



Charles F. Gottmann Sr.

February 20, 1932 - February 22, 2019

Charles Frederick Gottmann was born in Chicago February 20, 1932, the youngest in a family of five children. His parents were Henry Bernard Gottmann and his mother Barbara Josephine Marx. He went by the name “Chuck” for most of his life.

He grew up in a house at 3940 N. Bell Avenue, in what is now known as Chicago’s North Central neighborhood. He lived at that address until he married. The house was located directly across the street from the family’s parish church, St. Benedict’s, a location that proved convenient when he was running a bit late for school or church.

Chuck attended St. Benedict’s School through eighth grade. He became an altar boy at St. Ben’s, at which time his home’s proximity to St. Ben’s became more of a mixed blessing. The parish priests would call his mother on the phone if they needed a substitute altar boy and she would have him rush across the street to serve at the last minute. It would not be Chuck’s last time being assigned to serve in the reserves.

At the beginning of seventh grade, a new student arrived at St. Benedict’s School. Her name was Anne Virginia Wolf and at first she was a bit leery of Chuck. Anne was more inclined to following rules and Chuck was, by St. Ben’s standards of the day, a bit more “devilish,” as Anne would later put it.

Chuck was a member of the Boys Club at Revere Park. There he began to learn woodworking, played basketball, and learned to ice skate remarkably well.

After eighth grade, Anne returned to her former neighborhood of Old Town to attend high school at St. Michael's, while Chuck went to Lane Tech. Anne put aside whatever reservations she may have had and the two began dating their first year of high school.

Chuck enjoyed his years at Lane Tech and did well in woodworking, electrical and metal work classes. His woodworking lessons became a lifelong passion and he put his lessons to work building his own house and later making wooden toys for craft fairs and gifts. His electrical education became his lifelong trade. After Lane Tech, Chuck went to work as an apprentice electrician at Flashtrac Neon Sign Company.

Chuck decided early that he wanted to own his own real estate. With a bit of seed money from his mother, he purchased three lots on a channel of Nippersink Lake in the Fox Lake, Illinois, area. One lot had an intact foundation where a former house had met its end in a fire. Chuck used that foundation to build his own house over the course of a couple of years, repurposing lumber and other supplies where possible in his efforts to keep costs down.

His relationship with Anne Virginia Wolf continued to develop and they were married April 19, 1952. They moved to the house Chuck had built near Fox Lake and she commuted to a job in the Loop while he continued to work at Flashtrac. He soon earned his IBEW "B" card.

In October, 1952, Chuck received an invitation from the United States Army to

participate in some educational activities, some travel, camping and other outdoor activities as a soldier. He shipped off to basic training at Fort Riley, then was assigned to the 10th Infantry Division and sent off to Trieste, Italy. He served in Company L Fifth Infantry, where his electrical skills allowed him to perform some very welcome services for his comrades and the company.

In Trieste, he served near the border between Italy and Yugoslavia and earned his Combat Infantry Badge during skirmishes along the border. While he was enjoying the company of his Uncle Sam, Virginia moved temporarily back to snuggler quarters with her parents in Chicago and their first son, Charles Fredrick, Jr., was born July 4, 1953.

Upon completion of his active service, Chuck received his honorable discharge and returned to Chicago. When he returned, he received his second invitation from the United States Army to remain in reserve service, awaiting a possible call to serve once again, if needed. Unlike weekends at St. Ben's, Chuck was not again called to active service in the army and his service ended uneventfully.

Back in Chicago, Chuck returned to Flashtric. He joined the IBEW, Local 134, and remained a proud member until the day he died, 64 years later. He earned his "A" card and then his contractor license. Shortly thereafter, he and a friend, Bob Zoski, became business partners when they purchased Berwyn Electric Company. At first, Chuck and Bob were the only two employees and they moved the business from Berwyn, Illinois, to Chicago. It seemed too expensive to pay to change the name, so Berwyn Electric it remained. Over the years, the two partners built the business up to over 20 employees and worked on many major construction projects across the Chicagoland area.

His daughter Deborah Anne, now Boyle, was born August 1, 1955.

In 1959, Chuck and Anne bought their first house in Chicago, a Victorian that had a vermin problem and which the city was threatening to demolish. Chuck ingeniously jacked the house up, built a concrete foundation, and recruited neighborhood stray cats to assist him in evicting the resident vermin. The family enjoyed that house for many years until Chuck undertook to build his own house in the city near Belmont and Central. Electricity being so close to his heart, he had everything in the house electrically powered. He also built an indoor swimming pool at that house.

In 1973, Chuck sold his interest in the Berwyn Electric Company and retired from that business. In retirement he and Anne Virginia bought and sold houses in Chicago. They would buy properties in need of repair, update and improve them, decorate, and cultivate relationships with the neighbors. Usually one of the neighbors, who got to know them throughout the renovation, would identify a friend or relative who wanted to buy the renovated house, a fine proposition for everyone involved. They frequently followed the practice of burying a small statue of St. Joseph upside down and facing the house somewhere on the property. This practice is believed to hasten a sale. The statue is then dug up, given a good rinse, and taken to the next property. His peripatetic St. Joseph statue is believed to be on a shelf in his woodworking annex.

Chuck and Anne purchased a motor home and traveled the country. With more leisure time, he hunted for deer and fished whenever possible. He and Anne traveled to Las Vegas once, but to fish rather than to attend shows.

Upon his retirement, he moved to a house on Oriole Street in the Dunning neighborhood and became a member of St. Francis Borgia Parish. There he volunteered with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, delivered meals on wheels, and attended daily Mass whenever possible. He was a member of the

American Legion River Grove post for many years and a life member, 4th Degree, of the Knights of Columbus, Assembly 189, Council 1949.

In his later years, he built wooden toys for gifts and sale at craft fairs. He had an annex to his garage where he worked, often in sawdust a bit deeper than is generally thought advisable. It was his haven after selling his Wisconsin retreat.

Chuck lived with Anne Virginia, his wife of 66 years, until her death May 7, 2018, and with his son Charles Frederick, Jr., until his death February 13, 2019. He is survived by his daughter Deborah Anne Boyle.

Visitation will be from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Tuesday February 26, at Schielka Addison Street Funeral Home, 7710 W. Addison Street, Chicago. A Requiem Mass will be offered at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday February 27 at St. Francis Borgia Church, Stokes Chapel, 8033 W. Addison Street, Chicago. Interment with military honors will follow at St. Joseph Cemetery, River Grove IL.

Tribute Wall

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“ *The BG's purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Charles F. Gottmann Sr..*



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