



*Charles W. Stephens*

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1930–1990

By J. R. Burnett

Charles W. Stephens, or "Charlie" as he was known to his family and friends, died on July 16, 1990, just a few days short of the age of 60. Charlie retired in 1986 as the corporate vice-president and deputy general manager of the Electronics and Defense Sector of TRW Inc. From retirement until his death, Charlie was a technical consultant to TRW.

Elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1985, Charlie was an innovative, dedicated professional known for his many technical contributions to space electronic and communications systems, his mentoring the professional growth of many engineers, and his service to the engineering profession both within TRW and in the larger technical community.

Charlie was born on July 26, 1930, in Liberal, Kansas. He received his B.S. in electrical engineering from the University of Kansas in 1953. While at Bell Laboratories, he took the Graduate Engineering Program. He also graduated from the Executive Program at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1971.

Charlie and Mary Stephens were married in August of 1952. They had three children, Craig, Cathy, and Kirk.

Upon graduation from the University of Kansas, Charlie joined Bell Telephone Laboratories, where he was involved in military electronics design until 1954. He served his country in the U.S. Army until 1956. In 1957 he joined the Ramo Wool

dridge Corporation, the predecessor company to TRW, and remained there until his retirement in 1986.

Charlie, early in his TRW career, showed signs of being precocious not only technically but also managerially. His three-decade career was entirely in the fields of spacecraft electronics and space communications. The breadth of these fields included research and development, manufacturing, integration and test, and on-orbit operations. He contributed to all of these activities as he climbed the management ladder from design and research engineering through management of subsystems and complete systems, and then to overall management of the enterprise.

Charlie organized and managed the Systems Engineering Laboratory of the Electronic Systems Division, which was responsible for the system synthesis, analytical design, and performance analysis of advanced satellite and military communications systems. He was instrumental in the recruitment, mentoring, and development of many outstanding young engineers who are sprinkled throughout the management of the Space and Defense Sector of TRW.

From 1977 to 1981 he served as the vice-president and general manager of the Electronic Systems Division. He made personal contributions to advancements in the state of the art of communications technology and its applications to high-priority defense and space systems programs. His technical leadership and personal contributions to microelectronics, electro-optics, millimeter wave, microwave, and signal processing technology development have enhanced the national security posture of the United States.

He next was promoted to the position of vice-president and general manager of the TRW Electronic Systems Group, where he stayed from 1981 to 1984. This was a 5,000-person organization engaged in research, analysis, design, development, and manufacture of all of TRW's military electronic products. Charlie gave particular leadership to the Department of Defense Very-High-Speed Integrated Circuit program and was instrumental in expanding the TRW business into avionics. He was chairman of the board of Colorado Electronics, a subsidiary of TRW.

His last position, from which he retired, was vice-president and deputy general manager of TRW's Electronics and Defense Sector. This organization consisted of 43,000 people and was, and remains, a premier aerospace electronics, spacecraft, and information systems organization.

Charlie was very active in his profession. He had been a member of the board of governors of the Electronics Industries Association (EIA). Previously, he had served on the board of directors of the EIA Government Division. He served on the advisory boards of the University of Kansas's School of Engineering and Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. He was a member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association. From 1968 to 1988 he served on the National Research Council's Board of Telecommunications and Computer Applications and as its chairman in 1988. He also was chairman of the board of counselors of the School of Engineering at the University of Southern California.

Charlie's honorary academic societies included Eta Kappa Nu, Sigma Tau, Sigma Pi Sigma, Tau Beta Pi, and Sigma Xi. He received the Distinguished Engineering Service Award from the University of Kansas and was listed in American Men and Women of Science and in Who's Who in the World, America, and the West.

Charlie will be remembered by his friends and colleagues as a very incisive, very intelligent, very warm Christian human being who has contributed much to furthering the science and art of space electronics and communication and who has contributed much to the betterment of his fellow man.