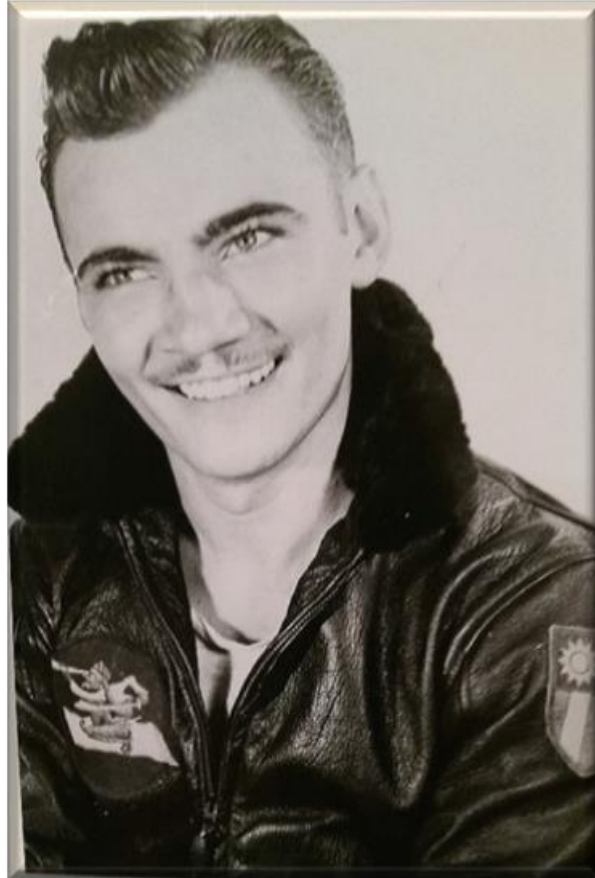


An exclusive interview with Aerodyne's Founder & Chairman Emeritus (Feb. 2015).

Postscript: Dr. Allen passed away on Dec. 21, 2016, two days before his 92nd birthday.

Dr. Charles A. Allen: A Life Well Lived

"There is a mysterious cycle in human events. To some generations, much is given. Of other generations, much is expected. This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny." – President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (June 1936)



**Dr. Charles A. Allen, Founder of Aerodyne Industries
(Dec. 23, 1924 – Dec. 21, 2016)**

Charles Allen was only eleven years old and attending grade school in Philadelphia when President Roosevelt addressed the 1936 Democratic National Convention in his hometown, but FDR's words would prove prescient for many of his generation.

"Philadelphia is a good city in which to write American history," Roosevelt said. "This is fitting ground on which to reaffirm the faith of our fathers; to pledge ourselves to restore to the people a wider freedom; to give to 1936 as the founders gave to 1776 - an American way of life."

One day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, President Roosevelt delivered a speech to Congress on Dec. 8, 1941 describing the previous day as "a date which will live in infamy."

Less than a year later, on Nov. 18, 1942, 17-year old Charles Allen joined the United States Navy and became an integral member of a generation that had a *rendezvous with destiny*. A group that decades later would be proclaimed "*The Greatest Generation*."

“I was in my senior year of high school (Philly’s Northeast High School) when the war broke out in 1941, but I was only 16 and they wouldn’t take you in the Navy until you were 17,” Charles said. “So after I graduated, I went in the Navy.”

“I joined the Navy because they told us we’d have a clean place to sleep at night; it was better than a foxhole, and the Marines, well, they don’t sleep at all! So the Navy was a very good choice and it was a chance to travel. I’ve been to the Seven Seas, aboard six aircraft carriers; we got to go to the Mediterranean and stop off in France.”

The Battle of Okinawa

Charles also participated in the largest amphibious invasion and last major campaign of the Pacific War – the Battle of Okinawa. The most brutal clash of the Pacific War, the Navy suffered its greatest casualties in a single engagement.

“I was stationed on an aircraft carrier and one of our first jobs was the Battle of Okinawa,” Charles said. “We flew the TBM Avenger (torpedo bomber) in a composite squadron for the Navy.”



Charles flew a TBM Avenger torpedo bomber in the Battle of Okinawa (1945).

The invasion began April 1, 1945 with the heaviest concentration of naval gunfire ever assembled to support an amphibious landing. Ten American battleships, nine cruisers, 23 destroyers and their escorts and 117 rocket gunboats fired 3,800 *tons* of shells at Okinawa in the first 24 hours, paving the way for 60,000 troops to land with little opposition.

“Things were moving so fast you didn’t have time to look back and evaluate; it was just go-go-go!” he said. “They (Japanese) were bashing up our airplanes and we used to take those, cut them in half, and take the good tail of one and weld it to another. We’re out in the middle of nowhere, you couldn’t call someone up and say ‘send me a fuselage.’”

“It was 12 hours on, 12 off, you slept with your clothes and floating belt on and when you heard the alarms, you could either be abandoning ship or manning your battle stations; you never knew.”

More than 12,000 Americans were killed and 50,000 wounded while Japan suffered more than 150,000 casualties before ending the resistance on June 21, 1945.

Less than six weeks later, a pair of American B-29 bombers, the *Enola Gay* and *Bock's Car*, dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, and Japan

surrendered unconditionally to the Allies on August 14, 1945; effectively ending World War II.

“We did such a great job, they gave us a Presidential Unit Citation for the squadron and the carrier,” Charles said. “It’s the second highest medal for combat next to the Medal of Honor.”

Student and Teacher

After the war, Charles continued to excel in his naval career for another 23 years. He was a teacher who never stopped learning.

He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Drexel University in Philadelphia in 1947. He attended Officer Candidate and the Navy Military Justice Schools in Newport, RI; Aircraft Maintenance Schools in Memphis, TN (F3H) and El Toro, CA (F3D); the Allison Jet Engine School in Indianapolis, IN; and Bombardier/Navigator School in Sanford, FL.

Charles was also a Radar Intercept Operator flying the F3D Skyknight as a member of the VX-4 squadron based at the Naval Air Missile Center in Point Mugu, CA. The purpose of this mission was to develop the sparrow air-to-air missile, which would be launched by a Navy aircraft and be directed by a radar beam that “locked on” to enemy aircraft at night - a first in Naval Aviation history.

Charles also obtained his license as a Commercial Pilot and was certified as a Flight Instructor (single and multi-engine aircraft), Ground Instructor, and Airplane and Engine Maintenance Technician.

Forty-two years *after* obtaining his bachelor’s, Charles graduated with a master’s degree in Aviation Technology from Thomas Edison State College in Trenton, NJ in 1989 and one year later he graduated *summa cum laude* with a Ph.D. in Aeronautical Engineering Management from LaSalle University in Philadelphia.

“If you’re not learning, you’re 6-feet under,” he said. “Every day you should take learning under consideration; it inspires you. I went to the University of Hawaii and I took a course in Abnormal Psychology and this was fantastic because you learn about people. When you take a course like this you find out what makes people crazy, how to get along, and everything else.”

Charles was also a Navy instructor on how to survive a chemical, biological and radiological attack and the President and Flight Instructor at three Navy flying Clubs: Naval Air Station (NAS) Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Naval Air Development Center in Warminster, PA, and NAS Sanford, FL.

After 26 years of honorable service, he retired as a Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) in 1968.

“I was growing up, the kids were growing up and my first wife said it’s about time I get out of the Navy and help raise the kids – and I couldn’t agree with her more,” he said. “So I was 44 years old and I said I quit; I’m going home to Richboro (PA).

“They gave me a farewell party and I had a 4-stripe sitting next to me and he said ‘it’s tough out there, you need to know how to do a good resume, you have to show them your experience and education; it’s a hard transition to make.’ He asked if I had a resume and I told him as a matter of fact I do and I was going to work Monday as a troubleshooter at the Naval Air Engineering Center in Philadelphia – I wasn’t out of work for one day!

“It’s a good idea to know where you’ve been; it’s a better idea to know where you’re going and how you’re going to get there. Sometimes you have to take a deviant route to get there, but never lose sight of your objective.”

The Birth of Aerodyne

Charles chartered Aerodyne Industries in Richboro the same year he retired from the Navy. His first jobs were as a Ground Instructor for 180 students at evening schools in Richboro and during the day he was a Flight Instructor for more than 90 students in Doylestown, PA. He also taught his middle child of five how to fly – future astronaut Andy Allen.

“He let me tag along when he was teaching flight, and occasionally take me out as the primary student,” said Andy.

“I started Aerodyne more as a write off because I had my plate full running a business with the flight and ground instructions and everything else I had going on; it was an eight-day week,” Charles said. “I had a secretary, who kept the records, made appointments, and everything. I never really advertised, it was more word of mouth.”

“I chose the name, *Aerodyne*, because *aero* was for aeronautics and aviation and *dyne* meant acceleration or moving forward.”

Charles’ many talents also helped to diversify the burgeoning company. He manufactured instrument panels for Waco Aircraft in Allentown, PA and had a Velvetex franchise to coat building walls and autos with decorative paint jobs that would “last twenty years.”

“Velvetex was a great product; it was fuzzy when you applied it, but it was the most beautiful thing,” Charles said. “It attenuated sound, which is why so many restaurants liked it. I did a couple of restaurants in San Diego and it worked great.”

“We had a blue 1961 Ford Fairlane and I re-painted it with Velvetex and added two broad, white racing stripes from bumper to bumper,” he said. “Andy would drive it to school and park it across the street in the lot near a vegetable stand so no one would see it!”

Aerodyne is Reborn

Andy would go on to a decorated career as a Marine Corps aviator and three-time astronaut for the Space Shuttle Program. After retirement from NASA’s astronaut corps, he was Program Manager for Ground Operations with United Space Alliance at the Kennedy Space Center from 1998 to 2004 and held executive positions with Honeywell from 2004 to 2007.

“Honeywell was getting ready to ship me to Phoenix and I was living in Clearwater so Dad and I had a conversation and I was thinking about maybe starting a company and he basically said ‘why don’t you take Aerodyne?’ That’s how it started. So I registered the company in Florida – that’s when we were in Oldsmar.”

A prideful Charles is quick to point out how Aerodyne has grown since then.

“Andy took the helm in 2006 and little did I know that this thing would take off like a gazelle,” he said. “He has very talented people and they do magnificent work. They have a lot of brain power and is all they had to do was find a few customers – and nobody does it better than Andy.

“And that’s the real message: People have got to like you; I don’t care how good you are, if they don’t like you, they won’t do business with you.”

Charles professes appreciation for his aviator son’s accomplishments with prideful glances and few words, but readily admitted “there’s nothing between Andy and I, we speak the same language.”

They also share a bond for flying, a link that began when a teenager from Philadelphia answered a call to arms in 1942 and began his *rendezvous with destiny*.

The Greatest Generation

Whether it be destiny or divine providence, it has indeed been a life well lived for Charles, a self-proclaimed *90-year old sailor* who was born two days before Christmas in 1924.

He embraced the challenges of his generation with equal doses of humility and honor, whether it was the Great Depression, the bloodiest battle in the Pacific or quadruple bypass surgery after suffering a heart attack fourteen years ago while on a honeymoon cruise with second wife, Joanne.

He fulfilled his duty with loyalty, patriotism and honor and lived to celebrate a family of eleven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Husband. Father. Aviator. Teacher. Student...War Hero.

Dr. Charles A. Allen truly embodies the best and brightest America has to offer; he is a living testament of *The Greatest Generation*.



Son Andy, wife Joanne and Dr. Charles Allen (Feb. 4, 2015).