



Paul Lawrence Farber PhD

March 7, 1944 - November 28, 2021

Paul Farber (77) passed away on November 28, 2021 after a brave eight month battle with pancreatic cancer. Born in Manhattan in 1944, he moved with his family to Uniontown, Pennsylvania in 1953. As a pre-med student at the University of Pittsburgh, he majored in zoology, but also took courses in history of science and philosophy of science. He received a Ph.D. in history of science from Indiana University in 1970, and accepted an assistant professor position in the General Science Department at Oregon State University that same year. He retired in 2008. At OSU Paul was a highly regarded teacher; he received the Carter Award for “outstanding and inspirational teaching” in 1976 and in 2003 the History of Science Society Hazen Award for outstanding contributions to the teaching of history of science. Paul was an unstinting mentor to numerous graduate students, many of whom went on to have impressive and successful careers. Though an administrator for nearly two thirds of his time at OSU, Paul succeeded in being a productive scholar in his field, authoring four significant and influential books and a multitude of articles, as well as editing four other books. His last monograph appeared three years after he retired. Likewise, he was active in his profession, serving as President of the Columbia History of Science Group, President of the History of Science Society, representative for history of science on the steering committee of the AAAS, and editor of several journals, chief among them *The Journal of the History of Biology*. Paul was a highly successful administrator. As acting director of the Humanities Development Program, he was chiefly responsible

for acquiring the grant that resulted in the Center for the Humanities. As chair of the General Science Department, he oversaw the emergence of the Environmental Science program at OSU and the listing of history of science courses as humanities. Under Paul's direction as chair, the History Department became the leading department in the College of Liberal Arts and the home of the Horning Endowment. A sign of the respect and admiration enjoyed by Paul is the fact that he was given the CLA Excellence Award in 1998 and was named Distinguished Professor (the highest faculty honor given in the institution) in 1993 and then again by the Alumni Association in 2002.

In 1966, while still in graduate school, Paul married Vreneli Marti, whom he met in his senior year at the University of Pittsburgh. In 1976 their twins Channah and Benjamin were born. Paul took great pride in his children and adored his grandchildren. In his professional life, Paul was known for his natty bow ties; in his private life, for his exceptional martinis. He was simultaneously a Francophile and an Anglophile, having spent many enjoyable months in both Paris and London. Beaches, botanical gardens, museums, theatrical productions, and concerts all had a very strong appeal for Paul. He loved to read, and he read very widely, such that he was a source of information and opinion on many topics, and that made him an extremely interesting man. He was unfailingly kind and considerate and a man of considerable integrity. He was beloved for his keen wit and grand sense of humor. The world is diminished by his loss.

Tribute Wall

MC

“ Vreneli, How sad I am to hear of Paul's passing. I so well remember him telling me about you after you met at Pitt. Paul was a treasured friend from the day he came into my grade school class in Uniontown, through high school, and then college. My memory of his wit, his character, his intelligence is perfectly in tune with the beautiful posted eulogy. I'm sure he was a wonderful husband and father, and I can only imagine how deeply he is missed by you and your family. Again, my deepest condolences to you.

Carol Coviello-Malzone

Malzone Carol - March 05, 2022 at 02:03 PM

WH

“ I first met Paul in 1974 when I started a MS in Science Education and took History of Science courses as part of that program. Paul gave an immediate impression as a very engaging, clever and erudite person. He clearly had an intense passion and love for his work. That seriousness did not prevent him from exhibiting a sly sense of humor. The combination of all these things made his classes very enjoyable.

One class he started in 1974 which was a mark of his creativity and willingness to try new things, was his course that featured reading and discussion of Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. When I went back to high school teaching I started a Science and Philosophy Club modeled on Paul's course.

In 1976 when my wife and I had returned to NY, Paul wrote to me asking if I would be interested in doing a Ph.D program in the department. That was the immediate impetus of our coming back to Oregon and making it our permanent home. Paul's courses in the History of Science were a major factor in my doing a concentration and eventually my dissertation in History of Science. I am very grateful to Paul for his personal attention and help.

The quality of Paul's work is shown in that even coming from a University without a dedicated History of Science Department, he held leadership positions in that field nationally.

What a loss it is that this man and his bright light had to go now. My condolences to Vreneli, the twins and rest of the family.

Walter Hellman

Walter Hellman - December 20, 2021 at 10:26 PM

NW

“ In the 1990s I took Dr. Farber's History of Science class. He and the class, are among my favorites at OSU. He had a talent for getting his students to think of things in a different light.



*My condolences to his family and friends.
Naomi Weidner*

Naomi Weidner - December 20, 2021 at 03:01 PM

DS

“ Dr Farber was a Prof of mine while I was student at OSU. His class (History of Science) was very enjoyable-- he was an entertaining lecturer. I noticed how he took it upon himself to have an awareness of each of his students. In the years to follow, I worked at OSU and would see Paul at the gym (Dixon). He worked-out regularly. Always friendly, cheerful, interested-- such a pleasure to run into him, every time. Sure will miss him. A lovely man and important component of OSU landscape.

*David Stein
Dept. Biomedical Sciences
Oregon State University*

David Stein - December 19, 2021 at 05:17 PM

JF

“ Vreneli I am so sorry to read of Paul's passing. Though I have left the Corvallis area (now live in Enterprise), Paul was so helpful to me when I first arrived--I really appreciated his friendship and guidance. And, of course the martinis. He was a fine scholar and promoter of science--a gift sorely missing in today's political climate. My best to you. John Frohnmayer

John Frohnmayer - December 18, 2021 at 09:53 AM

LB

“ *The news that Paul is no longer with us is very sad. While I did not know Paul well, in our initial meeting years ago we easily found common interests. For nearly 10 years, I've been directing the Environmental Sciences Undergraduate Program that Paul helped to bring into existence in the early 1990s from its origin in Oregon State's General Sciences. This part of his legacy lives on in the many students who have earned bachelor's degrees in Environmental Sciences and continue to pursue studies to address environmental issues today. His warmth and clear-headed approach to the university live on as a model.*

With condolences,

Larry Becker

Professor, Geography

Director, Environmental Sciences Undergraduate Program

Oregon State University

Larry Becker - December 17, 2021 at 02:02 PM

SA

“ *I was deeply saddened to hear of Paul's passing. It has been my privilege to know him these past few years. He leaves good memories that none of us will soon forget. My condolences to your family.*

Steve Athay.

Steve Athay - December 16, 2021 at 06:11 PM

MK

“ I was one of Paul's grad students circa 1973. He was an extraordinary mentor and a great guy with wonderful insight, wisdom, and a warm sense of humor. Paul made a positive impact for so many. He will be greatly missed. -- Mike Kinch

Michael Kinch - December 16, 2021 at 12:56 PM

NP

“ I am so sorry for your loss. Paul was a wonderful man and will be missed by all.
Nancy Payne

nancy payne - December 16, 2021 at 12:48 PM

MC

“ Such wonderful memories in years of knowing Paul. One of my best memories of him was after a play I was in. Paul came up to me and said "you occupied your character rather easily. I don't know if I can trust you after this." Then he smiled. A brilliant mind and lovely man. Michael Coolen



Michael Coolen - December 16, 2021 at 11:58 AM