



## Paul Leland Wagner

February 27, 1933 - December 11, 2021

Paul L. Wagner, a resident of Fort Collins, CO since 1975, died on December 11, 2021, after a strenuous six-year match with the Alzheimer's disease.

Born on February 27, 1933, in Culbertson, NE, Paul is remembered by many as being larger than life, whether on the tennis court or in business negotiations. Friends and family were not surprised by his determination to face Alzheimer's head on. Early in his diagnosis, he decided to focus on the positive aspects of life and participated in the Biogen Emerge study, aimed at slowing the progression of Alzheimer's.

Life on the Wagner family farm instilled tenacity, energy, work ethics and problem-solving abilities that Paul utilized throughout life. Always competitive in sports and in business, his generosity and humor prevailed with family, friends, and those in need.

Over the course of some fifty years, Paul built a thriving family business, providing affordable and well-maintained housing in the Capitol Hill area of Denver.

Paul was a familiar presence in Downtown Fort Collins, after purchasing and beginning the renovation of the vacant Avery Block at the intersection of

College and Mountain in 1977.

His first and most onerous task was evicting the only tenants of the building, the hundreds of pigeons inhabiting the roof.

Kearney State Teachers College (now UNK, the University of Nebraska at Kearney) was pivotal to Paul's life journey. There he made lifelong friends, played football and excelled in debate before graduating in 1958. Mid-college, he enlisted in the Army and spent two years in Korea, where he enjoyed sitting on the dirt streets to engage in animated conversations with the residents of the Korean countryside.

In order to assist students like himself, from small Nebraska school districts, Paul established the Opportunity Fund Scholarships at his alma mater nearly 20 years ago and made provisions for the fund to continue into the future. A staunch Republican (with some Bernie Sanders' values,) Paul wanted to assist UNK graduates in embarking on their post-college careers debt free.

Paul, the youngest of the four Wagner siblings, is preceded in death by his parents Frank and Pauline Wagner, brothers Francis and George Wagner and sister Irva Butherus.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Karen, daughters Lisa Wagner Erickson and Michelle Wagner Rice and granddaughter Ila Mae Rice, all of whom he supported in their every endeavor.

A memorial service will be held in June 2022 at the family home in Fort Collins. Until then, memories and remembrances of Paul can be posted at <http://bohlenderfuneralchapel.com/obituaries>.

Contributions to the scholarships Paul established should be made payable to

the Nebraska University Foundation, designated for the UNK Opportunity Fund, and mailed to PO Box 2678, Kearney, NE 68848 or contributed online at <https://nufoundation.org/fund/01078390>.

# Tribute Wall

KW

“ Dear Karen, Lisa, and Michelle,

*Paul’s “match” with Alzheimer’s has been a tough and sad journey for all. Thank you for the updates – it is good to have had them. I hope you are finding some peace and relief mixed in with the sadness.*

*When I think of Paul, I think of his bigger than life smile and openness, welcoming those around him into the same frame of mind. Gene considered him a good friend and tho ever sparse with praise, he always had good words about Paul.*

*Even I, now, from this distance of time, will miss him, so know that my heart is with you.*

*Karen (Wilken)*

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**Karen Wilken** - January 05, 2022 at 01:20 PM

MT

“ LeAnn and I would like to extend our sympathies to Karen and the family. Over the almost 40 years that we have known Paul, we have experienced his generosity and kindness on many occasions. Over the past week or so I have found myself particularly remembering the last conversation we had. Paul was happy and full of smiles! That's the way I'll remember him.

*Mark and LeAnn Thieman*

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**Mark Thieman** - December 22, 2021 at 07:12 PM

JK

“ My thoughts and prayers go out to Karen and the Wagner family. It has been several years since I have had the chance to talk to Paul but the picture of him laughing made me smile. Having introduced himself to me as a self proclaimed grumpy old man, I always enjoyed our conversations, but especially memorable was when he would let out that joyful laugh. A teacher at heart and a good man. Look out heaven, here comes Paul!!!

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**Joe Kruse** - December 19, 2021 at 11:47 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Family Photos



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**Bohlender Funeral Chapel** - December 14, 2021 at 08:40 PM

SU

*Paul Wagner was one of my heroes. In many ways he was a larger than life character. He lived life on his terms. I will always be grateful for having known Paul. He was a man's man. The thing that amazed me about Paul was his decisiveness. He got to where he was in life by making one good choice after another. He had a set of principles that he lived by and never compromised on those principles. Paul was as tough of minded individual as you will ever find but also had a very soft side as well. He took care of business but also took care of people as well. Much is to be learned from the life of Paul Wagner. He led a good and honorable life. RIP Paul. God Bless the Wagners.*

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**Steve Urban** - December 15, 2021 at 12:06 PM

KF

*Karen and family,*

*Please accept our deepest condolences upon Paul's passing. Please know our thoughts are with you. We got to know Paul during your 2004 commissioner campaign. We worked together to hand paint 2 "Karen Wagner for Commissioner" signs on 4x8 sheets of plywood and mount them in the backs of our pickups to be seen all over the county as we drove from place to place. His dedication to you was obvious and touched us deeply. We are so sad to learn of his passing.*

*With sympathy,*

*Randy and Kathy Fischer*

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**Kathy and Randy Fischer** - December 22, 2021 at 06:28 PM