



## Paul Michael Shanley

May 25, 2026

Paul Michael Shanley passed on May 25th, 2026, at age seventy-three; a life of twenty-six-thousand-three-hundred-nine days. A giant of a man in physical stature & passions, he was born on September 27th, 1952, to Joseph Shanley & Laura Hotchkiss. His childhood was a stormy time & he was raised in the feral manner of the era. He told a story from his childhood, at a friend's house after school. His friend's mother, a waitress, was leaving for work. She told the boys, "I'm going to work. There's no food in the house, but there are two packs of cigarettes in the drawer if you get hungry." His father was of Rhode Island, from a family of union ship fitters, plumbers & pipefitters. Joe Shanley served in the Second World War, where he met Laura Hotchkiss, a Red Cross dance-hall-girl nurse. Laura was from upstate New York, from a family of dairy farmers. Paul spent his youth in both states. He spent summers working on his mother's family's farm. His grandfather would tell him, "your mother said you can't have any beer. But I'm not hauling soda out into this field just for you!" Laura Hotchkiss, later in life, would declare that she "took the pledge, I never smoked or drank!" Paul reminded her; "Ma, in that cabinet there's a picture of you in a canteen overseas during the war. You've got a cigarette in your mouth, a drink in each hand, & you are laying across the laps of two GI's, neither of whom are my father." Joe Shanley made no pretense of that virtue. Joe Shanley was not known for any virtues. Laura & Joe deserved each other. Paul's older sister, Nancy, his loving sibling & only ally in the house, passed in a tragic accident when Paul was sixteen. This was the common clay from

which Paul Shanley was molded. It was, by all accounts, just awful.

Paul joined the military in 1971 when a judge gave him the option of serving time or serving his country. He enlisted in the Navy & took basic medical training, becoming a corpsman. He told stories of hiding pot in the ventilation shafts in the training barracks – a feat possible because of his height, six-foot-five, & reach. Paul missed out on being buried in the Veteran's Cemetery due to twice being docked a month of time-served. The first he went AWOL. The second, he punched a superior officer in the mouth, was thrown in the brig, busted back to E-1 & drummed out shortly after. The details are lost, but the attitude is exemplary of his life. Paul Shanley was never concerned with your rules.

Following his escape from the service, Paul worked a variety of jobs, as a working-class hood would. He spent time at Grinnell Foundry, & other manufacturing plants. He would talk later in life of those days, "you used to be able to walk out of one plant, go a block down the road, & get hired in another one the same day. Minimum wage paid my rent & bought four bags of groceries." In the perils of the later economy, he enjoyed these reminiscences. He supplemented his income with a variety of odd jobs & associations better left unmentioned here. In 1975 he went to Paul Smith's College in upstate New York, & studied land surveying, graduating 1979. Land surveying & construction layout became his trade for the rest of his career. He took great pleasure & pride in the work, enjoying being able to calculate, turn exact angles, & delineate boundaries of a plot of land, or layout a road, or a column line. He brought great passion & professionalism to his work; one of his quotes to his work crew was "never do drugs at work. It's a waste of good drugs." One of his favorite projects was the Jamestown Bridge, where he laid out the piers. He could always be counted on to remind you of how perfectly the bridge aligned during construction on his layout. He would tell stories of jumping from the base of a pier, fully-loaded with his work equipment, into a

boat for extraction on a day a storm crept up the bay. He always had stories for everything, for any situation, & never quite the same story twice.

In 1981 Paul Shanley married Eloise Rose St. Laurent, a skilled jewelry model-maker from a French-Canadian immigrant family in Providence. They loved one another, but over the years of marriage Paul's demons would haunt them. They had their first son, Brian Paul Shanley, in 1983, & their second, Mark David Shanley, in 1988. During those years Paul Shanley studied part-time at Northeastern, & Roger Williams University, in addition to whatever work he had at the time, completing a degree in civil engineering. During the eighties & nineties there is scarcely a town in Rhode Island that the family did not live in. In the early nineties they left Rhode Island, returned to his mother's farmhouse in upstate New York, & tried to settle into a life there. That time was an era of backsliding for the working class; & the family returned to Rhode Island, always seeking greener pastures.

The Great Recession hit Paul hard. By then in his fifties, & divorced, & on a string of DUIs, the collapse of the construction industry left him unemployed. By the time the economy was moving, he was in his sixties & on Social Security. He lived with his son, Mark, in Scituate through those last decades. In his fifties Paul finally confronted his problems, becoming involved in VA support groups for PTSD, substance abuse, & mental illness. In his early sixties he quit drinking, & quit smoking. He rediscovered the hobbies & pleasures he lost during his time adrift & in the service - photography, fishing, enjoying nature & animals. He loved & doted on a series of cats that brought him much comfort & joy. His health was poor. He suffered from COPD, neuropathy, PTSD, anxiety, bipolar depression, & likely an undiagnosed Parkinson's from his time overseas in the service.

In March of 2026, an operation to remove Paul's infected & stone-filled gallbladder went poorly, & he spent the following weeks in the hospital. Paul

was released to a nursing facility for rehabilitation in April, but never recovered. He returned home for two days in late May before going back to the VA hospital for his end. Still tough, he hung on until Monday, May 25th, 2026, when he drew his last breath at seven-forty-three in the morning. He will be missed; for his dry humor, for his cheerful pessimism, his cryptic commentary, for the daily updates about what the dog & cat were up to, & for his stubborn refusal to ever do what society expected of him. He taught his children many things the other half never had to learn, & did better far by them than his parents had done for him. In the final account he may have sinned, but he was always more sinned against.

Private funeral on Tuesday, June 9th, 2026.

# Tribute Wall

CA

“ David and I remember his years attending Paul Smith college. We looked forward to his school breaks when he would unexpectedly appear at our back door for a a visit, a home cooked meal, a few beers and a couple of doobies. One year I decided to make a sign in the style of the “fall out” shelter warning signs. It had the standard yellow and black “fall out” warning symbol except written below in bold letters it read **WARNING-FULL SHANLEY ALERT !** He took that sign home with him that night.

---

**Claudia and David Aspray** - June 12 at 06:04 PM