

## Remembering Christopher Keith

By D. Keith Ross, Jr.

Progress, whether in financial markets, technology or life, compounds. Innovations today are typically the result of constant, small steps forward that contribute to build a drastically better world.

Rarely, however, true genius appears – as if from the future – to catapult us forward. Christopher Keith, who passed away Sunday at the age of 86, was one such individual.

Everyone who was fortunate to know Chris professionally or personally can bear witness to his vision. Light-years ahead of his time, Chris was rigorous in his thinking, earning him the moniker of “Dr. Science” from colleagues at the New York Stock Exchange.

Often, his thinking was so far ahead of its time that he had to wait on markets to catch up.

At the NYSE, where he spent 17 years and served as its CTO, he led the exchange’s transition into the era of automation. While there, he pioneered inventions, like the Designated Order Turnaround (DOT), the Common Message Switch (CMS), ITS, the NYSE Display Book system, and untold other original pieces of technical creativity. And even after retiring, he focused on developing products that would alleviate market deformities as the founder and CEO of ExchangeLab, Inc.

PDQ Enterprises was one such innovation to come out of Chris’ work and the cause for my close relationship with Chris over the past decade. As PDQ’s Chairman Emeritus, Chris pushed us to reimagine new ways markets can interact and transact, a process that was so natural for him.

As a result, PDQ became a better company, and I a better leader and person than if our paths had not crossed. With Chris, it was always clear that our ambitions weren’t grand enough. At the ripe young age of 84, when he was still filling up twelve-hour workdays toiling in front of the computer, he was asked about his current project. “Internet search”, he responded dryly, “Google got it all wrong”. And so it was with Chris; we could always be thinking about and doing more profound things than we imagined.

In addition to being a brilliant inventor, Chris enthusiastically pursued his passions, whether that was time with his wife, Margaret, and three children, Geoffrey, Stephanie and Joseph, improving markets, composing operas, or pursuing his love of writing.

It is with fond hearts that we join them in remembering Chris, while realizing that the contributions he made to financial markets and our own lives will reverberate for years to come, and we count ourselves fortunate to be able to continue some of his most important work.

Sir Isaac Newton is credited with saying, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.” Christopher Keith was one such giant.