

DOUGLASS CHAFFEE - Eulogy - May 4, 2011

Written by Dale Linebaugh

Doug (born in 1936) was the youngest son of Pastor Ralph and Marjorie Chaffee who ministered at SABC, 1928-29 and 1943-53.

Dale Linebaugh Dale married Opal, Doug's sister.



Melba (Holden) and  
Doug Chaffee - 1999

When I first met Doug, he was but 12 years old. I soon learned of his love to make clay soldiers and to draw futuristic cars. He would make the "soldiers" from molding clay, place them in various positions with each other, then "bomb" them, wiping out the army, with dominoes. Of course the sound effects went with it all. His father, in exasperation would state: "All that child does is pinch clay and chuck dominoes. Little did he perceive the visionary artist that was developing. He shared with me pictures of cars of that actual year, and then showed me pictures he had drawn up to two years earlier, depicting that exact model of car. He seemed to be able to see ahead in car designs when only ten years old.

Early in life he showed a great interest in the Bible and particularly with the book of Revelation. He began to draw chalk pictures of the animals described in that book of the end times of mankind and earth. His mother would then hang these pictures in the basement of the house. On rainy days, when grandchildren were visiting, they would play with toys in the basement, but always a bit fearful of the vivid drawings of the awesome animals. One little fellow made it clear that he always closed his eyes when he went near one of them.

As his years and abilities developed, he became recognized for the quality, detailed artist he was which led him to success and a beginning of prosperity. He spoke of having the American dream of a beautiful wife, a son, and a lovely home. In the midst of all his growth and recognition and apparent security with IBM, he became conscious of the fact that he was receiving honor and recognition of greatness from the world, but would have nothing to lay at the feet of Jesus Christ when he would pass from this world. After much thought and concerned prayer, he left the security of his work at IBM with the benefits of retirement he might have had and began to do paintings for Christian organizations such as the Regular Baptist Press, Bob Jones University, independent missionaries, etc. Since the income was often low from these sources, he also did what it termed "secular paintings" to meet the needs of his family. An interest in Science-fiction, Sci-fi paintings began to develop in his life. One of his paintings

coming out of that was of an ice-breaker submarine. This painting was so accurate that it was purchased by the author of "In Search of Red October", Tom Clancy.

He continually studied the Bible, particularly in the area of eschatology, the doctrine of "end times." A web-site was set up by which he could contact individuals and answer questions they would raise about the end time events. The love he had for Christ continued to grow throughout his life causing him to look more and more to the time when he would be with the Lord Jesus Christ and be able to lay his crown at Jesus' feet. We, today, of his family look forward to joining him there.

Doug was known for his love of detail. Once he decided to enter a contest offered by the United States Postal Service. It was for a new duck stamp. An artist paints images of aquatic wild life in natural habitats and sends them in to be judged. The winner gets the recognition of his art work being put on envelopes that go all over the world. Exciting! Doug had never done anything like this and thought he would give it a shot. He did his best work and entered the contest. After months went by the contest was over and a new stamp was in the post office. But it was NOT Doug's. Once the contest was over his art work was returned with an apologetic note from the contest headquarters. To the best of my remembrance it went something like this. Dear Mr. Chaffee. We regret your art work did not win the prize of being honored as the coveted duck stamp for this year. We had some problem knowing just what category to place your art work in. We had it analyzed by a panel of art experts and found out that it was a genuine oil painting on canvas. However, we have never seen a specimen so microscopic and yet so perfect. We have one question. How did you do such amazing work? Usually people submit full size paintings, and we then photograph the winner and shrink it down to a stamp size. We have never seen a work of this quality and size. We regretfully return it. Please try again. Doug said he never gave it a thought that it was a full size painting they were looking for. He thought a duck stamp painting was simply a painting postage stamp size. How did he do it you might ask, as they did? With a magnifying glass, a hair for a brush and the world's most steady hand!

This tiny duck stamp was in large contrast to his three wall murals at the IBM headquarters. This mural is one of the largest of its kind depicting all the areas of expertise of IBM. He did the entire three walls down a long corridor with acrylic paint and a common pallet knife. It is truly an amazing piece of work.

His detail was incredible. When he did the launching pad scenes of the shuttlecraft for NASA, all cars in the parking lot, though minuscule in size could be identified as to make and model. In his space scenes, all the stars were in their place in exact orbit as to the time of season that the particular satellite or space vehicle was to be sent up.

Once, his detail got him into trouble of espionage proportions. Doug was often commissioned by the United States Government to paint pictures of the latest ship or plane the Government was working on. He would be given only written descriptions and would paint a painting of the subject in maneuvers. Once the subject was unveiled and christened, Doug's painting would be given to the Admiral or person in charge of that particular department.

Doug had been commissioned to do the work on the new Trident Nuclear Submarine. About half way through the project the Secret Service entered his home confiscating both the written description of the sub and the art work that was incomplete. The only comment was, "You will soon know why." With a shrug of his shoulders, Doug went onto another project and thought no more of it. A few months went by and the painting was returned along with the written instructions with the comment, "You may finish it now." After the Trident Sub was unveiled and christened the government had the sub maneuver into the exact same way as Doug's painting and then photographed it. They brought the photo back to Doug and asked him, "Tell us the difference between your painting and the real thing." Without hesitation Doug said, "I have added 7 inches to the tail rudder on mine and mine is more maneuverable than yours." They laughed and said, "Yes, but besides that?" Doug said, "There is nothing different." They explained that his detail was so good that the Russians were looking for him and his family for the purpose of stealing his painting. They knew of the quality of work he did and knew if they could find him and confiscate the painting, they would know strategic secrets of the US nuclear program. What secrets, you may ask? Doug had the silo doors exactly like the real thing and that tells what size the nuclear warheads would be.

It could have been a disaster during the cold war. Once the sub was out in the open, the cat was out of the bag so to speak. However, before that it was espionage, cloak, and dagger. He loved it.

Another detail disaster landed in the form of a lawsuit with the Ford Motor Company and the 1982 Knoxville World's Fair. Doug had been commissioned to be the illustrator for the fair that year in Tennessee. He created the artwork for the advertizing and brochures. The brochures and everything else had brilliant detail of the events at the fair that year in true Chaffee fashion. The Ford Motor Company wanted to unveil their new prototype at a given moment at the fair. They wanted a sample picture of the car on the fair advertisement to gain interest in their new car. They sent a letter describing the car and the commissioner of the fair sent it to Doug. Big mistake. After years of work with IBM, National Geographic, NASA, and detailed government work, Ford's secrets were no match for Doug Chaffee. When the Ford Motor Company saw the

advertisement with a detailed picture of their “secret” new car on the front cover, they hit the fan. They sued the fair and accused them of having a spy photograph the new prototype. The fair commission tried to explain that it was just Doug’s concept but they weren’t buying it. The only thing to do to solve the problem was to remove the painting of the car out of all the artwork. This is why that year the World’s Fair had a white slashed corner of their brochures and posters with some explanation of things to come written in the place where the car had been. Doug thought it made the brochures ugly, and had a good laugh at Ford when he saw the car. He, of course, liked his model better.

One of Doug’s commissions for the National Geographic was in the area of the planet Mars exploration. In the 1967 December issue of the NG under the title “Mars, a New World to Explore”, Doug has a number of paintings. One is of a space age “Santa Maria,” a module completing its 8 month voyage, breaking its decent on the planet’s surface with rockets blazing. Another is of a “Mariner” satellite taking pictures of Mars, and still another of a sci-fi (science fiction) imagery of plant and other life assumed to be on the planet’s surface entitled “If Martian Life Exists.” There is another detailed painting of the orbit, and the path of “Voyager” as it races to an encounter with Mars.

Space and technology was always fascinating to Doug. Working for some of the leading edge companies of his day was exciting to him. Not only to him, but he would often come home and wow a very young nephew with knowledge of such things as heads up instrumentation, stealth fighter planes, and fiber optics, clear back in the late fifties and early sixties. Such technology would not come out to the public until the nineties but it made for good bedtime stories to the wide-eyed nephew who knew there was no one like Uncle Doug.

Though Doug loved scientific inventions and space travel, be it real or sci-fi, space was not his “final frontier.” He knew he had a Maker and would someday be accountable to Him for his life and talents. He gave his life to Christ early on, and throughout his career he would not only do Christian ministry, such as chalk talks for Christ at churches, he also worked for many Christian publications. His now famous, sci-fi web blog led many to the truth about Christ Jesus through Doug’s love for sci-fi and his demanded artistic book covers.



It was his faith in Christ and the Word of God that got him into interesting discussions with the scientists at NASA. When commissioned to do the "Lunar Module" project when man first went to the Moon, Doug found issue with the design of the Lunar Module. He was told to paint it with long legs and enormous pods like upside-down salad bowls. Being curious, he inquired as to the purpose of the extra long legs and large foot pods. He was told that the moon would have billions of years of cosmic dust at the possible height of three feet and the Module would most likely sink down becoming unstable upon entry. Furthermore, it would take up to three days for the dust to settle before the cameras would be able to take any pictures, or for the men to exit the craft in order to walk on the moon's surface. Doug said, I believe the legs and pods are overkill, for I believe you will find the dust to be around three inches. When asked why he thought so, he said that the Word of God places the universe at a young age of around ten thousand years old. Well, he painted the picture to suit their calculations, and they built the module in the same fashion. However, we all saw the landing on that great day. With the cameras working almost instantly, the module being very stable on solid ground, man took his first steps on the lunar surface, and his foot prints are forever imprinted in three inches of dust. Doug would just smile, and raise one eye brow at such things.