

Charles Day Dilks: Obituary

Charles Dilks passed away peacefully at home on December 28th, 2024, at the age of 83. His life was a testament to his life motto, *carpe diem*, seize the day. Tying his business and philanthropic work to his love for the outdoors, he stitched together diverse interests to form a vibrant life characterized by integrity and enthusiasm.

Born November 28, 1941, Charlie grew up in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, the son of Margaret Day and John Dilks. He attended Chestnut Hill Academy and graduated from the Westminster School in Simsbury Connecticut in 1959. Having deep affection for his classmates and school faculty, Charlie stayed connected to Westminster throughout his years, believing his experience there changed his life by giving him focus and direction.

Charlie attended Yale University, majoring in American Studies and singing in the Yale Glee Club. Upon graduating in 1963, he continued supporting the Yale community as a class representative, eventually being honored with the Class Distinguished Service Award. He served as president of the Philadelphia Yale Club from 1972 to 1974. One of his deepest Yale connections would be formed years after graduation when he and his wife, Gene, joined the Yale Alumni Chorus. They travelled the world sharing the gift of song, bringing instruments to youth orchestras and raising money to help struggling communities in Africa, South America and Eastern Europe.

Having completed the ROTC program at Yale, Charlie served as a Lieutenant in the US Navy for two years after college. Working as the navigator on destroyers in both the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf made for exciting stories of using stars to guide the way across the oceans. He continued to serve in the Navy Reserve through 1970.

Charlie returned to Philadelphia in 1965 and began working at the nascent University City Science Center, the country's first urban research park. Over the next three decades, Charlie oversaw the financing, development and management of more than twenty buildings in West Philadelphia, laying the foundation for what has become one of the nation's most successful university research parks. Eventually rising to the position of Executive Vice President at the Science Center, he also helped to create the Ben Franklin Technology Center for Southeastern Pennsylvania and the Kyoto Research Park in Japan. Additionally, he was the Chairman of the West Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce beginning in 1985.

In 2003, Charlie formed Dilks consulting, Inc. and later began working with Wexford Science and Technology, advising on university research park development across the country. He consulted on projects with Yale, Brown, Wake Forest, University of Arizona, University of Miami, Washington University, University of Washington, and UC Davis. He played a significant role in the Association of University Related Research Parks (AURP) where he served as a board member and as president. To recognize his contributions, AURP honored Charlie with its Career Achievement Award and the International Business Innovation Association President's Award.

Charlie dedicated his time and talents to the betterment of the causes and communities he believed in. An experienced outdoorsman, his philanthropic pursuits focused largely on conservation where, early in the field, he established himself as a regional leader. He served on numerous boards, including the Schuylkill Valley Nature Center, Friends of the Wissahickon, Natural Lands, the Woodmere Art Museum, the School Committee of Germantown Friends School, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and the Chestnut Hill Conservancy.

Charlie possessed a remarkable enthusiasm for life and will be remembered for his passions for exploration, nature, family and food. Whenever the opportunity arose, he would attach a fishing or hunting adventure to business and family trips. He enjoyed his weekly tennis game at the Philadelphia Cricket Club, squash matches at the Philadelphia Racquet Club and season tickets to the Philadelphia Orchestra. In his quieter moments, he could be found gardening with his wife and cheering on his beloved Eagles.

Holidays were spent with immediate and extended family, encouraging enthusiasm for the activities he loved, particularly skiing, fishing and tennis. Sailing held a special place in his heart, whether navigating

the Marblehead to Halifax race, or sailing his Lightning on the Elk River at his family's farm, Harmony Hall.

Charlie is predeceased by his parents and his brothers, John and Peter. Charlie is survived by his sister Anne Dilks Grandin, by his wife of 56 years, Gene, their 3 children Christina Taylor, Charles Jr. (Chay), and Mark. He is also blessed with five fabulous grandchildren and a host of beloved nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at 2pm on Sunday, January 12th at the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 8000 St. Martin's Lane, Philadelphia 19118.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in his name to the organizations that Charlie loved and supported during this lifetime.

The Class of 1959 Fund at Westminster School, 995 Hopemeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

The Yale Alumni Chorus Foundation Scholarship Fund, Box 209036, New Haven, CT 06520 or online at Yalealumnichorus.org

The Association of University Research Parks (AURP), 5470 E. Broadway Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85711

The Chestnut Hill Conservancy, Conservation and Easement Program, 8708 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19118