



Chester Leland Skipper

December 2, 1931 - January 14, 2022

Chester Leland Skipper, Age 90. December 2, 1931-January 14, 2022.

Chester, a long-time attorney in St. Petersburg, FL, and later Gainesville, FL, peacefully passed away at his home in Deland, FL on January, 14, 2022.

Vigorous and undaunted until two weeks before his death, Chester quickly succumbed to a previously undiagnosed but advanced cancer. Thankfully, Chester was able to celebrate his 90th birthday at the beginning of December, 2021. He was surrounded by his wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, on a river cruise on the St. Johns River, which he loved and where he spent much time in his childhood.

Chester lived a blessed, full and meaningful life, over 90 years of eventful history. He was born in New Smyrna, FL at the beginning of the depression; the son of Jesse Carl Skipper of south Georgia and Nina Marie Lyons Skipper of western Kentucky. His family's roots were in farming, and Chester retained a life-long love of working outdoors, gardening and landscaping. Most of the last 20 years of his life were spent on a 10-acre property near Gainesville, FL where he spent many days well into his 80's working hard, chain-sawing fallen trees, driving his tractor, and tending fruit and vegetable crops.

During his childhood, his father and an uncle, John Lloyd Skipper, ran a tackle

and bicycle shop in New Smyrna, and also worked as local fishing and hunting guides. As a result, Chester spent much of his childhood immersed in the wilderness of prewar east-central Florida. Throughout his life he could impress with ability to identify local flora and fauna. Chester loved Florida and was a proud and partisan Floridian.

The business having been lost in the depression, during the war, Chester's father supported their family working as a construction laborer at military bases around the country. Chester, his parents and his older sister, Josie, lived in Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arizona during those years.

Chester worked hard all his life. When Chester was 14, his mother wrote the governor asking that Chester be granted special dispensation to get a driver's license underage, so he could drive her on a paper route and help support their family. Chester grew up surrounded by, supported by and personally engaging in hard manual labor. All his life he held an evident reverence for hard work and those who perform it.

After the war, the family returned to Florida and moved to Orlando. Chester graduated from Orlando High School and attended Orlando Junior College for one year before transferring to the University of Florida. Chester was nothing if not a passionate Gator ever after. Go Gators!

War had a profound influence on Chester, his family, and his generation. He turned ten just five days before Pearl Harbor. He, his sister, and his many cousins came of age during and just after the war. When the Korean War erupted in 1950, Chester enlisted in the army and served in Korea. One of his first cousins, Emory Bennett, who was born in Volusia County, FL, also volunteered but was killed in action. Emory's death, and his posthumous award of the Congressional Medal of Honor, affected Chester for the rest of his life. Chester served about one year in Korea, as a cryptographer. He was

promoted to sergeant first class by the time of his honorable discharge in 1952 at which time he was awarded The Korean Service Medal with 2 Bronze stars. His time in Korea and on "R and R" in Japan were transformative and he referred to it often during conversations.

Chester returned to UF to continue his education after the army. Eight years of on-again, off-again study, frequently interrupted by the need to work to earn money for school, Chester earned his law degree in 1960. It was during this period when he first came to St. Petersburg, a break from school to work as an insurance adjuster for Crawford & Company.

Chester returned to St. Petersburg, after graduating from law school and began practicing law. He soon joined a firm which by the late 60's was known as Ramseur, Bradham, Lyle, Skipper & Cramer. Chester enjoyed a long and successful career as an insurance and trial attorney, trying hundreds of cases over the decades. By the 1980's, Lyle & Skipper, as his firm was then known, employed over 25 lawyers.

In 1961, Chester married his first wife, Claire. The couple had three children, Jesse, Geoff, and Jennifer.

In the 1990's and into the 2000's alumni of Lyle & Skipper and other incarnations of Chester's firms were numerous in the legal community of St. Petersburg and the judiciary. Chester was a member of, active in, and sometimes led numerous legal societies and organizations. By the late 1980's Chester had developed an interest in international law and international legal practice. It was around this time that Chester began to study German. Chester traveled the world attending legal conferences and similar events. In the 1990's his firm, then Skipper & Day, hosted numerous German law students as part of their legal training, who then returned to Europe to practice. Chester

touched the lives and careers of hundreds of lawyers, locally and around the world, not least his son, Jesse Leland and his close friend Jack Day, his law partners with whom he practiced from 1993 to 2000. In October, 2000, Chester moved to Gainesville, FL and opened his private practice, Skipper Law Firm.

Chester was passionate for the law and deeply devoted to its higher ideals. He took his integrity, his honor, and his reputation for honesty seriously, and guarded them vociferously. Chester was a fierce advocate and formidable in conflict.

Chester was also active in politics and community affairs. He served in various roles with the Democratic Party. Chester read widely, and was interested in many subjects. He loved history, especially American history. He had a visceral and unyielding love of country.

Chester loved boating. His power boats included the Not Guilty, the Not Guilty Too, the Not Guilty Also, and the Loophole (the latter name derived from an often told off-color joke). His last vessel was a 28' sail boat, the Katie. He and his crew sailed the Katie to Cuba in 1999. Chester was active member of the St. Pete Yacht Club for many years. Chester was also an outdoorsman, who loved the mountains and woods, and led his kids on many camping expeditions and other outdoor experiences.

Chester was a great host and loved to party and socialize. For many years, in May and June, he entertained countless family, friends, law partners, clients, associates, and other guests for weekends in Boca Grande, tarpon fishing, boating, and socializing. He was a gifted story-and joke-teller, a skill deployed to great effect in the courtroom, but maybe more so in the living room, the dining room or aboard his boat. He was relentless in his use of puns, malapropisms, rustic mispronunciations, all manner of jokes and witty

remarks. Chester was always good for a good laugh. Often he laughed, to the point of tears, times beyond counting.

Chester loved people, of all sorts, from all places, from all corners and levels of society (except, perhaps, hippies; like the thinking of many in his generation). Chester treated everyone with courtesy and respect. He was a gentleman.

In 1991, he married his last and longest love, Carol. They spent over 30 years as a family; all benefited from their enriched and eventful life. The children had great respect for their dad. Chester gave them unconditional love and was always there to help when needed, countless times. His love was deeply returned.

Chester is survived by his wife, Carol Ray Skipper (former widow of Clarence B. Ray, Jr.). His children, Jesse Leland Skipper (Yayoi) of St. Petersburg, Geoffrey Carmichael Skipper (Ruth) of Plano, Texas, Jennifer Potter of St. Petersburg, and Clarence Edward Ray of Gainesville; seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. His nephew, Richard Burkett (Sue) and his niece, JoLynn Vance and their families. His first cousins Stanley Skipper (Carol) and Frances Skipper Connolly Carroll and their families. Chester was one of numerous first cousins born in the 20's and 30's, owing to his father being one of a dozen siblings, but at this time, this writer does not have track of all of them.

Chester was predeceased by his parents, his sister Josie Skipper Cowart, and by his granddaughter Mackenzie Claire Potter.

Interment will be at 2:15 p.m. on Friday, February 18, 2022, at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, FL. Honors will be presented by the U.S. Army. A Celebration of Life will be held at the Sunset Beach Pavilion in

Treasure Island, FL on Saturday, February 19, 2022 from 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

The family asked that Memorial donations may be made to Halifax Health Hospice, 1625 Veterans Memorial Parkway, Orange City, FL 32763.

For those who wish to send flowers, the family asks that they be delivered to the residence or to the Celebration of Life service at Sunset Beach Pavilion. Please do not have flowers sent to the National Cemetery in Bushnell.

Previous Events

Interment

FEB 18. 2:15 PM (ET)

Florida National Cemetery
6502 SW 102nd Avenue
Bushnell, FL 33513

Celebration of Life

FEB 19. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Sunset Beach Pavilion at Treasure Island
8000 W Gulf Blvd.
Sunset Beach, Treasure Island, FL 33706