

LEE KLAER



Lee was killed in a tragic accident on July 23, 1958, the summer after our Class finished ninth grade. Lee's Brother, Charles, found copies of these pictures taken of Lee on the fateful trip prior to the accident.

Message from Lee's brother, Chuck:

Thank you for the assignment you gave me. Perhaps my comments to NPR regarding the current film *The Tree of Life* best explains difficulty I've had reconstructing an obituary for my brother Lee.

Tree of Life

Having intended to see a different movie, I went to see *The Tree of Life* with friends not knowing what to expect. I find myself personally connecting to the film and the difficult task Terrence Malick, through his character Jack had reconstructing the memory of his younger brother R.L.

I am the youngest of four children. My brother only 20 months my senior died in a tragic accident at sixteen. I was fourteen and survived.

I was recently contacted by one of his high school classmates working on a website celebrating their 50th reunion asking me to supply something for the In Memoriam section for deceased classmates.

I was able to supply some photographs taken shortly before the accident, but like the movie, found myself at age 67 without an obituary, and proximity to his friends and what memories they might have, only able to collect a series of very short and disconnected episodic memories of my brother seen through my eyes as a young boy.

The dynamics of my family were closer to that of the Cleavers. Nevertheless the day to day dynamics of an Ithaca, New York school boy during the 1950's had a familiar rhythm to that of the film.

Over the last few years I've expanded on the work on the family genealogy my uncle and mother and her siblings did by hand. I find it easy to make the jump from genealogy charts to the tree of life for all things.

In retirement I have ample time to follow my curiosity and all the tangents the internet makes available.

A favorite discovery was the Florida State University %u201Cpower of tens%u201D web based tutorial that takes one to the edge of the Milky Way at 10 million light years from the Earth. Then move through space towards the Earth in successive orders of magnitude until you reach a tall oak tree just outside the buildings of the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory in Tallahassee, Florida. After that, begin to move from the actual size of a leaf into a microscopic world that reveals leaf cell walls, the cell nucleus, chromatin, DNA and finally, into the subatomic universe of electrons and protons.

<http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/>

I, like Jack and Terrence, often think of my gentle kind brother and try to imagine who he would have become, and how the continued presence of a close brother would have affected who I, my other siblings and parents became during our time and space in the universe. I have a handsome dark green fir tree planted in my brother's name. I stroke it every day while out walking my dog.

Regards Chuck