



Charles Curtis "Chuck" Needham

May 13, 1935 - December 25, 2019

Charles Curtis "Chuck" Needham, 84, of Gladstone, Missouri, lost his battle to Alzheimer's dementia on Dec. 25, 2019. He'll be remembered fondly by family and friends who've been blessed by his generosity, kindness and stories of the world for decades.

Chuck was born May 13, 1935, in Hazel Park, Michigan, to father Francis T. Needham, an auto worker, and Sarah Laverne Needham (née Thackston), the youngest of four children.

He was raised in Hazel Park by attentive and loving parents who raised him to be the same, graduating from high school in Detroit before joining the U.S. Army in 1955.

Chuck served as a private in an armored division, stationed in Germany until his return to the U.S. in 1958. He often said his time overseas was one of the best times of his life. He was proud to regale friends and family with stories of his time in the tanks as well his travels around Europe and the U.S., pulling out a map to point to the place he was talking about. When they dug further, listeners were often impressed to learn even the most far-fetched stories were all true — Chuck was nothing if not an honest man. He loved to learn; he could almost always be found reading a book, and he loved to share what he learned from his travels around the country and the world. A history buff, his favorite books were those on World War II.

After the Army, Chuck married Carol "Jeanie" Tripp, a school teacher from Iowa, in 1963. The couple spent time in southern California, where their son, James, was born in 1968.

After the couple divorced in 1992, Chuck met his second wife, Juanita Hatfield, at The Gold Dust Restaurant in Excelsior Springs. The two were married from 1992 until they divorced in 2014. With that marriage, Chuck became step-father to Juanita's six children, who will remember him fondly for always being there for them and providing fatherly guidance in bestowing life's important lessons: dependability, hard work, kindness and generosity.

Chuck's hard work and loyalty shone through in his work, as well. He was a service technician for Sears, Roebuck and Co. for 33 years, both in California and in Missouri, where he retired near Kansas City in 1999. He was proud of his work and the company, happy to offer a helping hand when a friend or family member needed a job done — by helping out, teaching the skill or offering his employee discount to get just the right tool. His basement workshop was always a testament to his profession, packed with gently used appliance parts collected on the job, available for the next repair that would come up. Fellow Sears service techs were among his best friends, a group of them meeting daily for coffee and to catch up on life and family before heading out to work. Chuck was the first of them to retire, but all stayed in touch as others followed, meeting for coffee weekly into recent years.

Chuck always made himself available to help in his community when it was needed. Whether offering financial help, lending a hand or offering advice, he was there. Several times over the years, he even opened his home to friends and family when they needed a place to stay. No matter what someone had going on, Chuck could always find the good in people, see the positive side of things and help them see it, too.

One of Chuck's greatest joys in retirement was time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who all live nearby around Kansas City.

Charles was predeceased by two brothers, Jim Needham and Johnny Needham; one sister, Mary Hyek; his step-son Danny Kennedy; and his parents Sarah and Francis Needham. He is survived by his sister Barbara Sharp of Mountain View, California; his son James Needham; five step-children, T. R. Kennedy, Angie Roush, Kenneth Kennedy, Chris Gallup and Shane Miller; six grandchildren, Shelby Lemon, Jennifer Roush, Samantha Kennedy, Adam Kennedy and Amber Kennedy; and three great-grandchildren, Marek Lemon, Kennedy Lemon and Whyatt Roush.

A burial service will be held on Friday, Jan. 24, 2020 at 12 p.m. at Missouri Veterans Cemetery in Higginsville.

A memorial service will be held on Jan. 25, 2020 at 12 p.m. at Smithville Church - South Side Baptist Church, 350 NE Amory Rd. Smithville.

Previous Events

Graveside Service

JAN **24**. 12:00 PM (CT)

Higginsville Veterans Cemetery
20109 Business Highway 13
Higginsville, MO 64037

Memorial

JAN **25**. 12:00 PM (CT)

Southside Baptist Church - Smithville
350 NE Amory Road
Smithville, MO 64089

Tribute Wall

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“ Grandpa a years coming up of you being gone and I know you always tried to prepare me but I miss you every single day and not. I'll always cherish your stories you told me and our walks along the missouri river. You weren't just my grandfather but my second dad. You were always so loving and kind and put a smile on everyone's face. The thought of you up there with dad keeps me going everyday. I love you and I find peace knowing you're no longer in pain

Amber Kennedy - December 06, 2020 at 05:06 PM