

Chet Atkins “Mr. Guitar” W4CGP *1924-2001* - Born Chester Burton Atkins June 1924 Luttrell, Tennessee, near the Clinch Mountains and raised by his mother with two brothers and a sister, Chet was the youngest. Forced to relocate to Georgia to live with his father due to a near fatal asthma condition, Atkins was a sensitive youth who made music his obsession.



Chet's gifted career is chronicled adequately, his awards many, his legacy intact. I would like to add a few things formerly printed about his amateur radio life through the edited words of his nephew Gary Atkins WØCGR. -

To Gary, Chet was simply “Uncle Chester.” (By N1RL and WØCGR) Chet's life was so busy he had little time left over for hamming, Gary Atkins of Fort Collins Colo says his Uncle Chester was never as active on ham radio as he wanted to be. ‘My father Jim was Chet's brother and was the first to make it in the music business.

Ham radio didn't come along until after “Uncle Chester” already was pretty well known in the music world. Gary said, he was interested in electronics as a boy during the 30s. “He home brewed his first one tube radio when he was a teen. That radio allowed Chet to hear my Dad performing. He said “that was the impetus for him to also become a famous musician.” W4CGP was later able to use his electronics skills to his advantage in his recording studios and workshop that really exists in a high quality recording facility in his basement.

Chet was issued WA4CZD and was active on CW for several years. “I guess CW offered some anonymity that wasn't available on phone” Jim said. “He often used the initials CB as a name on the air.” We can only imagine how difficult normal QSO's can be for a celebrity.

Gary Atkins said his uncle's rig was installed next to the dinette set in the kitchen, where he was able to tune the band at breakfast and dinner. “He loved to listen in to the banter on 160 Meters SSB.” Gary recalled one of Uncle Chet's first stations included a Hammarlund HQ-170AC receiver “that stole my heart.” Later Uncle Chester got a Collins KWM2A transceiver that eventually ended up in the hands of Paul Yandell WB4KVB, his on stage accompanist, who restored the unit.

Ill with cancer for some time, Chet Atkins reportedly died of complications relating to the disease. A funeral service was held in Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, the former home of “The Grand Ole Opry.” where he'd performed for many years. Formerly WA4CZD and more recently W4CGP, “Certified Guitar Picker” a silent key, was at rest age 77.