



Paul Lenard Spadin

March 11, 1936 - March 30, 2018

Paul Lenard Spadin, 83, of Fulton, died Friday March 30, 2018 at home surrounded by family. He was born March 11, 1936 in South Pymatuning Township, Pennsylvania, to the late Louis Eugene Spadin and Leah (Krapf) Spadin. He grew up in Pennsylvania and Maryland, working on farms with his eight siblings, and enlisted in the Air Force in 1954. He served for three years, and was stationed in Morocco where he honed his cooking skills for which he was known. He then attended the Communication Electronics School, where he refined his skills in building and repairing technology, and which lead him to his career in aeronautical and aerospace engineering. Spadin began his career at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in 1958, when it changed from NACA to NASA. He worked as a Laser Technician on the NASA Goddard Team that recorded the first laser pulses bounced off a satellite in late October 1964 and was recognized In 2014 by the International Laser Ranging Service (ILRS) for his contributions as one of the members of the original GSFC satellite laser ranging (SLR) team. He was also instrumental to the Apollo 11 laser ranging retroreflector experiment, working at Lick Observatory in California to measure the Moon's distance and orbit. Data from lunar laser ranging is still used today to study the Earth, the Moon and the character of gravity. With a gregarious personality and endless supply of jokes, Paul was always involved in striking a balance between work and play. At NASA, he was a leader the Goddard Trap and Skeet Club and Bowling Team, and coordinator of social activities. His colleagues attest that "whether

he was soldering circuit boards, running plumbing, or planning the week's activities, he taught them how to be a professional, how to treat people, how to simply do great work. He just made us all better." Paul retired from NASA in 1991, after 33 years of service which gave him time to work on his passion, building and flying Ultralight aircraft. He was a founding member of the Capital Area Light Flyers, an affiliate of the United States Ultralight Association, and was instrumental to its many events and partnerships over the past 37 years. He was best known for his ultralight with smiley faces on each wing, and the toy drop they held at many fly-ins, affixing tiny parachutes to stuffed toys that were dropped from the airplane for children to catch. He will be missed greatly by the Ultralight community for his advice, ability to build or fix and aircraft, his ability to bring people together, and of course his meatballs. He is survived by his four children, Karen Spadin Heiner of Orlando, FL, Diane Spadin Rogers of Jessup, MD, Glen Spadin and his wife, Maja of Wichita Falls, TX, and their mother Gaile Spadin and Melissa Spadin of San Diego, CA and her mother Harriet Gordon Spadin; nine grandchildren, Jaqueline, Jennifer, Erick, Mark, Rachel, Hannah, Sarah, Rebecca, and Faith; his companion Cathy Waltersdorff, and twin brother Perry Spadin of Virginia and sister Emily Fix of Virginia. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by four brothers and two sisters. Per his wishes, he was cremated and a celebration of his life will be held at the Eyler Farm on July 28, 2018. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to his favorite museum, the National Air and Space Museum, to ensure that it may continue its mission to "Commemorate, Educate, Inspire" about the wonders of flight. National Air and Space Museum Smithsonian Institution Contribution Receipt Center PO Box 98091 Washington, DC 20090

Tribute Wall



“ *Paul Lenard Spadin*

Funeral Home Owner - December 12, 2019 at 11:21 AM

“ I came to NASA as a grad student in Aug 1988, and Paul was one of the first to welcome me, show me where his tools were, talked to me about what I wanted to do, and how he could help. I think he was one of the first technicians to get his GS13, unheard of at that time. It is kind of a goofy rule where you can't get above a certain pay grade if your education isn't of a certain level. It may not be that way anymore, but it certainly was then. He had more skills in his little finger than many of the 'professional' engineers, both good and not so good, I've worked with over the decades. Every week or so I would walk in and he would catch me up on some crazy new thermal mount he had created, or he was literally doing someone's 'homework' by fixing their hardware, or dreaming up a new way of holding this, or driving that electrically, or cooling this thing.... \r\n He invited me in the '90's to one of his fly-ins at some random corn field out in remote Maryland. He took me up in his 2-seater. Amazing... Not sure if they had permission then, but it was a great time. I was lucky that we stayed in touch after he retired and he came to a summer party almost every year so everyone could catch up. I would pop by his house every few years with an assorted 2-stroke motor that had me stumped. Never a problem with him, toss me a beer, show me his latest plane his working on, and fix my motor the following week. \r\n For crying out loud! He and his wife drove down to SC in '93 for my wedding! Who would do that for a young NASA nerd wanna-be that was constantly hounding him for help...??? That was the best surprise when the Spadins showed up to the wedding, all super sweaty from the July Charleston city heat. (I still feel horrible that the hotel room he got for that weekend had a funky smell when they checked in. The prior 'guests' had apparently thrown up in the A/C.) He never let me forget. Yes, they got a new room. Everytime I talk about the wedding to a colleague here at work, I begin with the cool place we held it at, and that the Spadins came. \r\n He taught me a fraction of what he knew, and most of what I know now. I've found myself passing on many of his techniques and tricks in hand-on lab skills to new generations of engineers.. the ones who will listen anyway. I try to be very clear to share with these kids who I learned it from. \r\n I still think of events, little

interactions.... clear as yesteray, with Paul. Walking into his lab, he's at his desk in the back corner, I look on the work benches or the main center table to see what's new... He looks up, takes off his readers, smacks his gum, and says something like, 'What's up chief?'... or... 'Whatcha need?' 30 min later, I walk out of his lab that much smarter, that much better. I still try to relay the stories he would tell of his early days, with little success. But they were amazing. I miss that guy. \r\n One of the last good ones.

Barry Coyle - August 07, 2018 at 02:55 PM

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“ *We will miss Paul very much. He goes back a long time and will always be remembered in our thoughts and our hearts. Paul was a kind and gentle man with a big heart and a love to fly. There are times when one has a loss of what words to say when someone so kind has to move on. Our prayers for the family as they travel this journey to celebrate his remembrance. May God Bless each of you and give you peace and a joy in remembering Paul. Larry, Linda and Joe DeLuca.*

Lawrence, Linda and Joe DeLuca - April 04, 2018 at 12:19 PM