



**U.S. Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Pacific Ocean Division

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE IMMEDIATELY

October 6, 2008 (NR-4-08)

## **Former Chief of Engineering for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Kisuk “Charlie” Cheung dies in Honolulu—services October 15**



FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii – The former Chief of Engineering at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers headquarters in Washington, D.C. died Thursday, October 2 in Honolulu following an extended illness. He is survived by his wife Mary and three children, Daniel, Bill and Carol.

Kisuk “Charlie” Cheung who was a charter member of the federal government’s Senior Executive Service also worked in Korea for 14 years, Alaska for one year and Honolulu for 21 years before going to Washington to work at Corps headquarters. He was well known and highly respected by those in the business, military and engineering communities throughout the Pacific region.

“Charlie” Cheung, age 79, first joined the Corps of Engineers as a civilian employee in 1958 when he was hired by the Far East District. There he worked on rehabilitating the Inchon Tidal Basin and navigational and harbor projects and the Kimpo runway project. He moved to the Alaska District in 1973 where he was promoted to Chief of Engineering. In 1974 he was assigned as Engineering Director for the combined Pacific Ocean Division and Honolulu District. It was there that he was elevated to the Senior Executive Service in 1979.

“Charlie” Cheung assumed the Chief of Engineering position at Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. in 1995 and retired from federal service in 1998 after about 40 years of service with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“Charlie” Cheung was presented the rank of Meritorious Executive in the Senior Executive Service in 1980, 1986 and 1992. He was presented the rank of Distinguished Executive in the Senior Executive Service in 1982 and 1988.

“Charlie” Cheung was born in Korea in 1928 where he spent his childhood in an “official class family background” and a social agenda that expected him to take and pass that country’s grueling civil service examination. He said he was expected to become a Confucian scholar like his grandfather.

Charlie rejected the prospect of a civil service career in Korea. Instead he had his sights set on a career in America, an idea that was encouraged by his father, a Korean businessman with close ties to the American automobile industry in the 1940s and 50s. So, as a teenager, and with the blessings of his family, he traveled to the United States where he attended a prep school in New Hampshire.

Charlie said his father “made me realize and appreciate the marvelous physical accomplishments of America—the skyscrapers, highways, airplanes and automobiles—even the food production.”

Charlie’s academic accomplishments led him to Dartmouth University where he pursued a degree in engineering. But when the Korean War broke out he faced difficult times emotionally as well as financially. He lost contact with his family, money from home was cut off and he had to go to work to support himself and continue his education.

His first part-time, summer job was working for retired U.S. Army General Frank D. Merrill of “Merrill’s Marauders” fame of World War II. Merrill was then New Hampshire’s state highway commissioner and became a mentor to young Charlie. The job allowed Charlie to develop close contacts with influential leaders like Sherman Adams, governor of New Hampshire and Laurence Whittle, an adviser to President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

It was from these men that Charlie first heard mention of the Army Corps of Engineers. “They said if you really want to be exposed to the finest engineering institution in the United States, go to work for at least two years for the Corps of Engineers,” he said. “They told me the Corps epitomized competency, responsiveness and frugality.”

Charlie hoped to go to work for the Corps of Engineers after earning his masters degree from Dartmouth but he was drafted and the U.S. Army got him first. His two years of enlisted service in psychological warfare operations instilled in Charlie a deep respect for the military.

After his service in the Army, Charlie headed back to Korea where he went to work for a private construction firm in his home country helping to build hydropower plants. He remembered the words of his mentor about the Corps of Engineers and it didn’t take him long to land that first job with the Corps’ Far East District.

Those who worked with Charlie at the Pacific Ocean Division and the Honolulu District contend that his legacy defines excellence for the Corps of Engineers. His energy, intelligence and drive have been described as legendary. He is credited with laying the foundation of a platinum standard to measure present and future leaders within the Corps of Engineers.

A favorite “Charlie” Cheung quote is from the work of poet Robert Frost who was the poet laureate at Dartmouth when Charlie attended. “At sometime in our lives, all of us face the need of a new beginning. We all must learn to begin again. That’s life—a series of new beginnings.”

Funeral services for Mr. “Charlie” Cheung will be held on October 15 at the Nuuanu Memorial Park and Mortuary starting at 10:15 a.m. Viewing is scheduled to start at 8:30 a.m.