



Charles Henry Thornton Jr.

April 11, 1940 - December 12, 2023

Charles “Charlie” H. Thornton II passed away on December 12, 2023 surrounded by his family following a brief illness.

Charlie, a world-renowned structural engineer, and the founder of Thornton Tomasetti started the ACE Mentor Program in 1994, when he saw a decline in engineering enrollment at his alma mater, Manhattan College. His belief in the transformative power of education and mentoring took ACE Mentor from a single team of students in New York City to over 10,000 students a year across 70+ metro areas today. ACE Mentor Programs spread so quickly because of Charlie’s intense passion for its cause.

Charlie worked with many of the most talented architects of the day and his firm amassed a portfolio of high-rise buildings, airports, sports and entertainment venues, transportation hubs and special and long-span structures, many of which have set industry standards for innovative thinking. These include some of the first supertall towers—Petronas Towers in Malaysia and Taipei 101 in Taiwan—and countless iconic structures around the world.

Between his pioneering work in structural engineering, which reshaped skylines and set new standards for innovation in the built environment, to his commitment to nurturing the next generation of professionals, Charlie’s impact on this world is immeasurable.

Charlie Thornton, the proud son of a bricklayer, went on to earn his Ph.D. in Structural Engineering from NYU. He leaves behind a legacy of innovation, education, and mentorship that will endure for generations. As we mourn his loss, let us also celebrate the extraordinary life of a man whose passion and vision continue to shape our lives today.

Charlie is predeceased by his parents Charles, Sr and Evelyn. He is survived by his wife Carolyn, his daughters Diana, Kathy (Brian), Becky, and his son Charles III (Kathleen), his grandchildren Ryan (Jackie), Kaitlin (Shawn), Casey, Andrew, Brandon (Emma), Meghan (Nate), and Charles IV, and two great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his brothers William (Joan) and Robert (Gerry).

Details regarding memorial services will be shared with friends, family, and colleagues in the coming days. In lieu of flowers, please consider continuing Charlie's legacy with a donation to the ACE Mentor Program's Charles H. Thornton Memorial Scholarship. Donations can be made online at this link, acementor.org/cht-scholarship, or mailed to ACE Mentor Program at 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

Tribute Wall

FM

“Charlie, though a gifted and internationally prominent engineer, never lost sight of his humble beginnings as a bricklayer's son. He was a true and trusted friend. Generous with his time. In any conversation with him it was evident how proud he was of each and every member of his family. Marie and I will miss his friendly, witty visits. We wish to express our heartfelt condolences to Carolyn and each of the children.
RIP Charlie.

Frank Marino

Frank Marino - December 21, 2023 at 07:07 PM

ES

“Charlie was a dynamo. He had a positive energy that was infectious. He boosted people. He led with integrity, vision, and humor. Charlie didn't hold his words back, telling you things no one else would. He mentored effectively. He will be missed and always remembered. Our sincere condolences to his family.

Eric and Donna Stovner - December 20, 2023 at 02:03 PM

JD

“My fondest memory of Charlie is our first meeting. He took me out on *Elegant Solutions* to interview me for a place in *The Ace Mentor Program*. It was my first time on a sailboat, and he gave me my first lesson in sailing. He even put me behind the helm. What a thrill. That was the beginning of my long and very memorable relationship. All those who met him benefited. I am forever grateful for having met him. His memory will last for all those who knew him.
Jack Dempsey

Jack Dempsey - December 16, 2023 at 08:47 AM