

Former Catholic High president dies at 70

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Sister Carolyn Tucker remembers the Rev. Philip Halstead as everybody's favorite uncle.

The Rev. Halstead, a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel and former president of Pensacola Catholic High School, died Tuesday at the age of 70. Funeral services are at 10 a.m. today at St. Paul Catholic Church. He will be buried with full military honors at Barrancas National Cemetery.

The Rev. Halstead served as a military chaplain in the Air Force, globe-trotting to bases in England, Puerto Rico, Okinawa, the Philippines and Texas, Georgia and Florida. He once was Chaplain of the Year for the U.S. Air Force.

But he always told Tucker education was his first love. They traveled to study at Notre Dame University together, with Tucker finishing her master's degree in administration and Halstead studying theology.

"He was very much into education. He was a fun-loving guy," said Tucker, 56, who serves at Catholic Charities in St. Augustine. "He enjoyed having a good time and he loved playing games and he loved animals. He always had a dog. He was a friend of anybody."

The Rev. Halstead served as president at Catholic High School from 1984 to 1986. He served at St. Sylvester, Holy Name of Jesus, Blessed Trinity and St. Joseph the Worker.

Catholic High Assistant Principal Martha McLellan, who was a

guidance counselor while the Rev. Halstead was president, remembers his fun-loving spirit and caring attitude.

While at the school, he attempted to boost enrollment and promoted school athletics.

Halstead kept up his spirit and generosity throughout a lengthy struggle with diabetes. He was praised for donating more than \$1,000 to a Food for the Poor charity in the Caribbean in 2000, his donation helping build a home for a family there.

He kept a succession of four springer spaniels — all named "Sancho," from the "Man of La Mancha" character.

"He was a people person, and he wasn't very happy if he was alone," his niece Bonnie Holley said.

But Tucker always remembers his quick wit.

"He always joked that life was terminal," Tucker said. "He was a gentle, wise man and very loving of everyone. We're going to miss him. He was just a fun person to be with."