



Michael Mauro Paparella

February 13, 1933 - November 20, 2024

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Dr. Michael M. Paparella, age 91, of Minneapolis, died peacefully at home on November 20, 2024 surrounded by his loving wife and children. The son of Italian immigrants, Michael Mauro Paparella was born on February 13, 1933, in Detroit, Michigan to Vincenzo (Vincent) and Angiolina (Angelina) Paparella. He graduated from Cass Technical High School and started attending the University of Michigan at age 16. Alongside his pre-med studies, he loved playing music and organized the University's first Pep Band. Michael graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in 1957. After serving his country in Germany during the Cold War, Michael accepted a position at Harvard University's Eye and Ear Infirmary. In 1963, he became the first clinical associate and otologist at Ohio State University's growing Department of Otolaryngology, where his hunger for science and research began to flourish. At age 33, Michael was appointed Chair of the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Paparella's calling to his medical specialty originated from his early days in general practice residency at Henry Ford Hospital, where he was profoundly impacted by the wide range of inner ear problems he triaged. What followed was a remarkable career and myriad contributions in the renaissance era of Otology, both in research and practice. Michael connected his affinity for music to his choice to help people experience the joy of sound. Raised during the Great Depression, his humble childhood and non-privileged social class inspired his can-do spirit and non-

traditional approaches to his work. He pioneered new procedures and created tools to alleviate and/or cure diseases of the ear. All over the world, many thousands of infants, young children, and adults have received life altering benefits from the Paparella Ventilation Tube. Early in his career, Michael started a personal archive of human temporal bones that is now the Paparella Otopathology & Ear Pathogenesis Laboratory, one of the largest research collections in the world. In 1985, Dr. Paparella established the Paparella Ear, Head and Neck Institute. In collaboration with the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Minnesota, the Institute has earned an international reputation for the research, training, and treatment of ear conditions. Michael believed in empowering future generations, and he trained hundreds of ear specialists throughout the world who have become leaders in the field, and who continue to be productive in education, research, and patient care. In 1985, Michael founded the International Hearing Foundation, whose mission supports otological research, postgraduate education, service to patients both local and global, public awareness, and advocacy. Wife Treva served as the executive director of IHF from 1990 to 2024. Michael served on the National Institutes of Health board and subsequently helped develop the National Institutes of Deafness and Communicative Disorders which substantially increased funding for Otology research. In addition, he was elected to the American Board of Otolaryngology as an examiner from 1968 to 1986. Since his first award-winning research publication in 1961, Michael published more than 700 groundbreaking scientific papers and 65 books, including his biography, "Just Another Immigrant's Son." As a doctor, Michael was known to his colleagues, residents, fellows, nurses, and patients as a compassionate, caring physician who embraced the unique circumstances of every person entering his clinic. "Doc, you gave me my life back" was a common post-op refrain from his patients. He continued to perform delicate inner ear surgeries well into his 80's. Michael's life-long love of tennis transcended two knee replacements and hip surgeries, and he joyfully played the game until the year of his passing. Other interests included playing the

trumpet, reading, investing, walks along the Lake of the Isles, international travel, and winter getaways with wife Treva to their vacation home in Deerfield Beach, Florida. Michael demonstrated an expansive and inclusive understanding of "familia." For him, family wasn't just a collection of people related by blood, but a bond of love and respect that had no boundaries. Michael's faith compelled him to love God with his whole heart and honor the commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Michael lived a life of grace and gratitude and practiced the virtue of giving back and paying forward. The same spirit of curiosity that drove his breakthrough discoveries and advances in medicine carried on to his humanity. Whether a celebrity or a server at a restaurant, Michael was curious about the lives of others. He lived the prayer of St. Francis, seeking "not so much be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love." Michael is survived by his wife Treva, sons Mark (Ann), Steve (Misty), daughter Lisa (Mark) Leon; stepchildren Shelley Raiola, Brad Munz; granddaughters Laura DaBruzzi (TJ), Miliyah Paparella, Alyssa Raiola, Jenna Raiola, Lucy Leon, Lily Leon; grandsons Benjamin Paparella, Mauro Paparella; and great grandsons James DaBruzzi, Arlo DaBruzzi, and Albertino Da Bruzzi. Other family members include Garry Buzard, Anita O'Bryan, Jim (Judy) Buzard, Susan (Gary) Zentz, Rebecca Foreman, and a host of friends from all corners of the world. Michael was preceded in death by his parents Vincenzo Paparella and Angelina (Creati) Paparella, brother Anthony Paparella, sisters Josephine Mele and Elsie McNeill, and first wife Lynn (Behlow) Paparella. The family would like to thank the compassionate and caring staff at Park Nicollet Hospice Care, especially Nurse Nina, and also The Sisters in Harmony, Therese, Joanne and Mary. A Mass of the Christian Burial will be held at The Basilica of St. Mary, 88 N. 17th Street, Minneapolis MN on December 2, at 12:00 PM with a casual lunch reception following the service. Visitation will be at 10:30 AM preceding Mass. Michael will be interred at Lakewood Cemetery in a private ceremony. In lieu of flowers, and to honor Dr. Paparella's life and contributions to the field

of Otolology, donations can be made to: University of Minnesota Foundation/IHF
Fund #25594 (Otopathology Lab) 200 Oak Street East - Suite 500
Minneapolis, MN 55455 www.Washburn-McReavy.com Edina Chapel 952-
920-3996

Cemetery Details

Lakewood Cemetery (Minneapolis)

3600 Hennepin Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 2. 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

The Basilica of Saint Mary
1600 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Mass of Christian Burial

DEC 2. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

The Basilica of Saint Mary
1600 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Tribute Wall

KR

“ Dr. P was such an amazing Doctor. I was born with bad ears and had to have many reconstructive surgeries and tubes many times, as none would stay in my ear. Dr. P invented a tube specifically shaped to stay in my ear and essentially saved my hearing. I continued seeing him medically for decades and he continued to be a source of knowledge and continued to work his magic to help me. He was a brilliant and amazing doctor and man. He has left such a legacy in this world and his light will shine on.

Krisann - April 17 at 11:27 AM

NF

“ Dr. P., as I came to refer to him, following many visits and three ESE surgeries (two of them revisions) has been and will always remain divinity personified in my regard. Living with bilateral Meniere's Disease, he shared his compassion and remarkable skill, improving my quality of life immensely. I know that I speak for many thousands of patients whose lives he improved. His humble yet profoundly knowing care has kept me on my feet for the 30 plus years that I've lived with Meniere's. My deepest condolences to his loving family and all those who knew him. His life's work remains a blessing to so very many.

Natalie Finch - March 17 at 12:59 PM

WF

“ I had the honour of working with Dr.P. Almost 25 years ago. I was very sad to hear of his passing. He was a great teacher and a very talented surgeon, he made a very lasting impression on all who worked with him and all of those he beat up on the tennis court his memory and legacy will live on. *Bill Farmer*

william farmer - September 19, 2025 at 11:04 AM

CA

“ I was saddened to see Dr. Paparella’s obituary in the Sunday Minnesota Star Tribune. My condolences go out to the family. I was one of Dr. Paparella’s many patients. In 2003 I was suffering from inner ear problems that were caused by Menier’s Disease with severe vertigo and nausea. It was affecting my life negatively in many ways. It was affecting my work and most of all it was affecting my family. It was taking away valuable time with my wife and my two young children. I went to many doctors, and nobody was able to help me. It was a very low time in my life.

One day my wife came home from work, and she told me she talked to one of her colleagues and this person had a spouse who was dealing with some of the same issues as me and had gone to Dr. Paparella and was doing much better. I immediately set up an appointment with Dr. Paparella and he got me in quickly. He examined me and recommended to me that I have a procedure performed by him called Endolymphatic Sac Enhancement. I was so excited at the time because it gave me hope that this operation might relieve me of this ailment.

Dr. Paparella was able to get me in quickly for the procedure because he saw how I was suffering. The operation was a success! One regret I have is that I never got to thank him. He is an angel to me! Dr. Paparella gave me my life back!

Rest in peace Dr. Paparella and thank you!

Craig Anderson

Craig Anderson - December 05, 2024 at 11:25 AM

MW

“ Dr. Paparella was a large part of my life since I was 6 years old. I am now 53. Whenever he saw me he was so happy, caring and concerned about my well being. He always called me the million dollar kid because of the extent of inner ear reconstructive surgeries that were performed. He will be missed. He made me a better person.

Mark Welch - December 04, 2024 at 09:29 PM

BS

“ I had Dr. Paparella as my doctor back in the mid 90's. I'm from west central Minnesota and although we have some good doctors up here, nothing compared to when I was referred to Dr. Paparella. My left eardrum was gone but he restored the hearing up to about 80%. I got constant sinus infections until Dr. Paparella fixed me up as good as new. I'm happy to say I've had little to no problems in the last 28 years. The man changed my life. I remember one time I brought a University of Michigan sweatshirt to give him as a token of my appreciation. I'm sure there was no shortage of college memorabilia around his house but he was like a little kid on Christmas Eve when I gave him the sweatshirt. A great doctor but even a better man... And I was truly blessed and very fortunate to have him as my doctor. My deepest condolences to Dr. Paparella's family and friends.



Bob Schultz - December 01, 2024 at 10:36 PM

NS

“ Nazanin and Mohammad Seyyedi purchased the Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet for the family of Michael Mauro Paparella.



Nazanin and Mohammad Seyyedi - December 01, 2024 at 06:20 PM

NS

“ Nazanin and Mohammad Seyyedi planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Mauro Paparella.

Nazanin and Mohammad Seyyedi - December 01, 2024 at 06:20 PM

OT

“ Oleg and Tatiana purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Michael Mauro Paparella.



Oleg and Tatiana - November 29, 2024 at 10:16 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Michael Mauro Paparella.



November 28, 2024 at 11:18 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Michael Mauro Paparella.

November 28, 2024 at 11:18 AM