

Paul N. Maxwell Obituary



Brig. Gen. Paul Norman Maxwell, 78, of Great Falls, died of natural causes Monday, September 13, 2010 at a local hospital.

Visitation is 9 a.m. until the 10:30 a.m. service Monday at Central Assembly of God Church, followed by a fellowship lunch at the church.

Burial with military honors will take place at 3 p.m. Monday at Fort Harrison in Helena. Schnider Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

Paul, best known as "Dad" and "Papa," lived a life of service to his family and country.

Paul was born July 29, 1932, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Thomas and Reva Maxwell. He was the third of seven children. When Paul was 3, the family moved to Butte, where he was raised.

He attended Butte High and helped with the family business, M&L Supply. Free time was spent ski-jumping, boxing and "only Butte" fun. Paul was a competitive ski-jumper, winning many local and state competitions. Butte remained his favorite hometown throughout his life.

Upon graduation from Butte High in 1950, Paul entered the University of Montana in Missoula, graduating in business administration in 1954. He received a commission in the Air Force through the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), spending three years at Tucson, Ariz.; Laredo, Texas; and Tyndall AFB.

When Paul considered getting out of the Air Force, Montanans told him to go back to Montana and join the Guard "because it is the only way to fly," and he did. Paul joined the Guard in 1957 as a fighter pilot and flew T-33s, F-89s, F-102s and F-106s.

From 1957 to 1962, he split his time between the family business in Butte and commuting to Great Falls to serve in the unit. Paul then transitioned from a "weekend warrior" to a full-time guardsman in 1963.

The 120th Fighter Wing was the first Guard unit in the nation to be equipped with the F-106 Delta Darts, capable of flying twice the speed of sound. Paul served as a fighter pilot, a flight commander, squadron operations officer, squadron commander, group director of operations, group safety officer and support staff officer in Helena, group commander and assistant adjutant general for air.

The Tribune described Paul as self-effacing and soft-spoken, and high in his praise for the more than 800 members in his unit upon his promotion to group commander. The hallmark of his career was his respect for those he served with.

During Paul's tenure, the unit won many national competitions and awards. The unit won the nation's top aerial combat competition among Guard and Air Force units, the William Tell, twice. The 120th was selected for the top five of 90 guard units in 1975, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1982. During Paul's command from 1979 through 1985, the 120th received the National Guard Bureau's Distinguished Flying Unit Award, the Air Force's Supply Effectiveness Award for satellite bases, during Air Force-wide competition. The 120th was the second Guard unit to win the Hughes Achievement Award as the top air superiority squadron in the Air Force.

Gen. Maxwell was a charter member of the National Guard Bureau Long Range Planning Committee. His many contributions in this endeavor helped ensure the entire Air National Guard charted a course that would meet the national defense needs of the United States and the Department of Defense. In concert with the NGB Long Range Planning Committee, he organized a Montana Air National Guard Long Range Planning Committee to help ensure Montana ANG planning and activities were commensurate with national future needs.

Paul married Carol "Jeannie" Gardner on April 8, 1960. The couple lived in Butte, welcoming their first two children, Michele and Tracy. In 1963, they moved to Great Falls, where two more children arrived, Paul and Cynthia. Paul and Jeannie together created a family culture of fun, adventure, hard work, motorcycles, horses and love.

Extended family was a priority. Paul and Jeannie were both the third of seven children. Time with their siblings created years of cherished memories, many at Canyon Ferry with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Family friends were favorite targets for waterskiing lessons and motorcycle mishaps. Winter weekends were reserved for snow skiing as a family. The same family culture welcomed 15 grandchildren and one great-grandchild, all enjoying water sports, snow sports, picking up sticks and the candy bowl with Papa and Granny. Paul and Jeannie celebrated 50 years of marriage this April.

Paul and Jeannie spent their retirement years as snowbirds, meeting several new friends at the Fountain of Youth Spa in Niland, Calif. Those were years of golfing with new buddies and enjoying all that Southern California has to offer.

Paul is survived by his wife, Carol; children Michele (Tim) Laedeke, Tracy (John) Kumm, Paul (Jane) Maxwell and Cynthia (Pete) Schultz; brothers Lowell "Buster" (Wilma) Maxwell and Dave (Sandy) Maxwell; sisters Margaret (Scott) McIntosh and Marilyn Malesich; grandchildren Erika, Tiffany, Echo, Katrina, Brittany, Brandy, Taylor, Ryan, Casey, Luke, Alex, Zachery, Matthew, Mikaela and Samuel; and great-grandchild Amara.

Paul was preceded in death by his parents, Thomas and Reva Maxwell; sister Beverly; and brother Tom.

Memorials are suggested to the Montana Chamber Foundation, P.O. Box 1162, Helena, MT 59624-1162, to support long-range military planning and mission support to commemorate Paul's commitment to sustaining Montana's role in protecting and defending our great country.