



**Charles L. "Skip" Huston III: Feb 14 1934 – Jan 18 2025**

### **Lukens' "Man of Steel"**

"With charm, poise, and overwhelming generosity, Skip Huston has truly made himself beloved by his classmates. Sincere and honest, he begrudges no one the talents he does not have and says little of the ones he does have. He fights not for himself, but for others—for what is right and for what he believes. He has never had a moment's hesitation about aiding a friend; he has never been lax in loyalty or in cooperation." *The Haverford School yearbook "Haligoluk" 1953*

Charles L. "Skip" Huston III, passed away peacefully on January 18, 2025, at his home in Chester Springs, with his family by his side. Mr. Huston, known everywhere from Chester County to Nantucket as "Skip," was the former President and Chief Executive Officer of The Huston Foundation, a charitable foundation created in 1957 by his father, Charles L. Huston, Jr., and his aunt

Miss Ruth Huston. Previously, he was Vice President of Government Relations representing Lukens Steel Company in Harrisburg, PA and Washington, DC. He held this position until his retirement on December 31, 1991.

To know Skip Huston was to truly know a larger-than-life gentleman. His towering stature and overpowering presence was immediately made soft by his jovial nature and engaging personality. No matter your walk in life, Skip always asked (by name) about your spouse, your children, and your family. His memorable laugh immediately put the listener at ease. His uncanny knowledge of the steel industry and the community that bore it in Coatesville was spellbinding. To know Skip, was to love him.

"My father always told me, 'Accomplishments are a reflection of your character,'" says Charles L. "Skip" Huston, III. His accomplishments read like a Who's Who template. From his days in the Air Force, to his days at Lukens Steel, made famous by his great, great, great grandmother, Rebecca Lukens, to his days as a Washington and Harrisburg lobbyist for the Lukens Steel Company, to being the president of the Huston Foundation. In between, his resume is filled with board appointments, major philanthropy start-ups, a time as a Chester County Republican Committeeman but mostly the owner of the "all around nice guy" title, by the people who knew him best.

In many ways, Charles L. "Skip" Huston III, was still the mischievous, 10-year-old boy who hopped a train with his faithful dog Rusty, a feisty Cocker Spaniel, in Middletown, Ohio back in 1944. They huddled together in a boxcar of the New York Central, risking discovery, but anxious for adventure. When the two stowaways were finally discovered in a freight yard in Dayton,

Ohio by a dogged security guard, they were immediately sent back on the next train to Middletown. But the taste of freedom and the ability to make decisions on his own was not something that he would soon forget.

Skip's love of trains continued as he frequently took the train from his home in Paoli to see his Uncle Stewart in Savannah, Georgia. Skip's grandmother hailed from a distinguished family.

(The Stewarts) in Savannah and young Skip enjoyed visiting with them immensely. He often recalled as he disembarked the train, his Uncle Stewart would be waiting for him on the platform with an actual cane of sugar in his hands for the young lad to enjoy! Southern hospitality is at its best.

As he matured, Skip always remembered his family's teachings. "In the Air Force, I had to remember my non-commissioned rank," said Skip Huston. "I could talk with many people, but I could not divulge any information that was not essential to the job performed." Skip, who openly admits to struggling as a youth, equally credits age and perseverance as the road to wisdom and success.

In 1965, Skip was working full time at the Lukens Steel Company. He held the position of a "Heat Observer." His job was critical to the final processes of steel making, as he was the person who gauged whether the steel was the correct temperature in the soaking pits. One night, while working the midnight shift, Skip noticed a huge, brawny man standing in the doorway to his office. Taken aback by his surprise presence, Skip managed to voice a hello. The giant man proffered his name, along with an invitation for Skip to join him. "So, I did," said Skip.

"I followed him across the yard to the higher level of the steel- heating soaking pit where four men were standing around a smoldering striker's barrel. On top of the red-hot barrel was a big pot, bubbling over with soup. One of the men smiled and said, 'We'd like for you to taste it,' while offering me a spoon. So, even knowing that preparing food on the job site was against the rules, I tasted it! I then pronounced it, 'The best Chicken Corn Chowder I ever had,' to their glee and applause (knowing that a lower management supervisor had also broken the rule)! But that was the truth. It was delicious."

This act of camaraderie did not go over well with the Lukens Labor Relations Department, which forbade preparing food on the job. But the men had explained to Skip that instead of going to a local restaurant for their break, they needed to stay close to the job site because of the critical nature of the job they were performing. Thus, remaining at the work site to prepare their meal proved advantageous for the company.

Another person who heard about Skip's midnight soup run was none other than his father, the president of the company. Skip listened patiently as his father reiterated the rules of the company. But then Skip offered his own view, which not only sided with the workers and applauded them for not leaving their stations but also worked to eventually relax (and ultimately obliterate) the "no preparation of food on the job policy."

These kinds of scenes were played out again and again, in different ways, with different groups of people, but the end result was always the same: Skip knew and understood the Lukens Steel worker and worked hard to make their voices heard, while still remaining a respected member of the management team. This position was quite unusual for a member of management, but not to Skip.

On one occasion, as Vice President of Government Relations, he invited anti-NAFTA protesting workers from the rain-soaked sidewalk into a dry, tented reception area (set-up for dignitaries), to get them out of the driving rain. They were welcomed as long as they put down their signs and remained silent, as they had already made their case to the politicians in attendance. They agreed to do so and stood quietly through the presentation. Again, Skip's good judgement prevailed. And when those workers returned to work, they never forgot his graciousness.

It was with these acts of kindness and dignity that "Skip" Huston became one of the most beloved members of the Lukens Steel family and Coatesville as a whole. You could not work or live in the western part of Chester County and not know of, or know personally, Skip Huston. His quiet acts of ingenuity, empathy, and generosity were legendary. Whether he was the motivator behind the building of a new hospital in Coatesville (Brandywine Hospital) or the new offices for Lukens Steel (the ARC Building), Skip never stopped thinking of his fellow man. Even when the local YMCA came down (a project begun by his ancestors), Skip was instrumental in making sure that a new, multi-faceted "Y" would replace it.

Earlier, Skip assisted fathers of intellectually disabled sons, to establish a sheltered workshop where their children could work. Handi-Crafters was initially started to accumulate old newspapers from neighborhoods then fold, bale, and sell them to the Downingtown Paper Mill. The proceeds would pay for transportation, salary for a supervisor, and rental of basement space at the Brandywine Manor Nursing Home. Later, as demand dictated, the owner of the local Pontiac/ Buick dealership offered his car storage garage as the new production and office facilities for Handi-Crafters. When a joint venture with the Veterans' Administration Hospital was approved, the Board of Directors of Handi-Crafters entered into a design/build/construct agreement for a new building to house the offices, product assembly, packaging, and shipping facilities on Barley Sheaf Road, Thorndale, PA. Mr. Huston served as President from 1965-1968.

"When I think of my dad, I will always think of so many things, but especially our summers on Nantucket. Dad started going to Nantucket back in the 1930s. His father and mother had a couple houses there over the years. There was just something so calming for him about the salt air, the ferry ride, and fishing on the water. Some of my fondest memories are of fishing with my dad," said Skip's son, Scott G. Huston. "He taught me how to surf cast on the beach. We used to take the boat to Dionis Beach where other family members would meet us there in cars and we would have a big party on the sand. We were either fishing on the beach or over at the Sankaty Head Golf Club, playing golf, followed by a lobster dinner from Souza's Seafood afterwards," Scott said with a smile.

In a project near and dear to his heart, the preservation of the history and the impact of the steel industry, Skip was elected on January 7, 1986, to serve on the Board of Directors of the Graystone Museum Society of Coatesville, PA. He continued to serve as a Director of the Graystone Society, whose project was The National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum (NISHM), where his son, Scott Gardner Huston, is presently the president. NISHM is a not-for-profit educational institution, whose mission is to promote an understanding of the iron and steel history of Coatesville, PA, by collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting iron and steel's history and its relationship to the region, nation, and beyond.

In 1991 Mr. Huston was appointed to serve as a Trustee of the Stewart Huston Charitable Trust, in Coatesville, PA, under the will of his uncle Stewart Huston who died on August 27, 1971. The Trust was established after his widow died in late 1991. Mr. Huston often recounted stories of spending time as a young boy at his Uncle Stewart and Aunt Harriet's home, Terracina, and the multitude of memories he held there. There is nothing quite like the memories of a man who spent his youthful summers in an 1850s Victorian, gothic mansion.

Like his Uncle Stewart and father before him, Skip was always thinking of streamlining philanthropic endeavors. He noted that it was time to bring organized philanthropy to Chester County, and in 1992, Mr. Huston gathered several foundation leaders to The Huston Foundation conference room to develop an interest in creating a Chester County Community Foundation. There was a unanimous interest, but only Michael Rawl of the Intelligent Electronics Foundation, and Carol Ware of the Ware Family Foundation agreed to move forward. Ms. Ware, Mr. Rawl, and Mr. Huston spoke to Dr. Henry Jordan of the Claneil Foundation to ask him to join, and the Foundation began operations in 1994 at "Terracina" in Coatesville, PA. Several years later, CCCF relocated to the historic Lincoln Building in West Chester, PA. Mr. Huston rotated off the Board in 1998 but remained an Emeritus Board Member.

“Charles Lukens Huston III's influence in public policy, private foundations, and community efforts has been far-reaching, particularly in the areas of human services, health care and community revitalization,” according to the Chester County Community Foundation.

With the onset of 1995, and with the financial aid of The Huston Foundation and the Stewart Huston Charitable Trust, Mr. Huston merged the Delaware Valley Council of Agencies and the Western Pennsylvania Council of Agencies into one and called it the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) operating under the auspices of the National Association of Nonprofit Organizations structure. In time, PANO was formed, it became the one, strong guiding light to many member non-profits in Pennsylvania. He retired from PANO's Board of Directors in 2011. He remained as an Emeritus Board Member.

Established in 1997, Mr. Huston established the Lincoln Institute of Public Opinion Research. Lowman Henry, former Campaign Director for State Senator Earl Baker, was named President. He was assisted in this endeavor with the financial aid of The Huston Foundation and the Stewart Huston Charitable Trust. Mr. Huston stepped down from the Board in 2011 but remained a voting Emeritus Board Member.

Always thinking of the steelworker, in 2000 Skip assisted with the rejuvenation of the Lukens Veterans Guild, Inc., a non-profit organization created by Lukens Steel Company employees in 1937 and dissolved with the sale of the Company in 1998. Its purpose was “to establish, support, manage, and supervise services to preserve and memorialize the historical heritage of steel workers by creating a sense of pride and community spirit, without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.”

In 2004, Skip became involved in with the Fairview Cemetery. With the assistance of the Huston Foundation, Skip hired a superintendent who reorganized the files of the cemetery and brought it back to profitability.

On a personal note, one of the achievements that made him immensely proud was his membership in The Merion Golf Club. Coming from Lukens Steel corporate and the Haverford School notwithstanding, being a member of Merion was something that gave him great pride. To him, it meant, he had “made it.” Another milestone that brought Skip great joy was his membership at Upper Octorara Presbyterian Church (both he and Mrs. Huston are members there), Parkesburg, PA where he was an elected, governing elder. He held that position for 6 years until 2010.

When asked a multitude of times for interviews, “Mr. Huston, which one of your accomplishments brings you the greatest pride?” He would always answer, “I am most proud of my children. They have forged their way in the world, modeling the family code of conduct, and giving back to the community which has given them the most.”

Mr. Huston was married to his forever-sweetheart, the former Barbara Scott, with whom he enjoyed a long and happy relationship. They have two children, Rebecca Lukens Huston Mathews, and Scott Gardner Huston. He has four children by a previous marriage, Jeanne H. Chermack, the late Charles L. (Chip) Huston IV, Robert Stewart Huston, and David Kent Huston. He is also survived by many grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and two sisters, Mrs. Nancy Hansen, and Mrs. Elinor Lashley.

The family wishes to publicly express their appreciation for the care and compassion provided by the staff and nurses from Willow Tree Hospice.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held on Saturday, February 15, 2025 at 11:00 AM at the Upper Octorara Presbyterian Church, 1121 Octorara Trail, Parkesburg, PA, with visitation starting at 9:00 AM.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in his memory to the National Iron and Steel Heritage Museum, at <https://www.steelmuseum.org/donate/index.cfm> or the Parkesburg Point Youth Center, <https://parkesburgpoint.com/ways-to-give/>

Arrangements have been entrusted to the Wilde Funeral Home of Parkesburg, PA. Online condolences can be posted at [www.wildefuneralhome.com](http://www.wildefuneralhome.com)

**Service Date:**

Feb 15 2025 - 11:00am

**Service Location:**

Upper Octorara Presbyterian Church

1121 Octorara Trail Parkesburg, PA 19365



<https://www.wildefuneralhome.com/content/charles-l-skip-huston-iii>