



Berry Lawrence Chesser, Jr.

May 24, 1957 - June 24, 2011

Berry Lawrence Chesser, Jr., 54, died June 24th at his home in Ridgecrest where he had been employed with the Jacobs Naval Systems Group since November 2009. The cause was ALS (“Lou Gehrig’s Disease”), which he had fought since being diagnosed in January of this year.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, July 16, 2011 at Memory Chapel Funeral Home in Laurel, MS, with visitation prior to the service beginning at 9:00 a.m. Burial will follow at Lake Park Hills Cemetery in Laurel. Rev. Brent Benson and Dr. Randall Turner will conduct the services. Chesser was born May 24, 1957 in Columbus, MS and was there until 1971, when his family moved to Laurel, MS, where he was a 1975 graduate of R. H. Watkins High School. In Laurel, he was praised for his academic excellence, his good nature, and his athletic ability, starting at the center position on the R. H. Watkins High School championship football team. He subsequently earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Washington and became an applications engineer for the Nalco Chemical Company, the world’s largest sustainability services company, focused on industrial water, energy and air applications.

Lawrence was well known for enjoying intellectual challenges as well as for ardently following his personal interests. So it really came as no surprise to family and friends when – amidst a successful career in the highly challenging field of chemical engineering – he decided to change course and follow a life-long passion by pursuing a degree in perhaps the most difficult engineering

field: aerospace engineering.

Chesser earned his Master of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering from Mississippi State University in December 1992, at a time when MSU was one of the centers of development for a new era in computational fluid dynamics. Under this new approach, computer modeling became an efficient and effective means of understanding aerodynamics for airplanes and their “stores” as an alternative to wind tunnel or actual flight tests; and, as a CFD Project Engineer working with the U. S. Air Force SEEK EAGLE Office at Eglin Air Force Base, Chesser was deeply involved in the use of this computer modeling. From then on, he devoted his work to, as he put it: “working with airplanes and the things that fall off of them.” Chesser later was active in the development of the Institute for High Performance Computing (HPC) Applications to Air Armament (IHAAA) in 2004, and ultimately ran the Institute. He was also a member of Sigma Gamma Tau, the national honor society for Aerospace Engineering.

Lawrence Chesser was known for his generosity, spirit and an independent streak. Without hesitation he would step in to help those down on their luck – friends and strangers alike. In his avocations, there were no half-measures and he had an obvious joy in sharing his pursuits: from fishing to flying to reading to riding a seemingly endless series of motorcycles along both the open and the rocky road.

He is preceded in death by his father Berry Lawrence Chesser and grandparents James Monroe Garnett, Mellgwin Coody Garnett, John Samuel Chesser and Ethel Franks Chesser.

Chesser is survived by his wife Maria Amalia Chesser of Ridgecrest, CA; his mother Patricia Garnett Chesser and his mother-in-law Mercedes Bernal Bishop both of Laurel; sisters (brothers-in-law) Anne Chesser Hannaford of Evergreen, CO, Mellgwin Chesser Ramsey (Brad) of Marietta, GA and Margaret Chesser Thomason (Paul) of Charlotte, NC; stepchildren Rachel, Sarah, David, and Elizabeth Chaffin; nieces Sally Barker, Patricia Hannaford and Ana Thomason; and, nephews Thomas Hannaford, Julian Ramsey,

Monroe Ramsey and Walt Ramsey. After being diagnosed with ALS, Chesser discovered late in life that he was in fact one of "Jerry's Kids." The generous loan of a power wheelchair through the Muscular Dystrophy Association was a gift beyond measure. As the MDA also funds ALS research, the family would appreciate – in lieu of flowers – memorial gifts to the MDA in remembrance of Berry Lawrence Chesser, Jr.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Dearest Friend,
It's hard to say good-bye old friend,
You will be sorely missed.
Leaving port with your seat empty,
The boat will surely list.
I pray that we will meet again,
To fish the day away!
And when wetting a line I will think of you,
Until my dying day.
Shawn Patrick Thomas*

Shawn P. Thomas - July 14, 2011 at 02:03 PM

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“ *Maria and Anne, Lawrence was a great guy with a terrific soul. He will be missed.*

Lawran Bankston Richter - July 13, 2011 at 11:09 AM