



David "Paco" Richard Paukner

August 13, 1951 - February 12, 2022

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I could use this opportunity to recount my father's life, the details, the dates, the people and the places, his profession, and his accomplishments, but that doesn't feel quite right. He was more than all those things, so I won't bore you with a traditional obituary, and I hope I can do this justice.

First off, I know how curious humans are - and many of you may want to know, how did a man who evaded death no less than a half-dozen times come to die? I will tell you because I don't believe we should stigmatize death or treat it as a somber, unspeakable event. It's as natural as being born, and I am happy to report he went quickly and without pain. It was the dignified death he would have wanted, and I am eternally grateful for that. It was sudden and unexpected, but it was precisely the way he was meant to go. He had breathing difficulties out of the blue the morning he died, and he stopped breathing, and his heart stopped. While he was briefly resuscitated and maintained on life support (long enough for me to get to him), he was well on his way to heaven. There is a little more to the story than that, but I hope I've shared enough for you to know and feel comfort in his passing.

He was ready for heaven and to see his parents (Owen and Elaine) again. In his last moments, we snuggled, and I combed his hair. I talked to him all the way to heaven and reassured him that his parents were there waiting. And while I was not ready to say goodbye, I made the best decisions I could, knowing his wishes.

He was the golden child, the baby brother, and after all - their favorite kid (sorry, Tom, Linda, and Diane). I joke, but in seriousness, he loved his parents, and they loved him back fiercely. It was devastating for me to lose my Dad, but I'm also comforted because Dad and I talked a lot about heaven throughout my life, and I knew he was going to that magical place where he'd be restored to perfect health and happiness. He was never afraid to face his mortality and did so many times in his life. He got 70 beautiful years, 35 more than we thought he would. What a miracle that was.

Most every night of my childhood before I drifted off to sleep went like this: Dad clasped

his hands over my tiny hands, and we recited together, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake. I pray the Lord, my soul, to take. Amen." Daddy was ready for heaven, and he was undoubtedly welcomed by our Lord Jesus with open arms.

Ok, now on to some good stuff. Who was Paco?

I keep reading and re-reading his poems, letters, little random facts, anecdotes, musings, and riddles etched all over every and any piece of paper he could find. Some papers so worn and tattered, you could tell he touched them a hundred times - trying to remember details when he had a brain that was imperfect at remembering. Despite his brain aneurism and the resulting brain injury (1986), he maintained his brilliance, sense of humor, and kind heart. If his brain failed him, he always had his pen and paper to remember all the important people, dates, times, and facts. He figured out ways to compensate for his short-term memory loss, and fortunately, he also liked to write. He dubbed me his "little memory" from the age of 2, a position I took with great honor, and enjoyed helping him remember things until he took his last breath.

Many people mentioned the twinkle in my Dad's eyes and how he was so quick to share a smile. I laugh at that, not because it wasn't true, but because Dad smiled so big his eyes were usually just a squint. He had the best smile; it took over his whole face.

Paco was a one-of-a-kind person; just ask anyone who knew him. Exceptionally kind and a little bit mischievous. He wasn't sparring or shy in sharing his feelings with others. I found some epic poetry that he penned in his notebooks; he had the best way with words. Despite his warm nature, charismatic smile, and beautiful words, he also accumulated several hundred greeting cards over the years...99% of them he never wrote in or mailed. I could tell he picked most of them out for special people and special occasions but didn't send them. In the end, he kept most of his writings to himself. He cared deeply, but his brain failed him at times, and he couldn't complete the task. I found the hundreds of cards comical in a way... it was the thought that counts. I hope you forgive him for not sending a card or recognizing a special occasion; I guarantee he was still thinking of you (and you've probably got a card in this stack I found!). He relished in the joys and pained in the sorrows of everyone's life around him.

Somehow Paco was the perfect mix of sentimental and humorous. I don't know how he did it, but he could weave a tiny dose of comedic relief, even into the most difficult or serious situations. It was a gift, and I think he knew he was good at it. Case in point, after his brain aneurysm, he asked the doctors if he was dying. They reassured him that he was, in fact, not dying, and his response was "good, that is the least of my desires." He also cut a urine tube with scissors once in the hospital during his recovery from brain surgery. My mom wrote in her journal that he was a "feisty character." That sounds about right. I'm sure he was both a source of entertainment and joy and a giant pain in the ass during that time in the hospital- but he was a fighter. He persevered through numerous

challenges.

He was a true humanitarian, willing to give away, help, or do anything to ease others' suffering if he could. His military service (1975-1979) taught him a lot about sacrifice. He was extremely gracious and appreciative of any gesture, big or small - whether it was a stranger opening a door or a lifelong friend taking him out on an adventure. All deserved equal thanks.

He knew how to make others feel good for their efforts without being boastful. He liked paying others compliments or making them feel special. When I was younger, my Dad picked up a hitchhiker off the side of the road when I was in the car with him (much to my mother's despair). It never crossed his mind that the person may have ill intent; he treated everyone with dignity and kindness. He talked to the hitchhiker like he was a friend. A memory I won't forget. My Dad taught us all so much about humility. He would let someone take the shoes off his feet if that helped. He would give away his last dollar without a second thought. He was wise enough to recognize that life is much more than possessions, money, or status. It was about living a life one could be proud of and spreading love.

Some things my Dad loved: chess, cribbage, playing drums, lifting weights, wood-working, talking to friends, ice-cold beer, live rock music, a fresh pack of smokes, quality athletic socks, vests with lots of pockets, baseball hats, shorts all-year long...even in the winter, travel, the Navy, riddles, jokes, writing, numbers, poetry, darts, fishing, Prior Lake, his parents, his children, his grandchildren, and spending time with his many friends and family.

Some things my Dad disliked: not much comes to mind.... except his dentures, he hated those damn things! Oh, and quitting smoking...but guess what - he did it! He hid his congratulatory certificate away for me to find after he died, but he kicked a smoking habit I never thought he would! You go, Dad!

My father's character wasn't something hidden away. You could see it in plain sight. You never had to question where you stood with him. He was the best role model, making many want to "be like Paco." Even people I'd never met would stop me to say how special he was and the impact he made on them. He wasn't perfect, without sin or struggle, but Dad radiated love and acceptance to all who knew him. Paco was such a good man in so many ways, but his favorite accomplishment was being a dad, and he was one hell of a father.

So, say a toast for my Dad, remember all the good memories, and do not dwell on any regrets. Take a page from Paco's book and remember to be kind, share your smile, and don't forget the humor in life.

I hope you'll come celebrate with me on his 71st Birthday, August 13, 2022. Have a beer, play some cribbage, and enjoy a good laugh while remembering my Dad. Email me to make sure you get the invite or share a memory of him; I never grow tired of hearing the

stories. arikapaukner@gmail.com

-Arika Quick (Proud Daughter of the one and only Paco)

Tribute Wall

SP

“ This has been a very sobering time for me, even though it's still hard to accept. It reminded me how much I should cherish my loved ones. I felt bad because I wanted to go see Dad just days before he passed, but i didn't go, and i don't know why. He wanted me to schedule a time when i would show up at the vets home. In the past I would simply ride the bus and show up at his room sometime during the daytime and he would be grateful to see me regardless. We would play chess or cribbage and just talk, he always had kisses for me and told me to give a kiss to Mom.

Sean Paukner - February 24 at 03:54 AM

JC

“ Good ole Paco!!! Here's my story of LONG ago!! Doug and I were married and were expecting our second baby in 1978...I was 24y.o. and didn't have my Driver's license yet...so I had a permit and was practising driving at night on some back roads between Shakopee and Prior Lake, with Doug in the passenger seat and Paco in the back of our '66 Charger....some critters were in the middle of the road and I SLAMMED on the brakes...poor Paco abruptly joined us in between the 2 front seats....after a moment to settle back into our seats, Paco calmly stated "Jane. sometimes it's better to hit the darn things!!!"

Jane Ceballos - February 20 at 04:30 PM



“ A very loving tribute to David from Daughter Arika.

My wife and I are proud to be Arika's in Laws. May she forever find peace and solace in the memory of her loving father. Grief for a parent is a right of passage that we all at some time must bear. Our hearts go out to her in this time of sorrow and joyfull remembrance.

Dan Quick - February 18 at 01:44 PM

GT

Arika, what a beautiful obituary. You described him so well, his kindness, sunny outlook, his generosity and sense of humor and so much more. He was a very proud father and a wonderful friend. We will look forward to celebrating his life with you and others on August 13th!

Gretchen Taylor - February 18 at 04:42 PM

GO

“ Paco was a very mellow man and always ready with his huge smile a joy to be around.

Greg Osborne - February 18 at 01:11 PM

AP

100 TRUE LOVE ❤️ thankyou Greg 💕

April Paukner - February 18 at 01:31 PM

GO

My condolences April 😞

Greg Osborne - February 18 at 07:32 PM