

Paul Henderson Obituary (1956 - 2023) - Moab, UT - The Salt Lake Tribune



Paul Henderson

May 23, 1956 ~

November 17, 2023

Moab, UT-Well honey, it's almost time for me to embark on my next big adventure. I've never died before. –Paul Henderson

After a decade-long journey living with cancer, defying countless dire prognoses with his unique courage and strength, Paul Henderson started his next big adventure on November 17, 2023. He passed away peacefully at home in Moab, Utah, surrounded by his family.

Paul was born on May 23, 1956 to Alfred and Verna Henderson in Logan, Utah. The family moved to Washington state in 1958, where Paul and his older sister, Ann, enjoyed an idyllic Boomer upbringing: most of the year in Tacoma, where their parents taught in public schools, and summers at Mount Rainier National Park, where their dad worked as a seasonal park ranger.

As a teenager, Paul helped his grandparents on the family farm in Tremonton, Utah and was allowed to grow his hair long--so long as he kept it clean and combed. After graduating from Wilson High School in 1974, he moved to Bellingham to attend Western Washington University where he "majored in parties for the first few years" and

established himself as a regular at Pauline's Cafe, before eventually earning his bachelor's degree in Recreation Management.

Paul began working for the National Park Service in 1975, "first as a summer gig, but they never successfully got rid of [him] until [he] retired 39 years later." He lived in Arco, Idaho for several years while working at Craters of the Moon National Monument.

In 1983, Paul applied for a promotion at Craters that had been created with him in mind. Instead, the powers that be hired an outsider—an apparent setback that turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to him. That new hire, Betsy, became the love of his life. They married in 1985, raised two wonderful kids together, Cooper and Hailey, and built a partnership that spanned over four decades. Paul loved being a father and was profoundly proud of his children from the day they were born.

Their adventures in the National Parks took Paul and his family on a huge tour of the western United States; they settled and found community in Idaho, Washington, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon before finally landing in Moab, Utah in 1997. Along the way, his career evolved from trail maintenance to educational and interpretive work, before taking on administrative and fiscal responsibilities and

ultimately retiring as the Assistant Superintendent for the Southeast Utah Group in 2014. Paul's proudest career accomplishments were mentoring employees and seeing them go on to achieve their own professional goals.

In retirement, Paul enjoyed wandering road trips and Amtrak adventures. Finally free to take his sweet time, he got off the damn Interstate and stayed off it, preferring secondary routes informed by paper maps and train schedules. Once each day's exploration was done, he would find a greasy spoon diner, settle in at a mom and pop motel, and find peace in reminding everyone on Facebook that Donald Trump is a menace to society.

A self-proclaimed "fun pig," Paul took every opportunity to throw a good party and open his tender heart by cooking delicious cuisine for the people he loved. He will be remembered by many as a master storyteller, a talent he showcased best with a spatula in one hand and a beer in the other. Armed with his quick wit and wry sense of humor, he could make anyone laugh and feel right at home.

Naturally, Thanksgiving was Paul's favorite holiday, "a day that truly celebrates the nuclear family, our many lucky breaks, and our love of good food." He led with compassion and love, right up to his final breath. On this turkey day, may his memory inspire anyone reading this obituary to hug their

loved ones even tighter, and to remember how much we all have to be thankful for living in this beautiful small town that most folks only get to visit on vacation.

Paul is survived and celebrated by his wife, Betsy Henderson, of Moab; son, Cooper Henderson (Dana Olson), of Madison, Wisconsin; daughter, Hailey Henderson (Sam Webster), of Seattle, Washington; sister, Ann Baumann, of Lacey, Washington; and countless other friends and relatives throughout the country.

In lieu of flowers or gifts, we encourage you to donate to Living Rivers, an organization whose mission and leadership Paul sincerely supported, by visiting www.livingrivers.org and clicking the "donate" button.

At Paul's request cremation has taken place and a celebration of life will be held in spring 2024.

Paul's voice lives on for any of us lucky enough to have known him. He was a firm believer that all good stories should get better over time. Crack a beer, cook good food, and tell the stories. In the words of Paul Henderson, "peace be with you"

You may send condolences to the family at www.SpanishValleyMortuary.com or www.SVMC.US

