

BEHIND THE BADGE

End of Watch



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Detective Paul A. Hale

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Paul Andrew Hale was born in Arizona on January 8, 1962. His father, Richard, and mother, Patricia, moved with Paul and his older siblings Betsy and Jim to Battle Creek, Michigan, when Paul was just three months old. Richard Hale describes Paul as a very active boy, who was very competitive in games of touch football with the neighborhood kids, and always pitched in to help mow the lawn and shovel the heavy winter snowfall.

According to his parents, Paul never seemed to be afraid to try anything in the realm of physical activity, and not only did he attempt the activities, he excelled at them. Paul joined the high school swim team when he was a junior, although he had never tried competitive swimming before. He ended up being one of the only team members to achieve the team's "Ironman Challenge," which involved endurance events and a long-distance swim. Paul also played tennis throughout high school and reached the state championships in both singles and doubles play.

The summer before tenth grade, Paul went to a party at a friend's house, where he met Connie Edmonds.

The pair hit it off immediately, and Connie remembers that she and Paul spent the whole night dancing together. They were never far apart from that point on, even though Connie went to Albion College in Michigan and Paul decided to study geology at Vanderbilt University. Their schools were 500 miles apart, and neither Connie nor Paul had a car, but they successfully negotiated their long-distance relationship during their college years.

Shortly after they graduated from college in 1984, Connie and Paul got married, and the pair decided to move to Raleigh after reading about it in a book about the best places to live in America. Although Paul was raised up north, he always had a fondness for the South. "It was a true way of life for him, and he really appreciated [the South]," said Patricia Hale. The couple's first daughter, Jessie, was born in 1987.

While Paul was active in Navy ROTC during college, he decided not to go into the military as a career. He had several jobs, working for Coca-Cola and UPS and managing a furniture manufacturing plant, but his mother remembers that Paul always preferred to be out in the field. When Paul told his parents that he had decided to join the police department, they weren't all that surprised—Paul's beloved grandfather was an inspector with the Detroit Police Department, and from the time Paul was six years old, he enjoyed hearing his grandfather's stories about his work in law enforcement and looking through his police scrapbooks. "He said he always wanted to be a police officer, like Grandpa Hale," said Patricia Hale.

Paul and Connie welcomed their second daughter Stephie in 1989, a few months before Paul started the 57th Academy on June 4, 1990. When Paul graduated from the academy in October 1990, the family had a party to celebrate Paul's graduation and Stephie's first birthday. Connie remembers the cake she ordered for the party; it featured "Big Bird" from Sesame Street wearing a police uniform.

After he graduated, Paul went to work in southeast Raleigh. Patricia Hale remembers her son's response when she asked him why he wanted to work in that particular area: "He said 'If I'm going to be a police officer, I'm going to the toughest spot in town.'" Retired Sergeant R.A. Hepps, who rode a beat alongside Paul for several years, recalls that Paul was a hard worker, and didn't care whether he had to take an extra report, or whether it was getting close to the end of the shift. "He was always one to jump in the middle of everything," said Hepps.

Those who had Paul as a training officer say that he taught them a lot more than just how to get by on the street. "When you did something wrong, he would let you know so you learned from it and weren't embarrassed," said Detective P.E. Dorsey. K-9 Officer K.T. Pickens recalls that Paul made it his goal to do something positive for someone each day he came to work, and that he would always take the time to explain things to people and make them feel important when he talked to them.

Paul also trained Rhonda Powell, who was formerly an officer but is now a victim advocate for RPD's Family Violence Unit. She admired Paul greatly for the fairness with which he dealt with everyone he encountered. "He didn't care if you were black, white, red, green—he respected everyone, and everyone respected him," says Powell. She also remembers how Paul never let her get by with just being acceptable when it came to parking the police vehicle, because he was such a stickler for proper parking. Rhonda says that to this day, she is still a parking expert, and she credits Paul for making her practice those skills so much during her time on field training.

Paul's friends and family also remember his fondness for chewing tobacco and Mountain Dew—two things he enjoyed not separately, but at the same time. Powell says that she still marvels that Paul would routinely drink Mountain Dew while he had tobacco in his mouth.

Paul kept his family and work life very separate, according to Connie, and he would never fail to make sure he took time off for his daughters' special events. Jessie and Stephie were very active in dance and year-round swimming, and Paul tried his best to be at all their recitals and swim meets. Connie remembers Paul standing at the edge of the pool, shouting "Kick, kick!" and doing the backstroke in the air, encouraging them to do their best. "He lived and breathed by his girls," said Connie. Sean Evans, a former member of the RPD, remembers that Paul's treasure was definitely at home. "His family came first," said Evans. "When he left southeast Raleigh [to go home], he left southeast Raleigh."

Paul would also call Connie at least two or three times during each shift he was working, just to say hello and make sure that she and the girls were all right. Former Officer Russ Cullum, who rode a beat near Paul, remembers how Paul would call when he was working night shift to talk to the girls before they went to bed, and call again to wake them up in the morning. "Paul was such a family-oriented person," said Cullum. "Those two girls were his everything."

Paul had been with RPD for seven years when he was promoted to Detective on July 7, 1997. Just four days later, on July 11, he was called in to work early to take a suspect into custody so that he could be interviewed by homicide detectives. As Paul approached the suspect, the suspect shot him with a 9mm pistol.

Connie remembers that she was eating dinner at Duffy's that evening with her parents, Jessie, and Stephe when her pager kept going off. She didn't want to answer it, but she finally called back and was told that Paul was at Wake Medical Center and there had been an accident. Former Chief Mitch Brown told Connie that Paul had been killed.

In 1997, the year Paul died, there were seven other law enforcement officers in North Carolina who were also killed in the line of duty, and Paul's parents saw the outpouring of support from many members of the community who wanted to do something to give back to the public safety professionals who risk their lives for the communities they serve. They thought about how they could help, and in June 2000, along with family friend John Dorsey, Patricia and Richard Hale started the 200 Club of Wake County. The organization's mission is to provide immediate financial assistance to the families of public safety officers who lose their lives in the line of duty.

Original text by Dawn Myers