

Ep 13 A Heartfelt Tribute CJP EDITED-aup

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00:01 Enid Otun: Hello, and welcome to a special episode of If Women Were Meant To Fly, The Sky Would Be Pink, a heart-felt tribute. I'm Enid Otun. I would like to dedicate this one-off special episode to an amazing pilot and human being, Captain Christopher John Puddy.

[music]

00:50 EO: I didn't expect to have to write this tribute. Sometimes you just don't expect certain things to happen, but they always do. I should be writing about the next stage in my career, more stories and excitement as we wander through my life story, but instead I want to introduce you to this wonderful man who made a significant impact in my life, and that is also part of my life story. I would like you to get to know him through my eyes, even though I know he would probably smile and shake his head.

01:23 EO: Captain Christopher John Puddy, known as Chris to me, was a very important and significant force in my life and career. I first met him when he joined Bristow Helicopters as one of our new captains. Right away, I could tell we were gonna be friends. He was incredibly charismatic and kind and came to us with a wealth of experience, both flying and in life. It was so easy to like Chris. He always laughed when he spoke, he always spoke kindly, and he was a great teacher of all things aviation and life. He had a spiritual aura about him. He spoke candidly and never minced his words. He was honest about himself and his life, and always grateful when people were the same to him. He made friends easily and to him, everyone had a part to play and a song to sing.

02:16 EO: He encouraged, motivated, and taught so many people, and I know this to be true, even after our time together, as he did what he did best. Chris never overloaded himself, either emotionally or practically. When we were scheduled to fly together, I would rock up with a flight bag overflowing at the seams, ready for every eventuality. He would rock up with one bag carefully packed with only what he needed. Included in that, were the ever present healing crystals.

02:46 EO: I was always interested in a higher spirituality without calling it anything specific, and he was only too happy to impart his wisdom and knowledge on this subject and how he came to have it. We shared a love of Russian literature, something I read a lot of during those years. There was a lot of waiting around as a pilot. We had long, long talks about everything, and regardless of the subject matter, Chris would offer a glimmer of hope if he could. He offered wisdom and help for the emotional trauma, but left it to me to pick out what I needed. He was never judgemental. He spoke about all he had learned in his life, both good and bad, with an honesty, rarely found. I only ever saw him really mad a couple of times when people had taken advantage of his good nature, and even then, all though he was firm and you were in no doubt how he felt, he saw only that people could change and learn.

03:41 EO: Flying with Chris was a scream, in a good way. He showed his skill from years of experience with ease. His handling of the aircraft, I tried to emulate. He taught me so many things that you couldn't find in any textbook. Even in weather, he was adventurous and confident in a way that I wanted to be. He would guide us through some horrendous storms with me questioning why

he chose to punch through there and why he wasn't far enough away from that storm cell. Each time he gently reassured me that he had seen all this before, and he understood why I felt uncertain. Never a harsh word or recrimination. He never felt undermined when I told him that I didn't agree with his choice, he just smiled and said, "Fair enough, I'll always take what you say onboard, and if I'm wrong, I'll admit it." You just couldn't ask for more.

04:32 EO: I often refer to him as Saint Chris because I'd rarely met such a selfless person as him. He was easy to approach, and he was always reflecting on something. I would talk to him at length about my traumatic past and he would offer coping strategies to see if they helped as I navigated through my feelings.

04:50 EO: I surmised quite early on that Chris' wisdom came from an old soul. It was if he had been born many times over. He devoured knowledge. On more than one occasion, I would accompany Chris on what I called his mercy missions. He would visit all manner of organizations whilst we had a four or five-hour layover to help and assist with his practical skills. He was a plumber at a Catholic retreat, a carpenter at another retreat, and an electrician at yet another in-need establishment.

05:20 EO: I remember as clear as day how he gratefully received the nuns' thanks for saving them from several days of hardship, and how he was showered with fish or coconuts and other fruit varieties, 'cause he wouldn't take any money. I would wander through the Lagos And Port Harcourt markets with him as we searched for something or other, for someone or other. He would often look at crystals. He believed very deeply in their various healing properties, and I was intrigued at his knowledge. I had amassed quite a collection by the time I left the company for my next great adventure.

05:50 EO: He sold me the very first laptop that I ever acquired, a Macbook. He was really taken with the emerging Macs of the day and had enjoyed this one, but it was time to move on and I had my eye on it. It was a chunky beast compared to today's models, but it was state-of-the-art at the time. Captain Christopher John Puddy died suddenly on April 23rd this year, age 73. He had been the chief instructor at a flying school for a good number of years and was still doing what he truly loved. My only regret is now not having the opportunity to connect with him in his later years. I will always, however, be grateful for having had the opportunity to know him and learn from him. I truly believe that he was one of the kindest souls I have ever had the privilege to know. To know Chris, and be in his company, was to feel peace. Rest in peace, my friend. You will truly be missed.

06:51 EO: Thank you for listening. As always, your reviews and comments are very much appreciated. Thank you to Lucy Ashby for the editing of this episode. If you want to ask a question or make a comment, then please do on any of our social media sites or send us an email at theskyispinkpilot@gmail.com, that's theskyispinkpilot@gmail.com. You can also reach us on our website, which is www.skyispink.co.uk. In the next episode, my flight time increases substantially on my way to becoming a senior first officer. I am seconded to another company as a co-pilot for six months, and some colleagues pay a heavy price as aviation grows quickly in Nigeria. Thank you, and goodbye.

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