

Free To Choose Network Founder & Chairman Bob Chitester Dies

*Producer of the original PBS series, **Free To Choose**, with Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman, changed the world.*

ERIE, PA (May 9, 2021) -- Free To Choose Network, a global media company, confirmed today that Founder and Executive Chairman Bob Chitester, 83, passed away after a seven-year battle with cancer.

“Far exceeding medical predictions, Bob Chitester, founder and chairman of Free To Choose Network, passed away on May 8, 2021 after a seven-year battle with cancer,” said Rob Chatfield, President and CEO of Free To Choose Network. “His profound legacy will carry on, but our friend and teacher will be greatly missed.”

Chitester is best known for producing the 10-part, award-winning PBS series and international best-seller book, *Free To Choose*, with Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman. The series, which reached around 15 million initial viewers, and book changed the world by introducing Friedman’s free-market principles of personal, economic and political freedom. Former Soviet countries used the book to establish new governments, and economics students around the globe studied the series and book to gain an understanding of how the free market engenders prosperity.

Chitester had more than 50 years of experience in television management and program development. He started educational television facilities at Buena Vista High School in Saginaw, Michigan and Edinboro State University in Pennsylvania. In 1966, he became the founding general manager of the Erie, Pennsylvania PBS and NPR stations (WQLN and WQLN-FM), which he headed until 1982.

In 1977, Chitester persuaded American economist and Nobel Prize-winner Milton Friedman to work with him to produce the 1980 world-changing television series, *Free To Choose*. Subsequently, Free To Choose Network was launched, with Chitester and his production teams producing more than 500 hours of high-quality programming for public television and other media outlets. The *Free To Choose* series and book based on the series are still in wide circulation and have been used as guides in the development of emerging countries, most notably post-Soviet era nations.

Chitester also created “Stossel in the Classroom,” and “The Idea Channel”, a library of more than 200 video recordings of intellectual discussions with the world’s leading scholars, including 16 Nobel Prize recipients, such as Friedrich von Hayek, James Buchanan, Christian de Duve, Norman Borlaug and Charles Townes, plus other notables including George P. Shultz, Walter Williams, Walter Wriston, and more recently Senior Federal Appeals Court Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg.

In mid-1990, working with TCI in Denver, CO, Chitester created Issues USA, a nightly half-hour program, whose alumni include: David Asman, Eric Burns and Douglas Kennedy, currently regulars on the Fox Cable News Channel, Jonathan Karl of ABC News, and Richard Lowry, editor of National Review.

Chitester also created the concept for izzit.org, an online education resource that now offers a library of 70 video-centric teaching units, daily current events and more. Since launching nearly 14 years ago, more than 300,000 educators have used izzit.org videos, reaching over 60 million student impressions.

Chitester was recognized as one of the 100 Most Influential Libertarians and he received a number of awards from various organizations, including the Sir Antony Fisher Lifetime Achievement Award from Atlas Network and the 2016 Blinking Lights Award from Foundation for Economic Education.

On October 21, 2020, Chitester received Northwood University's highest honor: Doctor of Laws *Honoris Causa*, for his "long and impactful contributions to freedom and free enterprise." A week prior, Chitester attended the dedication of the Robert H. Bork Library at CapitaF, Milton and Rose Friedman's beloved Vermont summer home. Three years ago, Chitester led a group to purchase the home and established it as a residential venue for weeklong student colloquiums to advance human well-being through free-market capitalism.

Chitester's love of poetry was widely known among his family, friends and employees. He began many meetings, events and dinners with Robert Frost's poem, "The Pasture," an invitation to join him on his journey pursuing personal, economic and political freedom:

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.

Chitester earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Michigan, and also holds an honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Allegheny College. He was an avid runner, clocking as many as 10 miles nearly every day. He also loved to whittle and carved his own wand for a speech he developed on "Hogwarts and the Libertarian Wizards."



Chitester is survived by his wife, Carol (Lovell) Chitester, four children, Cindee Behrendt and her husband, Fred, Kim Parsons and her husband, Larry Simmons, Mark Chitester and his wife, Sherry and Amy Chitester. He also leaves eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Chitester often closed meetings and events with another of his favorite Robert Frost poems, "The Road Less Traveled," whose ending perfectly sums up his lifelong pursuit sharing ideas of freedom.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Services will be private. [In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Free To Choose Network.](#)

For more on Bob Chitester and Free To Choose Network, visit the website, at www.freetochoosenetwork.org/tribute.

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