Congressional nomination. Chuck did well militarily, serving as First Sergeant and later Squadron Commander of CS-28, but always struggled when it came to academics. He remembered being on academic probation (what he referred to as “the other Dean’s List”) more semesters than he was off of it. It is here that one of the most striking facets of his personality was honed: his perseverance. Many of his Academy friends recall him studying much longer hours than his classmates. Perhaps because of this work ethic, he overcame his academic problems and graduated in 1975 with a degree in General Engineering.

Chuck went on to pilot training and spent most of his 19-year career flying the C-9 and the C-130. His assignments included Scott AFB, where he met his wife, Karen, as well as Elmendorf AFB and Little Rock AFB, where his daughter and son were born, respectfully. After a remote tour at Camp Red Cloud, Korea, he accepted an offer of early retirement, which took effect June 1994. He and his family then moved to their current home in Niceville.

Chuck believed in hard work and enjoyed staying busy. The same work ethic that his contemporaries recall him demonstrating toward his homework, refusing to seek excuses for work that did not meet his satisfaction, has remained with him all his life. During his career, he used his free time to pursue and earn a Master of Business Administration Degree. After retiring, he worked 15-20 hours a week as a volunteer financial counselor at the Family Support Center at Eglin AFB, and hated nothing more than having nothing to do. One of the proudest moments of his life was when he received the Angel Award as Volunteer of the year. During this time, he also started up an Internet business that was slowly gaining strength, as many of his associates became close friends.

He always tried to look on the bright side of life and his laughter could often be heard echoing throughout the house. His sense of humor and positive attitude were the hallmarks of his personality. One of his daughter’s earliest memories was of his laughter

— not so much booming as explosive and infectious. Even during the toughest times at the Academy his classmates remember him having a smile on his face or a joke on the tip of his tongue. As one classmate put it, he was the type of guy that, when you met him in the hall or on the terrazzo, you always felt better afterwards.

Chuck leaves behind many people who loved him, including his mother, Maurine; his sister Mo; his wife, Karen; his daughter Michelle; his son Charlie (USAFA '08); as well as many cousins, in-laws, and friends. He made an impact on many people's lives and will most certainly be missed. (His children Michelle and Charlie, USAFA '08)