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Philip Cheney, 74, Raytheon Engineer and Manager



PHILIP W. CHENEY

By [Maggie Cassidy](#)

Dr. Philip W. Cheney, a retired corporate vice president of engineering and chief engineer at Raytheon and a consultant at Northeastern University's College of Engineering, collapsed at Raytheon offices in Tewksbury and died May 25, a month after undergoing back surgery. A diabetic, he was 74.

"He never spoke ill of anyone. He always found the good in people, which was, I think, very nice for people," said Leslie (Dineen), his wife of 52 years.

"He certainly brought out the best in everyone's lives he touched."

Born in Portland, Ore., Dr. Cheney graduated from the city's Washington High School in 1953, when he received the Western Regional Alumni scholarship to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

With limited funds, he traveled by train and bus to Boston that fall, his wife and daughter said.

After he arrived at South Station, he asked a cab driver how expensive a fare was to the school — and realized he did not have enough money, so he picked up his suitcases and walked across the city.

That kind of drive and determination soon defined Dr. Cheney's work ethic, they said, and he received his bachelor's and master's degree from MIT in 1957 and 1958, respectively, and his doctorate (all in electrical engineering) from Stanford University in 1961.

Before receiving his degrees, Dr. Cheney met Leslie on a blind date coordinated by friends at MIT in 1956.

The pair wed in 1958 and, upon completion of Dr. Cheney's studies, settled in Acton, where they raised three children. The couple moved to Concord in 1994. "He absolutely cherished my mother. He would do anything for her," said his daughter, Pamela of Wellesley. "I don't know a lot of people who put that much effort into a marriage — my father was just a very loving person."

Dr. Cheney worked for Raytheon for 40 years.

Before retiring in 2001, he had served the company as lead engineer of the PATRIOT missile program, manager of the Bedford Laboratories, assistant program manager of the PATRIOT program, deputy programs manager of the HAWK program, and manager of the AMRAAM missile program.

He continued consulting for Raytheon, where he was known for his extensive engineering knowledge, his ability to see "big picture" problems, and his willingness and enthusiasm to mentor young engineers, his children said. "He loved the next batch of engineers, especially the enthusiastic ones," said his son Stephen of Marblehead, who now works at Raytheon.

"Mentoring is part of it, but he'd really sit down with them and say, 'Where do you want to be in 10 years? . . . If you want to do that, here's a couple things you want to do.'"

In 2003, Dr. Cheney took his love for mentoring to Northeastern University, where he became senior consultant for corporate and government partnerships for the Center for Subsurface Sensing and Imaging Systems. As the engineering executive in residence, he taught the engineering leadership course for the Gordon Engineering Leadership Program.

Dr. Cheney was also a longtime member of several boards, including that of Emerson Hospital, where he served 20 years, and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. He served as a board member of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, the Massachusetts Microelectronic Center, and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, of which he was a fellow. He was a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, and member of the Association for Computing Machinery and the executive committee of the John Adams Innovation Institute. Full of wit, Dr. Cheney was a committed family man who loved taking part in his family's activities — even if those activities were not his "first loves," Pamela said, because he just wanted to spend time together. Barely able to swim and afraid of the water, Dr. Cheney would still partake in his sons' beloved pastime: sailboat racing. Stephen Cheney said his father told them, "The boat part isn't that great — but I love spending time with you guys."

In addition to his wife, daughter, and son, Dr. Cheney leaves another son, Christopher of Marblehead.