

At the age of 93, Paul Edward Fortin, Colonel US Air Force (USAF) (ret), PhD Electrical Engineering (E), 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 8 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

Paul was born 8/21/1930 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 AB 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.

Memorial services will be held at Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Topeka, Kansas on Veteran's Day, Saturday, 11/11/2023.

*Note from Reg Urschler:*

Another old soldier, friend and crew mate passes.

Paul and I arrived at Forbes the same time on August 1955 along with a whole passel of 2nd Lt's and EW's destined to augment the new mission assigned to the 65th SRW...Reconnaissance, a word with which some still have difficulty spelling correctly.

The entire Wing was TDY in North Africa (Ben Guirer) which left we Lt's with not much to do , consequently we were assigned extra duties to try and keep us out of trouble.

We bachelors met pretty much every day for breakfast in the Field Ration Mess (tells how old we are) at the back of the Officers Club and then later in the afternoon rendezvoused in the Base Theater to preview the latest movie to be shown that night. Paul's "duty" was "Base Theater Officer".

Paul and I later crewed up on a Tell Two crew and deployed to Incirlik in '61, he as EW 1 (of two) and I as the guy in the front seat. It was a very productive and interesting TDY as the other crew members there were a composite of WW II troops as well as the Det Cmdr and then we "Lt's".

Lots of tennis, bridge, barbecuing and Club time as well as alert (twenty days alert, ten days R&R).

Paul was a "Professional" from the "git go" and we shared many successful missions as well as wonderful social gatherings.

He was a true 55th Warrior who was on the ground floor of the new mission who leaves a proud record and Legacy. He could have written volumes of those early days which would be a treasure and "eye opener" to those who follow on in his footsteps.

Tail Winds, BlueSkies and Happy Landings Paul, 'Til we fly together again.

God Bless,

Reg