



Charles Ernest Ailsworth Jr.

March 27, 1931 - December 11, 2020

Dear Judy,

Dementia has been humbling. I have almost ninety years of memories that I wanted to share with you and the many wonderful and caring people at our nursing home, but I couldn't.

I was born during the depression in Chicago on 3/27/1931. We were just trying to make ends meet living with my grandma. Her husband, Charles William Ailsworth, is who I was named after. He was an adventurer if there ever was one. At 13 he left his home in Dover, England to board a ship as a crewman. Grandpa eventually sailed around the globe three times over. He survived a shipwreck to become a steamfitter at Niagara Falls, and finally a farmer in northern Alberta, Canada. During a run to town for coal, he found the local coalmine was flooded. Grandpa offered to fix the pump in freezing, waste deep water. When done he headed back home. On the way he was caught in a blizzard. Grandpa and his team of horses survived it in an old, abandoned barn. However, he caught pneumonia and never recovered. He died later that spring in 1919. Grandma, Uncle Earl, and my dad returned to Chicago, where she had family.

As a young kid we moved often, as Dad looked for work as a chiropractor. We went from Chicago to Niagara Falls to Niagara on the Lake, Canada. When I was seven, we finally grew roots in Buchanan, Michigan. It was there that my dad saved a 9-year-old girl who had been swimming. He did artificial resuscitation. Like any other kid I loved hunting, fishing, baseball, and fixing things. Ran a trap line each morning before school. Thought I was a millionaire when I caught my first mink. In high school I of course played ball for the Buchanan Bucks. As for being able to fix anything, I'm proud to say that no repairman ever stepped foot in my house.

Just prior to going Adrian College, I lived near Kalkaska, alone on an old, grounded, houseboat. I hunted and fished and worked for the CCC. Hated Adrian. Mostly because my kooky sister Helen was also there. Transferred to Western Michigan, but still not overly serious. To avoid being drafted during Korea, I enlisted in the Navy to choose my destiny. Was my second try with the Navy. Earlier the Naval Academy denied me for having a silly "end to end bite". After boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Station, I became a Corpsman and served on the USS Electra. Always said that old pile of steel saved my life. She could

barely float, so they had to keep us stateside in San Diego, Seattle, and the Pribilof Islands up in Alaska.

Things were different back then. After four years I was discharged. I had to find my own way home. The trains didn't stop at Buchanan, so I had to jump off in a snowbank and have my buddy Howard throw me my duffle bag. Mom and my little brother George were sure surprised to see me. My Mom, Kathryn, was a wonderful woman. Loved to read and so truly kind.

I went back to Western, a little more serious this time, in pre-med. Met a girl studying to be an Occupational Therapist, Susan Young from Elk Rapids, Michigan. I married her on 6/16/56! We started our family right away. Was accepted to med school but things went south. We lost our first baby John in infancy. Then had to give up my spot in med school because a snafu with the GI Bill. Eventually life straightened out. We had three more wonderful kids. Karen is now that doctor I never was. She lives in Wisconsin, married to Dave Kinzer. They gave me two fantastic grandkids: Ben and Geneva. My son Kent and his wife Ann (Alwood) are both RNs in here in northern Michigan. They gave me my first great grandkids: Kallan and Kai. My youngest is Charles Ernest Ailsworth III, also known as Chuck. He's an engineer downstate, married Mee Hyang Lee, and gave me two outstanding grandkids: Charlie and Kristen. Was able to help all my kids and grandkids with their education!

For years I dragged my poor family to universities across the U.S.: Western Michigan (BS '57, MA '63), Wisconsin, Kansas, and my beloved University of North Dakota (MS in Teaching '64). I started teaching in Midland, but we quickly moved to Traverse City. Taught Chemistry, Physics, and Honor's Senior Science. Became the Chairman for their Science Department. I had so many outstanding students, like yourself. It was my former students that had me honored as Teacher of the Year up at Michigan Tech. Hundreds of you honored me as well by throwing a party for me that I will never forget!

We live in a beautiful area and I enjoyed the sailing, cross country skiing, and biking. Sailing in the bays or out on Lake Michigan was always fun. Finished the Vasa in my fifties, and even biked across Iowa with Susan. I tried to give back to my community. Was a coach for the high school, every year I took my students to Chicago, was a Den Leader for the Boy Scouts, and was twice elected as City Commissioner for Traverse City. I was Mayor Pro Tem before we moved outside of Traverse.

Susan and I loved to travel. We had planned to finish our careers overseas, but she died of cancer in 1987. I went on to teach for the Department of Defense, first at Subic Bay in the Philippines, later in Wiesbaden, Germany. At Subic, I met fellow teacher Dottie Clement. She was a widow from Tennessee who had raised her own five kids: Mike, Mark, Jeff, Jana, and John. Together Dottie and I continued the travels where Susan I had left off. With the spirit of my own Grandpa, I have been to South America, Africa, Asia, all over Europe, Mexico, Canada, and in all fifty states. During the summer of 1970, we camped

for three months straight as we traveled across the U.S. By July, those kids could fly setting up our Scamper pop-up camper.

I lived a full life. Saw a tornado in Missouri, John F. Kennedy in North Dakota, watched The Wall come down when in Berlin, and went to a World Series game with my grandkids in Detroit. In 1964 my family and I survived a killer flood, trapped for several days on a Montana mountainside. Many were not so lucky as us. For others less fortunate, I felt honored to be able to put a friend through nursing school, and to pay for an aide's medical bill that was preventing her husband from having life saving surgery in the Philippines. After Dottie passed in 2015, I moved back home to Traverse City. Dementia caught up with me soon after. I have been at our home ever since. 2020 has been a kick in the teeth. My family could no longer visit. Judy, you, other wonderful CENAs, the nurses, Hospice, and the rest of those here became my family. But I have never been able to tell you how much I appreciate all of you. I won't miss 2020, but I will sure miss you and the others. Please be safe and I hope somehow you realize how much I appreciate you for all you have gone through just to take care of me. THANK-YOU.

Sincerely, "Chuck"

(Charles Ernest Ailsworth Jr. ~ 3/27/1931 - 12/11/2020)

P.S. In lieu of flowers, I would feel honored if you would please donate to Hospice of Michigan instead. Thanks-you once more. <https://www.hom.org/donations/>

Please feel free to share your thoughts and memories with Charles' family at his tribute page at www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com.

Comments



“ Oh my gosh, Karen, I was so sorry to hear this. I have SO many great memories of all of us in his classes. I remember that giant calculator that he had in the classroom! I had the CFC we got thru him for my entire career. It was hard to let that go, just because of the memories. He would call me Mr. Schmitt when he got exasperated with me. I loved how he treated us with respect because we really wanted to learn, but still had that wry smile that I interpreted as "you all have so much to learn." One of my last memories was when he helped me choose my first car after my senior year in college. I wish I could have told him how much his classes helped me prepare for the career in engineering that I had for 38 years!

David Schmitt - December 28, 2020 at 07:35 PM



“ Karen: I was very sorry to hear of the passing of your father. He was my favorite high school teacher and he truly had a profound effect on me. As you know I was not exactly a serious student, but somehow your Dad recognized some sort of potential and suggested I join one of his Honors classes. I ended up taking them all. He also talked me (and I think you) into starting the Medial Explorers club and although I never pursued a medical career like you (lucky potential patients), I somehow managed to graduate from U of M and am enjoying a career as a senior exec at a Fortune 500 company. He made a big difference in my life and for that I am thankful. His Obituary made me cry and reminded me of what an incredible man he was. Larry Clarke

larry clarke - December 21, 2020 at 05:29 PM



“ Thanks, Larry! Your comment means a lot to me. My brother wrote the obit. We were kind of in awe when we saw his whole life written down like that. Wish he could have appreciated what he meant to people!

He was actually my favorite teacher, too (probably not supposed to say that!). I went to college intending to major in physics, but realized in one semester that I only understood the concepts when Dad explained them :-)

I forgot about Medical Explorers! I knew for sure I did not want anything to do with medicine after feeling woozy when someone came to talk to us about bones. But after a few detours I found my calling as a pediatrician.

Are you still in California?

Thanks again for your note!

Karen Ailsworth - December 21, 2020 at 08:36 PM



“ Mr Ailsworth was a favorite teacher back in those early 70’s as he taught us well and with respect. I easily excelled in my physics classes at the University of Michigan and I realized how well he had prepared me. It was with surprise and some joy when 40 years later he sought me out at my office in Kalkaska to address a medical concern. Our visits often ran long as we discussed local and world affairs. I have felt honored that a man that I respected would/could remember me so many years later and seek my opinion. Your dear obituary reminds me how lucky I am that he touched my life not once, but twice. Thank you Mr Ailsworth. Marc Frick, MD

marc frick - December 20, 2020 at 05:10 PM



“ Marc,
Dad was pretty excited to discover you are a physician in the area, and believed you were excellent. He was happy to have someone he knew he could trust.
Thanks for your note,
Karen Ailsworth

Karen Ailsworth - December 21, 2020 at 08:40 PM



“ I will remember Chuck as Family. He had a profound influence upon my life. His generosity allowed me a spare bedroom when I relocated to Tennessee. While there, I began to help him with “projects”. He always was involved in a project and It didn’t take me long to figure out Chuck could fix ANYTHING. Either with the correct parts or whatever he had lying around the garage.
Chuck prioritized helping others in his life. He was always there to help out, no matter how large or difficult the job. As my mother became sick he was there to ensure she had everything she needed. His help was invaluable. He was the glue that kept everyone and everything together. We would not have made it through without him there by my mothers side.
The greatest consolation is the knowledge that he and my mother got to travel around the world, the one thing they loved the most. Looking back now I am astonished by the uniqueness and magnitude of the experiences they shared. They both truly lived a full life. I am thankful to have experienced his love and kindness. He will be missed by many, but forever remembered for all he did for others

John Clement - December 20, 2020 at 04:43 PM



“ Thank you, John. He thought highly of you! Thanks for sharing.
Karen Ailsworth

Karen Ailsworth - December 21, 2020 at 08:42 PM



“ Mr. Ailsworth was a gem. I had him for physics, and will always remember his kindness and the way he kept us laughing with his stories. My condolences to his family. I'm sure he will be greatly missed.

Valerie Roblyer Caton - December 16, 2020 at 08:40 PM



“ To the Ailsworth family,

I am so very sorry to have heard about your dad. He was a really special teacher and presence in school. This lovely obituary really captures the adventure that was his life. Wishing you all many happy memories and my deepest sympathy.

Liz Larson

Liz Larson - December 16, 2020 at 07:48 PM



“ Thank you from all of us. Kent wrote his obit. We were all in awe when we saw, in one place, all that he had done while alive.

Karen Ailsworth - December 21, 2020 at 08:44 PM



“ Mr. Ailsworth was one of my favorite teachers. I was one of those physics and Senior Science students. He was the best!

Kerry - December 16, 2020 at 05:42 PM



“ What a beautiful life and a beautiful telling. Thank you for sharing those moments that make up life well lived. Dementia is so tragic. Our sincere sympathies to your family. John and Barbara Cundy



barbara cundy - December 15, 2020 at 07:47 AM