



## *Arizona Chili Icon Chuck "Sarge" Dugan*

The chili world lost a good friend and great cook, Charles (Chuck) "Sarge's Mess Hall Chili" Dugan. After a long fight with cancer, Chuck passed away in his sleep the evening of 1 June, 2004.

Chuck Dugan was born in Brockway, Pennsylvania and entered the Army in 1961, honorably serving our country as a member of the Adjutant General Corps for 22 years. He earned the Bronze Star medal, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry (w/Palm), and numerous other medals and honors. After retiring as a Master Sergeant, he continued his work for Department of the Army as a civil servant here at Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

Chuck started cooking about 1988 or 89, and he told me that when he first started out, he didn't know the rules...and consequently broke a few...he was grinding up onion but not so small that you couldn't see and he was using pre-mix chili powder exclusively....but, he quickly learned and became one of the best cooks in High Desert Pod, qualifying for Terlingua each of the last 15 years (to include this year with 19 points already).

His time with High Desert Pod was not solely occupied with cooking chili; he was Great Pepper, Pepper Popper, Chili Penny, Chilicity, Area Referee, and Regional Referee, where he kept those of us who weren't so savvy on the subtleties of judging straight, as a matter of fact, he was a stickler for doing it right. His coaching and guidance and teaching are one of the reasons that our pod has had very few problems with judging results for the last several years. He was also a member of our scholarship committee, working to ensure the best students possible were submitted for both the CASI scholarship fund and for our own pod scholarship fund.

He loved to travel, and went through three motor homes after starting off in a pickup truck, and then a van, sleeping in a sleeping bag wherever he could find a dry spot. He had chili friends all over the southwest, to include Phoenix, Tucson, New Mexico, west Texas, Nevada, and of course, Terlingua. Going to TICC was one of his favorite activities, and he seemed to know everybody there. He would travel to other Pod sites and get invited to dinner and also had a constant stream of folks visiting him at his motor home. He especially loved the stew feed provided by his

friends from Texas and truly enjoyed the company of the members of the Black Gold Pod.

He started the Paul's Pub CCO here in Sierra Vista, his favorite watering hole. While not the biggest CCO in Arizona, it certainly drew folks from far and wide and raised some good money for various charities to include this year the Junior ROTC from Buena High School.

His favorite trophy was the coveted Brass Roadrunner from Dorothy William's cook-off at La Kiva in Terlingua, although had he ever placed at the Terlingua International Chili Championship, I think that would have been one of his top two. He never placed at TICC, but he tried as best he could, finishing last year (2003) in the next category down from final table (top 21-35). He also always wanted to match his Roadrunner with one of the Horny Toad trophies from the Odessa CCO, but never managed to place there.

Last year at TICC, our friend was honored by the Great Peppers of Arizona by being selected as the Arizona Chili Head of the Year for 2003. He was also surprised and greatly pleased when the Houston Pod honored him by inducting him into the Chili Hall of Flame. Chuck was truly one of the best and deserved the recognition he received.

One little secret that only his closest friends knew, is that Chuck hated to cook, and did not really like the taste of his own chili. Just before turn-in, he would sample his chili, chew the meat a little bit, then always spit it out. He frequently said that the nastier it tasted to him, the better he would place, and time after time, what he said came to pass. When he liked his chili....it would not do well. When he thought it was awful...he would usually take a 1st, 2d, or 3rd.

Sarge's byword was honor. Many of our rules are on the honor system, and this was one of his strongest feelings, that cooks should follow the rules, regardless of what that cook thought of the rule.

Chuck got to cook with us one last time at Tombstone, Arizona's Wyatt Earp Days CCO. He was having a rough time of it, but insisted that he go and cook so that he could see his friends again. All of his chili cook friends attending that day came by and it was obvious that he was truly loved and honored. While I was taking him home, he thanked me for helping him have a great day, although he prodded me to get him home by asking me if I was done "bragging".... He was always modest and looked to the future, not the glory of the past.

Chuck was interred at the Fort Huachuca Old Post Cemetery among the history he enjoyed so much and among the mountains and trees of the area he loved for the last 25 years. He was given full military honors, and there were no dry eyes when Taps was played by a lone bugler with those haunting notes echoing off the hills.

The family has requested that in lieu of flowers, condolences may be made to Geraldine Wildfire (Chuck's sister), 173 Wehler Road, St. Mary's, PA 15857. Cash donations may be made to the High Desert Pod, Charles C. Dugan Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 1023, Hereford, AZ 85615. Please make checks out to High Desert Pod and in the memo section write, "Charles C. Dugan Scholarship Fund."

*We're gonna miss you Chuck, you are one of the greatest.*

*Charles C. Dugan, "Chuck" – Sarges Mess Hall Chili  
12/5/38 – 6/1/04*