



Paul Fortin

August 24, 1930 - July 22, 2023

At the age of 93, Paul Edward Fortin, Colonel US Air Force (ret), PhD Electrical Engineering, passed away on July 22, 2023. He was surrounded by Jane, his wife of 66 years, and their adult children, David Fortin, Joan Fortin Peterson, Suzanne Fortin, and John Fortin. He is also survived by eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Paul was born August 21, 1930, in Newburyport, Massachusetts, the son of Josephine Connors and Joseph Fortin. He had one older brother, Alfred, that preceded him in death. He graduated from Newburyport High School, attended Fork Union Military Academy. Paul was accepted and graduated from Virginia Military Institute in 1953, earning a BS degree in electrical engineering. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Air Force.

After initial officers training, he attended pilot, navigator and electronic warfare training. His first assignment was in 1955 at Forbes Air Force Base in Topeka, Kansas, as an electronics countermeasure war officer and crew member on the RB-47 reconnaissance aircraft (part of the Strategic Air Command), 55th Wing. He flew during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and obtained the photographic evidence of USSR involvement. He also flew reconnaissance overflights of the USSR from Thule, Greenland and Incirlik, Turkey. In 1963 he was sent to the Air Force Institute of Technology at Oklahoma State University

to obtain his Master of Science in electrical engineering. After completing his degree in 1965 he was assigned to the Foreign Technology Division at Wright Patterson AFB in Ohio. Between 1967-1968 he was deployed to Takhli Royal AFB Thailand, to fly countermeasure missions over North Viet Nam. As part of the Red River Rats, he flew over 100 combat air missions in the RB -66. On his return home, he was assigned to the Air Force Institute of Technology at Denver University.

Paul obtained his PhD from the University of Denver and upon graduation was assigned to Kirkland AFB, New Mexico to design and test electronic countermeasures for the USAF next generation aircraft. He worked on the electronic system of Air Force 1. In 1980, Paul was promoted to Colonel and stationed at the Pentagon, and Andrews AFB in the Washington DC area. He retired after 30 years of honorable service as a distinguished and highly decorated Korean, Cold War and Vietnam veteran.

After military retirement, Paul worked for the University of Kansas School of Engineering as a professor of electrical engineering and aerospace engineering. He taught at the Kansas University Lawrence Campus, Kansas University satellite campus in Kansas City, and the Fort Leavenworth Command and General Staff College.

In 1990, he was tasked to develop curricula for the Kansas City Magnet Schools of Engineering. In 1995 he relocated to Topeka, Kansas and headed the Kansas Commission of Aerospace Education and was involved in many national aerospace education associations. He was awarded the Kansas Governor's Award for Aerospace Education in 2009. In 2021, he was inducted into the USAF 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing Hall of Fame. He was active with the Foundation for Aeronautical Education and the Topeka Combat Air Museum. He volunteered as a math and science instructor for the Topeka Let's Help Program and as a volunteer at the Colmery-O'Neill VA Hospital. He

was a member of the Swinging Squares dance club.

He enjoyed traveling the world with his wife, Jane. Together they taught with Global Volunteers and Road Scholars. He enjoyed time working on his beloved farm in rural Douglas County, Kansas. In 2021, Paul donated the entire quarter-section of farmland to Duck's Unlimited as a wildlife sanctuary.

Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 12 p.m. Saturday, November 11, 2023, at Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 3601 SW 17th Street, Topeka KS 66604, where military honors will be provided by Whiteman Air Force Base.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Let's Help or Midland Care Hospice, and sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka KS 66614.

Previous Events

Mass of Christian Burial

NOV 11. 12:00 PM (CT)

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 SW 17th Street
Topeka, KS 66604

Tribute Wall



“ Jared, Alicia, Tess, & Amber planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Paul Fortin.

Jared, Alicia, Tess, & Amber - November 06, 2023 at 12:21 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Paul Fortin.



November 06, 2023 at 12:21 PM