

Paul Memoriam

In the late summer of 1970, someone told me that a newcomer to town, Paul Sittenfeld, needed a ride to Procter & Gamble. Paul was starting out as a brand assistant in the bar soap and household cleaning products division; as it happened, so was I. I picked him up – and quickly realized that I had never met anyone quite like him.

Uncommonly articulate, he radiated energy, enthusiasm and goodwill. He had a sense of humor that wouldn't quit. Quips, puns and double-entendres were non-stop, but he could also turn out riotous doggerel about Top Job, the cleaning brand to which he was assigned.

Eager to involve himself in the life of the city, he took an impolitic stance against P&G's decision to tear down the historic Wesley Chapel, the company's neighbor to the immediate south. Paul lost that fight, but undaunted, turned to raising money to revive the moribund fountain in the middle of Hyde Park Square, and the fountain still flows today. As a proud Princeton alumnus, he soon became president of the local Princeton Club. He was off and running.

Paul stayed at Procter for just inside of a year, then left to run the local office of Planned Parenthood for two years. He left that to take over administration of what was then called the Fine Arts Institute, responsible for raising money for four of the city's premier arts institutions: the Symphony Orchestra, the May Festival, the Art Museum and the Taft Museum. Paul remained in that role for 14 years, and in that time he oversaw the fund's annual growth from 18,000 pledges and \$600,000 raised to 32,000 pledges and \$4 million raised. Recipient organizations doubled to include the Cincinnati Opera, the Cincinnati Ballet, the Playhouse in the Park and the Contemporary Arts Center.

Paul joined the Literary Club in 2001, and in his twenty years with us, delivered six papers and one memorial. He liked to bring guests, and did so often, many of them new or from out of town, reflecting his perception of the club as a unique Cincinnati institution that outsiders with obvious intellectual bona fides should know about. His frequently eloquent introductions of his guests are a strong memory.

In preparing this memorial, I read through Paul's papers, and I'd like to offer some brief observations on the first three, not only because they are strong papers, but because they say almost as much about Paul as they do about his subject.

The first talked about his friend, Melissa Lanier, who was, in her day – the last four decades of the 20th century – one of the most respected, effective and high profile volunteers in our city. David Hoguet recalls that when he moved near her on Grandin Road, Paul suggested he get to know her, which, David says, turned out to be an especially lovely event in his own life. What that reminded me about Paul, however, was his almost uncanny ability to seek out and befriend many, many of Cincinnati's most interesting and accomplished citizens, and to enjoy that friendship throughout his life. He came here from Kansas City as a young man knowing no one. By the time he died, it felt like Paul knew almost everyone.

The second paper talked about Jewish humor, and it was ripe with jokes as well as some of Paul's own experience in being born Jewish. That heritage left him less than comfortable some of the time, but over the years he learned to work it to his advantage, finding in Jewish culture – seder dinners, for example – customs that could enhance his life, and the life of his family, in unexpectedly enriching ways. One of those customs was the aforementioned humor; life without laughs, for Paul, would be life not worth living.

The third paper covered his relationship with Tatyana Grosman, the nation's foremost lithographer and printmaker of the late 20th century. It reviewed how Paul talked his way into her studio, won her confidence, and ultimately became her sole sales representative in this part of the country. At that time, as a sideline, he and Betsy, his charming and capable wife, had established the Elizabeth Paul Gallery, and embarked on a roller coaster ride in the *recherché* world of vending fine art. It took all of Paul's smarts, interpersonal finesse and restless energy to make the go of it that he did.

Paul died on St. Patrick's Day of this year, just days before his 74th birthday. In his time on this earth, in addition to what I already have told you, he became a eulogist of exceptional impact; Jim Friedman feels that better than almost anyone else, he was able to get at "the truths of a person's life."

Paul and Betsy raised four exceptional children; he became a portfolio manager of stature; he served on some forty local boards, everything from the the Zoo to the Seven Hills School, where Peter Briggs says he was "an inspiration." Together with Betsy, he hosted so many gatherings at their home that it left some of us breathless at the joy he expressed through such extensions of himself. But that was Paul.

Thank you.