



## Dr. J. Christopher Schnell

March 27, 2009

Dr. J. Christopher Schnell, 66, of Cape Girardeau died peacefully Friday, March 27, 2009, at the Lutheran Home in Cape Girardeau with his wife at his side. Chris suffered a severe stroke 5 months ago and fought hard to overcome the devastating paralysis and other effects of the stroke. His family celebrates with him as he enters into a new freedom where pain and paralysis have no hold on him. His presence here will be greatly missed. The unmistakable laugh, quick wit, bright intelligence and eagerness to be helpful to others are a few of Chris' traits that will be sorely missed by family, friends, and students. Comfort is found in the knowledge that he soared through Heavens gates to be united with his God and rejoined with his family in Heaven. Chris married Phyllis Lynn Knowles Nov 16, 1985. Chris was born in Wichita Kansas Sept 9, 1942 the son of James Joseph and Edna Paula Hunter Schnell. He attended St. John the Baptist Grade and High School in Beloit Kansas, 1948-1960. Although Chris left Beloit after he finished school he remained loyal and close to many of his high school friends, all of whom gave tremendous support in these final months. A prayer chain of classmates called, sent cards and letters frequently. The love and support that flowed in from this group was palpable, their prayers were felt in a million ways that meant so much to him. Chris always had a story to tell about each class member and part of his final months was spent with recollections about these friends and school days long ago. Chris attended K-State University from 1960-1966 where he received to B.A. degree in Radio, Television and Speech

and another in History. He then received an M.A. in History from University of Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri in 1968. He returned to K-State, his Alma Mater, in 1972 to receive his Ph. D. in History. Throughout his life he remained an avid and loyal K-State fan. Chris came to Cape Girardeau following his graduation and began his 38-plus year career as a Professor of History at Southeast Missouri State University. Chris had many accomplishments during his years at Southeast but his favorite was getting good evaluations from students. Dr. Schnell loved his students and they loved him. His classes were not easy, he expected his students to work as hard as he did. He made his classes not only educational, but entertaining and full of an energy that only "Dr. Schnell" possessed. Recently he was referred to as a "Legend" on campus. He had a distinct voice, a distinct walk and most of all a very distinct laugh that was contagious to all. Throughout his illness he came into contact with students he had taught throughout the years. Students from recent and past years all had the same kind words. Often he was told he was the best teacher they had ever had. He had students as nurses who would care for him with love and respect. Many of these past students cried with the family and consoled from their hearts. They were aware that a very good man was leaving us too soon. Professor Schnell loved working with all students but his favorite were his Honors Classes. He gave extra time and attention to students who shared his love of History. He was the advisor to Phi Alpha Theta for over 25 years. Dr. Schnell was involved with his profession at many levels. He was chairman at the Missouri Conference on History 1980, 1991, 2003 and was attempting to deliver the keynote speaker to the conference on October 27, 2008, the day he suffered his initial stroke. Chris was adamant even in the Emergency Room that he could not stay in the hospital because he had to go get the speaker, a mentor, and introduce him that night at the Conference. He also coordinated the Southeast Missouri Conference on History from 1977-2003. Chris was a distinguished author and publisher of over 60 professional articles He received the Article of the Year Award from the State Historical Society of Missouri in 1974. He presented papers, chaired

sessions and led comments at conferences throughout the area. In addition, Chris wrote and received over 23 Grants for Historical purposes. Chris did not let his degrees in radio and television go to waste. In 1964 he was the Station Manager of KSDB at K-State University in Manhattan Kansas. He was well known in Cape Girardeau as the voice of "J. Christopher Schnell" doing the Historical Almanac with KFMP Cape Girardeau Missouri, 1975-1980 and KRCU at Southeast Missouri University 1980-1985. Chris co-hosted KRCU's "Going Public" and Public Forum, a television program interviewing and discussing current events from 1997 to his death. He was a road manager with Mid-Continent Entertainment 1964-1967 and traveled with greats like Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs, The Ikettes, Paul Revere and the Raiders, The Kingsmen and many others. Dr. Chris Schnell's accomplishments are too vast to list in his obituary. Most importantly his accomplishments are a testimony to his love of his work. He never really took time off. Semester breaks were for research and writing. He loved to travel to Hyde Park, New York which he did many times to visit the FDR Library and home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. His love of Presidential History and his research on the New Deal in Missouri gleaned many articles and a book in progress. His family often accompanied him on these trips and on occasion his wife would help with research. He loved these research trips, they were never vacations but it wasn't work as he was doing what he loved and feeding his passion. Along with his activities and accomplishments at the University, Dr. Schnell was a member of the Cape Girardeau Optimist Club. He is a lifetime member of the Optimist Club and served as President in 1985-1986 and was the only Optimist to ever serve a second Presidential term in 1996-1997. He was the Lt. Governor of Optimist International in 1986. Professor Schnell has been a Friend of Bill W. since May 2, 1983 and also initiated Students for Sobriety in 1988. Dr. J. Christopher Schnell loved politics, history, sports, writing and traveling. But above all this he loved God and his family. His family is better for having had him as a husband, father and Grandfather. For those who remain

it seems his life was cut way too short but in reviewing his life and number of people he touched and his many accomplishments, he has lived many lifetimes in 66 years. We are grateful for his endless compassion and all he contributed to life. Chris is survived by his wife, Phyllis Schnell of Cape Girardeau, Mo.; one son, Joseph Christopher Schnell of Columbia, Mo.; two daughters, Jennifer Gosche of Cape Girardeau, Mo., Elizabeth Eugenie (Kenny) Rodgers of Perryville, Mo.; one brother, Mike (Linda) Schnell of Cody, Wyo.; one sister, Debbie Schnell of Santa Fe, NM; and three grandchildren, Katie, Tyler, and Brittany. Friends may call at St. Vincent De Paul Church 4-8 PM Monday, March 30, 2009. Parish prayers will be at 7:00 PM. Funeral mass will be 1:00 PM, Tuesday, March 31, 2009 at St. Vincent De Paul Church with the Rev. David Hulshof and Rev. John Harth officiating. Burial will follow at Farimont Cemetery. Memorials may be given to National Stroke Association.

# Tribute Wall

LM

“ Sending Chris's Family my symapthy & prayers. Former school mate/ class of 1963.

Linda Wessling Mann - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MP

“ Our thoughts are with your family at this time. Our class will be attending Dr. Schnell's funeral today. We read about his life and many accomplishments. We will be praying for you.

Mrs. Raines' 2nd Grade Class - St. Vincent de Paul - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

EC

“ Dear Phyllis and Family: My heart and thoughts go out to you. Dr. Schnell was a very important person in my life. He was on my Thesis committee and I took several classes from him. He was also a valued mentor. I am so sorry to hear about it.

E. Scott Cracraft - May 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RV

“ Thanks for being a good friend to my father, Lee Voss. May you continue your friendship in the here after. God Bless, Ross J. Voss

Ross J. Voss - February 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ I was shocked and saddened to hear of Chris' untimely death. Wow, what a legend he was and what memories he most definitely made with his family and friends! Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers and have my sincerest sympathy. Margi McClintock St. John's H.S. Class of '63

Margaret McClintock - January 04, 2009 at 12:00 AM