

OBITUARIES

CHARLES HUGH KLENSCH '48

JOURNALIST



Charles Hugh Klensch "Chuk" had a lifelong interest in exotic places that began with collecting postage stamps as a boy and led to a series of overseas posts in Europe and the Far East and indirectly to two international marriages.

In high school he developed a second enthusiasm, journalism. It began with "manual training" classes in letterpress printing in the eighth and ninth grades and he moved on to the twice-weekly newspaper, becoming managing editor in his senior year. He also achieved as an Eagle Scout in Troop 114 in Cincinnati in his early years.

Klensch first served overseas as a bombardier on a B24 Liberator from bases in Italy in 1944-45.

His foreign assignments as a newsman included a stint as a sports editor (and senior proofreader) of the Rome Daily American, 1948-49; Madrid, Moscow and London correspondent for the Hearst newspapers' agency, International News Service (INS), 1954-58; and manager of the American Broadcasting Company new bureau in Saigon, 1965-66.

His most notable overseas assignment was reopening the INS bureau in Moscow, where he served for three years, 1954-57. These were the eventful years following the death of dictator Josef Stalin that saw the rise and consolidation of power by Nikita Khrushchev.

Klensch was born in Akron, Ohio on Oct. 27, 1923 to Charles Frederick Klensch Jr. (CFK) and Bernice Green Klensch. He passed away in New York City on Nov. 23, 2016.

After his graduation in June 1941 from Walnut Hills High School, Chuk enrolled at the University of Missouri, in Columbia, Missouri intending to enter the university's highly regarded journalism school. After Pearl Harbor, in Dec. 1941, Chuk joined the U.S. Army Air Corps reserve, remaining at university until the spring of 1943 because the Air Corps had signed

newly created pre-cadet programs set up at universities. Chuk wound up at Southwestern University in Memphis after basic training at Keesler Field, Biloxi, MS.

Chuk graduated as a second lieutenant bombardier at Midland Air Base in Texas, May 1944. In November, after crew assignment and training in central Mass. he flew with his crew in a brand new B-24 Liberator bomber from Mitchell Field, Long Island to Southern Italy by way of Newfoundland, Gander Bay, Canary Islands, and Algiers.

After five bombing missions with the 449th Bomb Group of the 15th Army Air Force over southern Germany, Austria and northern Italy, Chuk was reassigned to a special group that dropped supplies and agents from allied nations to partisans in Yugoslavia, northern Italy, Austria and southern France—first from Brindisi on the Italian boot heel, then from Castiglione, on the northwest coast south of Leghorn (Livorno). After 28 missions (mostly at night) Chuk was hospitalized for six weeks with an illness. He was still in the hospital when the war ended in Europe (VE Day).

He returned to the USA in a Liberty ship named Lincoln Steffens (1866-1936), a famed "muckraking" journalist, whose autobiography had been an inspiration to Chuk when he was managing editor of the high school semi-weekly newspaper.

Chuk entered Williams College in Williamstown, Mass. in the spring of 1946, three months after his release from the Army Air Corps. In the accelerated immediate postwar college program, he graduated with a bachelor of arts in June 1948. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. He attended a language school at Bolzano in the Italian alps on the GI Bill of Rights, studying Italian five hours a day, five days a week and skiing in the nearby Alpi di Siusi on weekends. He returned to Rome after two months of study and was hired by the successor to Stars & Stripes (the wartime U.S. Armed Forces daily newspaper) in Italy, the Rome Daily American, as chief proofreader, who also put out the daily sports and financial pages. A few months later a colleague who had moved from Durango to Colorado Springs helped Chuk secure a copyreader job with the Colorado Springs Free Press and a few months later another colleague introduced him to a job with INS in Denver. In Sept. of 1950 after moving to Denver, he was married to Elisabeth Burnford-Davey, an Englishwoman he had dated in Colorado Springs.

With INS efforts to restate in Moscow, Chuk volunteered for a Moscow correspondent job. When the INS visa request was granted in 1954, he was transferred from a temporary assignment as Madrid correspondent to open the new INS Moscow bureau.

Chuk retired from the Citibank public relations department in 1986.

Chuk is survived by his second wife, Elsa Klensch of N.Y., daughter Gabriele Klensch; son Charles Klensch IV (Fran); grandsons Ethan Klensch (Rachael) and Charles Klensch V; great grandson Austin Klensch; and sister June Klensch, all of R.I. Chuk was cremated in New York City. A Celebration of his life will be held at Peace Dale Congregational Church, 261 Columbia St., South Kingstown on Saturday, Dec. 17 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers, a donation in Chuk's memory to South County Museum (in support of the print shop), P.O. Box 709, Narragansett, RI 02882 will be appreciated.

