



## Paul Richard Best

July 29, 1944 - August 16, 2020

Paul R. Best, 76, of Oviedo, Florida died tragically on August 16, 2020, doing what he loved to do literally daily: biking. He was born on July 29, 1944 in Berwyn, Illinois and lived most of his life in La Grange, Illinois before taking up residence in Oviedo in the fall of 2014 and eventually moving to The Haven Retirement Community.

After graduation from Lyons Township High School (LaGrange, IL) in 1962, Paul began his life's journey which was marked by service to others, guided by his personal relationship with Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior, and packed with adventure!

After a failed initial attempt in pursuit of a college degree, Paul's foundational first adult life adventure was a multi-month backpacking trip through Europe. Upon his return and no life direction readily evident, he enlisted in the US Army's Officers Training School where he attained the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. Eventually he was assigned to a service-oriented job in Vietnam; his battalion was tasked with the relocation, out of the war zone, of the indigenous Montagnard people. Eventually Paul would rise to the rank of Colonel through his 20 plus years of service in the Army Reserve!

Equipped with the army instilled tools of discipline, Paul enrolled at Elmhurst College and obtained a BA in Elementary Education. He would initially teach in Western Springs, IL as well as 5th and 6th grade classes in Downers Grove, IL. While teaching, he pursued a Masters in Education Administration at Concordia College. This eventually enabled him to serve as a much

beloved principal at Whittier Elementary School in Downers Grove where he served until his retirement in June 2001.

No traditional retirement, Paul just expanded upon his favorite avocations as well as keeping his foot in the educational world. Almost without exception, these avocations were tied closely to the service of others.

Educationally, he served at Paul Revere School in Chicago under the auspices of the Comer Science and Education Foundation. Most recently, after moving to Oviedo, he served as a substitute teacher at St. Luke's School.

Prior to retirement, he began a hobby of woodworking. Over the years his skills improved, and he ended up building an unknown number of items for innumerable family and friends. He was especially blessed by the access he had to the woodworking shop at The Haven and all of the professional equipment.

His zest for travel only broadened in retirement. Traveling to the four corners of the world and the United States through various means of transportation. He traveled to Europe, including numerous trips to Austria and Latvia on missions trips. Honduras was another destination of service. He also returned to Vietnam and was able to visit the region where he served in the Army, where he met some of the Montagnards and their descendant family members. US trips regularly involved trips to visit family members in Boston, Chicago, and Dallas.

A subset of his travels were his bicycle trips. His major trips included a summer bike trip from Chicago to Boston. In two successive trips, he traveled by bike from Chicago to Montana and finally The Pacific Coast in Washington east to Montana. One other major trip was Chicago to Florida. Biking was by far his favorite avocation, which he did literally until the end of his life.

Yet by and far his main allegiance was to his family and his faith. He was a member of the Western Springs Baptist Church in Illinois for around 50 years and a regular attender and participant at the St. Luke's Lutheran Church. At each church it was his joy to serve the community where God had placed him

in the name of Jesus Christ.

Paul lived a full and wonderful life, and his absence will be felt by so many. His unique humor and his care for those he loved immensely will be missed, but remembered fondly, because of the huge impact he had. Paul leaves behind two wonderful daughters, Gretel and Elissa, and their families, as well as the mother of his daughters, Kathi. Gretel (Best) Roberts resides in Dallas, Texas with her husband, Andy, and their three children, Maggie, Micah and Jack. Elissa resides in Watertown, Massachusetts with her wife, Caitlin, and her three boys, Henry, Tucker and Ziggy. Kathi (Oosting) Best also resides in Dallas, Texas. Paul was preceded in death by his parents, Elmer and Dorothy Best. Paul was also preceded in death by his older brother, James. He also leaves behind three younger brothers. David in Willowbrook, Illinois, Philip (Vicki) in Topsfield, Massachusetts and Jon (Julie) in LaGrange, Illinois. He also leaves behind numerous nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews.

Finally, Paul's greatest desire would be that you could say along with him the verse that started his day and his bike rides - "This is the day that Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24

If you would like to donate in memory of Paul Best, please consider one of the following charities.

Latvia Mission fund

An online memorial donation may be given to St. Luke's Lutheran Church at [sllds.org/give/](http://sllds.org/give/) and specify Latvia Mission Fund. A separate email would need to be sent to Lisa Prusak (CFO) at [lprusak@sllds.org](mailto:lprusak@sllds.org) to specify "In Memory of Paul Best".

Mail a check to ("In Memory of Paul Best" in the memo line):

St. Luke's Lutheran Church

Attn: Latvia Mission Fund

2021 W SR 426  
Oviedo, FL 32765

In lieu of flowers, the family request donations be made to:  
Bikes Not Bombs  
<https://bikesnotbombs.org/>

# Tribute Wall

DF

“ Claudia and I (Dan) first knew Paul when he began teaching in Downers Grove School District #58 in the 1970's. Claudia taught and later became an administrator and I served as a district administrator in the same district. As a colleague, Paul was an absolute delight to work with, and we got to see more of him and get to know him better after he retired and we settled on Pine Island in the Fort Myers Florida Area. After he relocated to Oviedo, we would get together when he drove down for a visit, usually in the fall and spring. In addition to his wonderful sense of humor and his love and enthusiasm for those precious grandkiddos, we admired and enjoyed his huge enthusiasm for biking (Claudia and I had long ago given up long bike rides!)-- each morning he cycled the thirty-eight mile round trip distance of Pine Island and then returned with enough energy to tackle other activities. We enjoyed his visits immensely and loved it when he shared those wonderful family photos. Claudia and I also were pleased when Paul stayed overnight with our son, Shane, and his family while biking across Wyoming. I am grateful that, after playing phone tag for several days, I was able to talk with Paul a few days before his tragic accident. Claudia and I, like many others, will miss him a great deal. We wish to express our deepest sympathy to Paul's family on his passing.

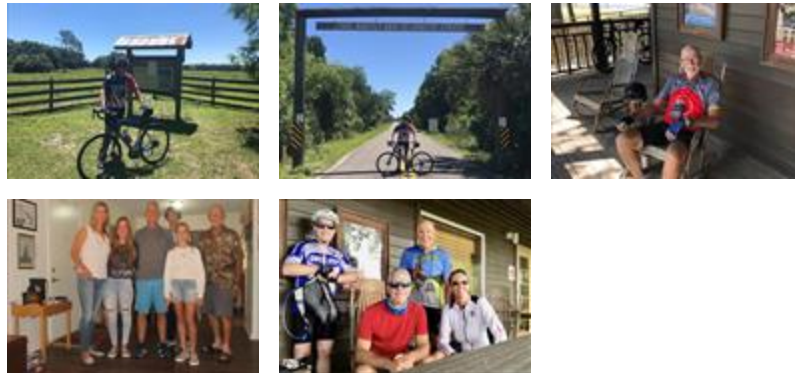
*Dan Foote and Claudia Binter*

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**Daniel Foote** - August 29, 2020 at 12:15 PM

WH

“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Wendy Hanus - August 26, 2020 at 12:43 PM

WH

“ Paul was a very dear and close friend to my husband, Bill, and I. We rode 30 miles with him the day before he rode right into God's glory! We are still shocked and will miss him, our conversations, and rides! He was a man of contagious joy and enthusiasm...showing and sharing undeniable Christian love! He always made me smile and lifted my spirits with his positive attitude. He cared for our girls...making them special gifts in the wood shop, taking pictures at their many events, and treating them with special desserts when visiting his home. Just a few weeks ago we were there celebrating his 76th. Paul readily shared about the people in his life. It was SO evident how dear his children, grandchildren, brothers, and all his family were to him. He shared fond memories of Kathy, friends, colleagues, and students from IL. He shared of life experiences, past travels, and dreams/bucket lists for his future. He had no problem sharing his failures as well, and how he had grown personally and spiritually through them. How second chances are important and should not be wasted! He inspired our faith, our attitude, our physical fitness, and will be greatly missed! We are all better for knowing him!

Wendy Hanus - August 26, 2020 at 12:35 PM

PO

“ Oh the memories that have flooded my mind of our childhood days at the Western Springs Baptist Church since hearing of Paul's death!! He was always such a character. He and Tom Extrom did some bike trips in Door County when I first moved here. He was always - well, Paul Best. Another childhood friend gone. My condolences to all his family, most of who don't know me. I will always have fond memories of him!!!

*Pam Scheerer Olsen*

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**Pam Olsen** - August 25, 2020 at 05:10 PM

WH

*Hi Pam...I'm a friend of Paul's from FL. Paul often recalled his days growing up in IL, and his work there. My husband and I ride often with Paul...and we rode with Tom and him when he'd visit Paul down here.*

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**Wendy Hanus** - August 26, 2020 at 10:57 AM

RB

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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**Ron Bowers** - August 25, 2020 at 04:41 PM

RB

“ Paul was my first principal at Whittier when I was student teaching with Kristin Mellish. He had flamboyant plaid pants and a personality built for those pants! Great guy. This is sad.

*Ron Bowers*

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**Ron Bowers** - August 25, 2020 at 03:59 PM

TB

“ We here at the Haven were so shocked and saddened to hear about Paul’s tragic accident. As soon as he moved in, he had gatherings at his cottage celebrating our birthdays, introducing new residents etc. He was very thoughtful of our needs. Reading about his active life, his service to his country, his careers in education, his new hobby of woodworking, his closeness to our Lord - his love of bicycling. We will always remember him with a big wave as he left or was returning from his extensive bike trips.  
Blessings to his family. Terry Bushey

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**terry Bushey** - August 22, 2020 at 02:29 PM

JL

“ *Paul Best Family:*

*I am deeply sad to hear about Paul’s accident. He texted me the morning of the accident and it is still hard to believe he has gone to be with the Lord. Good for him and sad for us.*

*Paul lived with me and my sons a number of years ago. He was a bright spot in a tough time for me. We have the fondest of memories from those days. What an inspiration he was to us. I will miss our calls and text messages.*

*Paul was part of our men’s Bible study and was a tremendous encouragement to so many men. He just had a way of lighting up a room for sure.*

*I look forward to a glorious reunion. Seems like a life taken to early, but who am I to second guess the Creator of the universe. Praying for the family during this time. I know his love was deep for them. Hi loved the grandkids!*

*Jim Lang*

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**jim lang** - August 21, 2020 at 10:48 PM

LE

“ *Paul was always a welcome presence, A big smile and kind word were part of his MO. He was never shy about his willingness to help or His love for the Lord! To know him was to be blessed!*

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**lois Enfield** - August 21, 2020 at 07:28 AM

SB

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



**Steven and Tracy Best** - August 20, 2020 at 07:43 PM