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## Obituaries



### Joseph Vincent Charyk

(September 9, 1920 - September 28, 2016)

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Joseph Vincent Charyk, 96, of Delray Beach, FL, Falmouth, MA and formerly of Washington, D.C. passed away peacefully on Wednesday, September 28, 2016.

He enjoyed a long and distinguished career, making key contributions to the field of global telecommunications. Charyk is widely credited as the founder of the geosynchronous communications satellite industry.



Joseph Charyk was born in Canmore, Alberta, Canada, on September 9, 1920. After graduating from the University of Alberta, he came to the United States, earning a Ph.D in Aeronautics, magna cum laude, from California Institute of Technology, where he was mentored by the renowned aerodynamic theoretician Theodore von Kármán. It was at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Caltech where he met his lifelong love, Edwina Rhodes, whom he would marry on August 18, 1945. Joe and Edwina moved to Princeton in 1946. Charyk was a Professor of Aeronautics at Princeton University from 1946 to 1955, where he helped to establish the Guggenheim Jet Propulsion Center. It was during his years at Princeton that Charyk accompanied his mentor Professor von Kármán on visits to the home of Albert Einstein. He often recounted to his children, with much delight, how Professor Einstein would insist that the conversations be conducted in English, so that von Kármán's young protégé would not feel excluded. The Princeton years also saw the birth of Joe and Edwina's first two children, William and John. Opportunities at Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, and the aeronautics division of Ford Motor Company brought the Charyks to California, where their third child, Christopher, joined the family in 1957. Two years later, the Charyk family was on the move again, this time to Washington, DC, where daughter Diane was born in 1959. Charyk served as Assistant Secretary-Chief Scientist of the United States Air Force from 1959 until he was appointed Undersecretary of the Air Force. In 1961 he was appointed by President John F. Kennedy to concurrently serve as the first Director of the National Reconnaissance Office, a consolidation of the Central Intelligence Agency, United States Air Force, and United States Navy space programs. He brought the first United States imagery satellite, CORONA, into operation and demonstrated signals intelligence technology from space. During Charyk's tenure, the NRO operated the U-2 reconnaissance aircraft and managed development of the A-12. In September 1962, as NRO Director, Charyk played a central role in providing critical intelligence to President Kennedy and his top advisors throughout the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Dr. Charyk became President and a director of the Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT), shortly after the organization's inception in 1963. He decided to make geosynchronous satellites the basis of the Comsat network. He fought skepticism that this untested technology would not work for voice transmission



because of a half-second time delay. He also raised funds to support this new industry and enlisted the cooperation of countries around the world. His efforts launched a global system that would eventually seem commonplace to billions of people around the world. While at Comsat, Charyk served as President, CEO, and Chairman from 1963 to 1985. In addition to his role at Comsat, he served on the boards of several corporations, including Abbott Laboratories and Draper Laboratories. In 1974 he received the International Emmy Directorate Award for his work with Comsat. In 1987, President Ronald Reagan awarded Charyk the National Medal of Technology and Innovation "for employment of the concept of the geosynchronous communications satellite systems as the basis for a global telecommunications system, established by international agreement, and for his guidance in the development and growth of the Intelsat system, which today services over 150 nations and territories."

When asked about which of his many accomplishments he felt were the most significant, Dr. Charyk would invariably mention that he felt most proud of his family, his loving wife Edwina, his children, and, as the years passed, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He reveled in any opportunity to bring family members together, such as the unforgettable cruises and extended family vacations that he and Edwina organized to mark major wedding anniversaries. From his vantage point at head of the dinner table, with an unforgettable twinkle in his eye, together with equal parts razor sharp wit and warm heart, he would regale family and friends with exciting tales of his interactions with Presidents, corporate leaders, and infamous international celebrities, combined with bold opinions on the most controversial issues of the day. He relished the opportunity to engage in spirited debate with any family member bold enough to take up the challenge. Extended family get-togethers were replete with distinctive rituals and customs, such as requiring everyone in attendance to compose a brief speech of thanksgiving, or having each family member create a list of predictions for the coming year, with the promise of enticing prizes for the winners of these contests adding to the atmosphere of revelry and friendly competition. He enjoyed many sports, especially golf, and found great happiness in sharing with his children and grandchildren his memories of skating and hockey from his rural Canadian childhood.

For many years, Joe and Edwina divided their time between their lakeside home in Falmouth, MA and their home overlooking the Intercoastal Waterway in Delray Beach, FL. Edwina passed away in 2013, shortly before what would have been their sixty-eighth wedding anniversary.

Charyk is survived by his children William, John, Chris, and Diane and their spouses, 9 grandchildren and their spouses, and 7 great grandchildren.

A memorial mass will be celebrated at 11:00AM on Saturday, November 5, 2016 at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Falmouth, MA. Dr. Charyk will also be remembered with a funeral mass at St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church in Delray Beach, FL on Saturday, December 3, 2016 at 11:00AM.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to any of the following; California Institute of Technology (for the use and benefit of the Charyk Laboratory for Bio-Inspired Design Fund), University of Alberta Foundation, USA, Inc (to be used for scholarships and/or research at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in memory of Joseph Charyk), St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church in Delray Beach, Florida, or St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Falmouth, Massachusetts.

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