



Paul Steven Etzell

July 21, 1940 - February 28, 2026

Dr. Paul S. Etzell, an oncologist, and devoted family man, passed away on February 28, 2026, surrounded by his family. He was 85.

Born on July 21, 1940, in St. Paul, Minnesota, Paul was the third of five children born to George and Ione Etzell. His childhood in Clarissa, Minnesota—where his father ran the Clarissa Independent and his mother was active in community service—instilled in him both a communicator's clarity and a healer's heart.

Paul followed his calling to the University of Minnesota, where he earned both his undergraduate and medical degrees. It was during these years that he met Mary Anne Schilling, who would become his lifelong partner and wife. Together they shared 62 years of loving marriage and raised 3 children.

Paul's medical career was marked by excellence and service. After graduating from medical school he spent a year as an intern at Hennepin County Medical Center. He then served three years in the US Army in Germany. When he returned to the US he completed his specialized training in Internal Medicine and Hematology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Upon completing training, Paul spent three years practicing internal medicine in St Cloud, Minnesota. He then moved to Fargo, North Dakota where he

practiced oncology and hematology for nearly 21 years. He was a founder and first medical director of the Roger Maris Cancer Center, the first cancer center in the region. In the final chapter of his career, he moved on to Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He was instrumental in establishing the Lake Region Cancer Center, ensuring that patients in rural areas had access to the best possible care closer to home.

Paul was known for his kindness and compassion in caring for his patients and their families. He devoted many hours to supporting them, doing everything in his power to make their experience with cancer as manageable and comforting as possible. He even made house calls. Paul didn't just practice medicine, he lived out his calling as both a physical and emotional healer.

When he wasn't in the clinic, Paul spent time with his family, was an avid gardening assistant to Mary Anne and enjoyed golfing and photography. Even though he had a demanding career, he made sure to attend all his kids' events and cheer them on. He also delivered more than his share of newspapers as he helped his kids in their endeavors. He enjoyed time at the lake near Brainerd where, in his younger years, he would perform water skiing tricks with his sister. Later in life, he could be found pontooning and finding joy in watching his children and grandchildren enjoy the lake.

Paul was preceded in death by his parents, George and Lone, and his eldest brother, Peter.

His legacy lives on through his wife, Mary Anne; his children, Joan (Grace), Tina Litchy (Mark), and Steve (Robyn); and his grandchildren, Alex Etzell, Matthew Litchy, Bryn Etzell, and Grace Litchy. He is also survived by his siblings, Gretchen, Mary, and Martha.

Paul will be remembered for his compassion and optimism ("It's gonna clear"), and as a man who loved his family above all else.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Parkinson's Foundation or the Mayo Clinic.

Visitation will begin at 10:00 am followed by Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 am on Tuesday, March 10th at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, 155 County Rd 24, Wayzata, MN. Reception lunch to follow.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 10. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Holy Name of Jesus
155 County Road 24
Wayzata, MN 55391

Memorial Service

MAR 10. 11:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Holy Name of Jesus
155 County Road 24
Wayzata, MN 55391

Tribute Wall

WA

“ I did a lot of work for Paul on his lake place in the Brainerd area. Paul along with Mary Anne were the best to work with and we shared many good times over the years discussing all kinds of things. The world was definitely a better place with him in it. RIP Paul
Warren Anderson - Anderson Construction - retired.

Warren Anderson - April 11 at 09:38 AM

KL

“ I worked with Dr.Etzell when he came to Wadena Outreach Oncology Clinic. I have never met a more compassionate physician. He truly cared about all of his patients.

Kathy Lorentz - March 20 at 01:32 PM

LK

“ Dr. Etzell was my mother's physician 25 years ago. Not only was he a pioneer in the fight against cancer, but he was also kind and compassionate and his faith was apparent in every interaction with my mom and our family. My sympathies to his family. Lynette Kluver

Lynette Kluver - March 10 at 12:48 PM

MP

“ Sending deepest condolences to Mary Anne and the family! Paul & Mary Anne were dear friends of my parents Paul & Sue Beithon in Fergus Falls. Dad and Paul would talk medicine and patient care topics often. Once when I was going through some medical issues I was able to pick Paul's brain and so enjoyed the thorough and complete way he followed up. Like it piqued his interest so he had to find an answer for himself as much as for me. He was wonderfully curious that way. My husband Bill practiced with him at LRHC in FF and spoke so highly of him as a colleague and a friend. We are so grateful that our lives intersected. So grateful for all he did for the medical community in Fergus Falls while he was here. Thinking of you all! In almost every conversation he demonstrated a high regard for Mary Anne and their family! Sending much sympathy to you all!
Mary & Bill Pettit

Mary & Bill Pettit - March 09 at 10:00 AM

MS

“ It was such an honor to be able to work with Dr. Etzell! Besides being the most compassionate and understanding Physician to his patients, he also treated the nurses the same way! His desire to do the right thing in every moment was his most precious gift to all of us. He used every rounding of patients to teach us nurses about labs, standards of care, imaging results, etc. He was an incredible mentor, and so caring! His leadership in creating the Roger Maris Cancer Center will be a lasting tribute to every patient who enters through those doors. His legacy will live on as he continues to live in the hearts of all of us who called him a co-worker and friend. My deepest sympathy and prayers to the family for your loss. Mary Sahl

Mary Sahl - March 09 at 09:33 AM

JM

“ *Joni Mosher lit a candle in memory of Paul Steven Etzell*



Joni Mosher - March 07 at 02:24 PM

JM

I worked with Dr. Etzell at the Lake Region Cancer Center. It was a privilege to work with hm and call him my friend. My condolences to his family. Rest in Peace Dr. Etzell.

Joni Mosher - March 07 at 02:31 PM

SK

*I was a neighbor of Dr. Etzell. One of his daughters was in my grade went to school with me. He was a wonderful man. There are few like him and I appreciate being able to know him and his family. A wonderful family.
Love you all.*

Steve Kolars - April 29 at 09:17 PM