



Paul Hollenbeck

March 3, 1946 - January 29, 2026

Paul Richard Hollenbeck “The Dad”

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Three days ago, Paul Hollenbeck died peacefully at home surrounded by family and, as he put it, “more love than I can even absorb.” Paul’s last weeks of life were filled with visitors, handwritten cards, lengthy text messages, carefully crafted emails, and tearful phone calls from loved ones letting him know how much he meant to them. His staggeringly intergenerational fanbase of four-year-olds to 90-year-olds and every age in between is a testament to his legacy as a husband, community builder, mentor, colleague, friend, and a defining example of what it means to be a good man and a father so iconic that he signed his cards simply, “The Dad.”

Seventy-nine years ago, Paul Hollenbeck was born in Detroit, Michigan to Tanya and Leroy Hollenbeck Jr. He was only nine years old when his parents divorced and he became the head of household, taking care of his little brothers Leroy and John while his mom was at work.

Sixty-seven years ago (age 12) he got his first job: a paper route for the Daily Telegram in Adrian, Michigan. After delivering papers every morning, he would load his baby brother John into the basket of his bicycle to take him to preschool. Occasionally, the cops would stop the brothers for their reckless

behavior. Paul would lift John out of the basket and wait until the cops were out of sight, before loading him back in, and continuing on their way.

Sixty-six years ago, Paul's eighth grade teacher assigned the class an essay on what they wanted to be when they grew up. Paul had no idea. Wandering around the house rifling through old papers, he found his dad's own eighth grade essay and learned that his dad had wanted to be an architect. Paul didn't know what that was but thought the essay sounded pretty good so he "plagiarized the whole thing, 100%" and got an F.

Sixty-two years ago, (age 17), the girl with the locker next to him, Pamela Hodapp, asked him to the Sadie Hawkins dance. He was the shy boy on the swim team. She was the popular girl on the homecoming court. He said yes. The rest is a love story they both loved to tell. But what Pam never knew and Paul's daughters only learned recently is that another girl had asked Paul to the dance two days earlier. He had been so stunned, he said no. Today, Paul's daughters are grateful to that first girl for asking and getting his jitters out so he was prepared to say yes to Pam and make their lives possible. Before going to the dance, Paul and Pam had their first date: hot chocolate at Bummies. Shy Paul barely spoke.

Fifty-seven years ago, Paul and Pam were married in June of '68. When Paul talked about how his marriage transformed him, he would point to his signature. "When we first got married my signature was like this," he'd say, grabbing a stray napkin and writing his name in small, timid, cursive, each letter defined — "But after Pam," he'd dash a bold, firm, giant, vertical leap of a signature across the page, "I was somebody."

Paul started his college career at Michigan State, and graduated in 1970 from Miami University with a Bachelor's in Architecture. Although he'd plagiarized the idea from his Dad's eighth grade essay, he did become an architect. "It

was a combination of art, building things, and working with people. It was a good fit because you didn't do the same thing day after day." His first architecture job would be at SSOE in Toledo, Ohio. Toledo is also where Paul and Pam would start a family with their first daughter Corey, born in 1972. Paul loved to tell how Corey's birth was so quick and easy that she was already in Pam's arms before he'd made it inside the hospital after parking the car.

The sweet, little family and Brandywine, their big Irish Setter, moved to Ithaca New York where Paul worked towards his Master's at Cornell University. The Hollenbecks would return to Toledo for good as Paul joined a small firm called The Collaborative, making Toledo the birthplace for three more daughters, Emily, Annie, and Sarah, all raised in their beloved family home on Drummond Road.

In 1984 Paul became a Partner at The Collaborative working on many of the firm's defining projects, with a focus on master plans, space planning and facility design for dozens of colleges, universities, and churches throughout the Midwest and East Coast. In 1988, Paul became the President of the Toledo chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). In 2004, he was named Architect of the Year by the Toledo chapter of the AIA. In 2009, he became AIA President of Ohio. That same year, Paul chose to sell back his shares at The Collaborative, but stayed on in a 'Principal Emeritus' role. In 2012, AIA Ohio awarded him the Public Service Award, citing his work at The Toledo Design Center, the Downtown Toledo Development Corp, Vice President of the Aurora Project, Inc for homeless women and children, and President of Camp Courageous for kids with disabilities.

Family lore has it that while accepting one of these prestigious awards from the AIA, Paul got the idea to play the Tina Turner song "Simply the Best" as

the walk-up music for his speech. But then as he walked to the stage, the lyrics began, and it occurred to Paul that his song choice might be misconstrued as an ego trip. Embarrassed, he began wildly pointing at the audience, yelling, "You! You are the best!!" That was Paul, humble even when he deserved the spotlight.

When Paul talked about his career with his daughters, he talked a lot about the AIA holiday parties. "Your mom and I used to tear up the dance floor," he'd say grinning. Awed and so proud that he, that shy kid who barely spoke on their first date, fearlessly took center stage in front of all of his colleagues as soon as he heard the opening chords to Bruce Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark" or Bob Seeger's "Old Time Rock n Roll."

Throughout his career, Paul was an ever-present father. He packed lunches, decorating each brown paper sack with his signature drawings, illustrating some significant project or aspect of each daughter's day or week ahead. He was always paying attention. Every February 14th, he'd come home with a stack of homemade valentines drawn on scraps of foam-core for Corey, Emily, Annie, and Sarah or mailing them off when each girl went to college. He built the club house in the backyard with Annie and her best friend Brian. He went to every single one of Emily's basketball and soccer games. He rented a full gorilla suit and dressed up as Koko for Sarah's third grade class project on animal communication. Every night at almost 8 p.m., he would pull into the driveway on Drummond Road blasting Sinead O'Connor through the sunroof of his Volkswagen, just in time for dinner around the dining room table with candles lit. He instigated epic wrestling matches with Emily and Annie. Everyone always assumed it was Pam, the storyteller, who read the girls books before bedtime. But it was The Dad, every night. He attended every Father-Daughter Dance at St. Ursula Academy. He drove each girl to college every year, so proud that both Emily and Corey attended his alma mater.

After he retired, he didn't retire. He continued to work with the Toledo Design Collective, mentoring young architects and designers. He and Pam started to split their time between Toledo and Oak Park to be near their grandkids Matt, Josie, and Alice with frequent trips to Charleston, South Carolina to see his eldest grandchild Lena. He was always cheering them on – at volleyball tournaments, soccer and flag football games, tennis matches, and plays.

When Pam died in 2018, he showed us what it was to have a broken heart. If you met him for dinner or a glass of wine, he never tried to hide how much he missed her. He showed the world how to be sad and alive at once and how the two made life whole.

And just when his daughters began to worry that his broken heart may be too much, Lila arrived in August of 2021. He moved into the second floor of the two-flat in Chicago with the sounds of Lila's stomping, running feet greeting him each day below. He became her best playmate, teaching her about load-bearing walls with her MagnaTiles and burying her in leaf piles. Of Lila, he told his daughter Sarah, "When I hear her footsteps on the stairs, it's like hearing your mom's car pull into the driveway again. My heart beats that fast."

A year ago, he built a staff kitchen and renovated the back-of-house area of Sarah's bookstore, Women & Children First, and continued his role as handyman there, often stopping by to repair a shelf or paint or just haul out the cardboard.

Six months ago, he marched with his grandkids in the No Kings rally in downtown Chicago, a sign that he had drawn in sharpie, demanding "ENOUGH."

Three months ago, he sat at his dining room table with the sun pouring through the window, writing long, personal Christmas cards to more than

seventy family and friends. Keeping the tradition alive, still using up the cards and stamps that Pam had collected over decades.

Three months ago, he spoke in front of 300 people in the black box theatre of Toledo School for the Arts, welcoming them to an evening of poetry sponsored by the Pam Hollenbeck Visiting Artist Fund.

Two months ago, he walked down the halls of St. Thomas of Canterbury School, high-fiving and bear hugging each of the five kids that he tutored weekly.

A month and a half ago, he walked to the Edgewater Athletic Club to go swimming, like he always did, twice a week.

Six weeks ago, he took a two-mile walk on Folly Beach holding hands with his eldest daughter, Corey.

Five weeks ago, he played Scrabble, beating his daughter Emily by one point.

Five weeks ago, he jumped into a giant ball pit at the Balloon Museum, Lila squealing with delight.

Three weeks ago, he sat in his living room next to his daughter Annie with sheets of tracing paper, redesigning the floor plan for a family cottage in Saugatuck.

Three weeks ago, Lila climbed in bed beside “Papa” and read him 18 get well soon cards from every kid in her preschool class.

Anyone who knew Paul Hollenbeck knows he hated talking about his health—

or for that matter, yours. He wanted to talk about life. What was the next building to design, project around the house to tackle, birthday card to write, mile to walk, lap to swim, grandkid's soccer game or play to attend, book to read, crossword puzzle to solve (in pen!), community forum to join, kid to mentor, protest to march in, daughter to hug.

Paul is survived by a loving family including his four daughters: Corey (JD) Hollenbeck, Emily (Ken) Novak, Annie (Matthew) Osborn, and Sarah (Andrew) Hollenbeck. And his grandchildren: Lena Dubick, Matt, Josie, and Alice Novak, and Lila Marikis.

In lieu of flowers, build—full lives, welcoming spaces, loving relationships, communities, conversations, collaborations, solutions, neighborhoods, democracies, families, the world, the future.

The family has chosen green cremation. A private celebration of life is being planned.

Donations to Compass Harbor: <https://givebutter.com/CompassHarborSC>, the Pam Hollenbeck Fund at Toledo School for the Arts: <https://ts4arts.org/give-back/donors/> or any organization that does good in your community are welcome.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

May Chapel at Rosehill Cemetery
5800 North Ravenswood Avenue
Chicago, IL 60660

9:30am guest arrival; 10:00am service starts

Reception

MAR 7. 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Whiskey Girl Tavern
6318 N. Clark
Chicago, IL 60660
<https://whiskeygirtavern.com/>

Reception immediately following the service at May Chapel.

Tribute Wall

MP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Millard Pickney - April 28 at 02:24 PM

MP

“ Paul was a close friend from elementary school straight through high school. He was the one who organized baseball games in the empty lot at the end of our block, and we spent countless hours on Dick Foster's front porch playing baseball simulations while listening to the Tigers on his transistor radio. Later, we ran cross country together; Paul joined to condition for the swim season, while the team simply gave me a way to stay busy after school.

Millard Pickney - April 28 at 02:18 PM

CS

“ We met Paul when he would bring Lila to the playgroup at the Lutheran church. He was always so kind and warm, and I'm so sorry to hear of his passing. Thinking of your family, and grateful to have known him even briefly. Thank you for sharing this beautiful tribute. May his memory be a blessing.

Caroline Serce - February 05 at 01:31 PM

JH

“ *What a beautiful tribute to an amazing man! I loved reading about all of his accomplishments, and the origin story of his life with Pam, and the many ways he gave to his communities.*

Living right across the street from his daughter Emily for almost 20 years, I've had the joy of watching Paul live his best life with his children and grandchildren. Building a Little Free Library, driving to and from activities and just generally showing up, all the time, with such clear love.

May the many beautiful memories give you some comfort during this time. I'm so happy that Paul was able to live such a wonderful life.

Jennifer Halperin - February 05 at 12:07 PM

EN

Thank you for sharing, Jennifer!

Emily C Novak - February 25 at 06:48 AM

CB

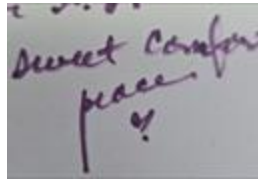
“ *Your dad, Paul, was a true joy to know and your parents together, were a very fun loving, warm couple. I worked with Paul in the late '90's, early 2000's at TCI in Toledo. It was great catching up with your mom at company events. My deepest sympathy to your family. Peace and love during this sad time. Carolyn Beyersdorf*



Carolyn Beyersdorf - February 05 at 12:16 AM

SB

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Sue B - February 04 at 10:45 AM

DB

“ *I didn't know The Dad, but after reading your wonderfully written tribute to him, I wish I had. In my job, I've read thousands of obituaries, and yours is among the best I've seen. Your dad, although probably slightly embarrassed by all the praise, is proud of you and so pleased. My condolences to your family.*

Donna Boen - February 04 at 09:44 AM

AM

“ *Paul and Pam were classmates of mine in the Adrian MI Class of 1964. We've always been a very close class. There are a lot of grieving folks remembering you fondly Paul and gorgeous talented Pam. We're also rejoicing you are together again. Along with too many of our classmates which you already know by now. Have a wonderful new adventure with Pam. Soulmates from the beginning and forever and ever. Alyce*

Alyce Mott - February 03 at 03:25 PM

SB

“ *My condolences to your family on your loss. Paul and Pam were classmates and friends and led exemplary lives. Fellow swimmer, Steve Benz*

Steve Benz - February 02 at 04:45 PM

BK

I'm so sorry to hear about about Paul's death. After reading his memoriam I felt like he was an amazing husband, dad, and person. My deepest sympathy to the family.

Betty Kuntz - February 04 at 11:06 AM

TP

“ Your mom and dad were our first and oldest friends in Toledo. I feel so lucky to have had your dad as a friend. I cherished his friendship for over 50 years. I will miss him. I found a photo of your visit with us in Canada, a reminder of happy times spent with you and your parents.



Tom Porter - February 02 at 03:31 PM

SH

I love this! What a wonderful memory.

Sarah Hollenbeck - February 03 at 10:07 AM

EN

Wow! My dad would love to know that this image of me in a Michigan shirt is immortalized! Thank you for sharing. I remember this trip vividly.

Emily C Novak - February 25 at 06:49 AM

ED

“ I absolutely loved your mom and dad! Coming to your home for tutoring and being in the presence of both of them are some of my fondest memories!

Going to company picnics for the Collaborative.

I always referred to them as the first “Hippies” I am here’d every met. The coolest parents, in the group for sure, always so cool.

I take solace in knowing that they are now back together in each others arms, with those big smiles they always had.

May their souls rest in eternal peace and may the preputial light shine as bright as they lived.

Enjoy those wings Paul, Pam has been waiting for you. Rest easy- your legacy will shine for years to come. Peace & Light Ella

ella-Lynn Dudek - February 02 at 01:35 PM

RB

“ Paul Hollenbeck became a good and long-term friend while I was chair of the Department of Architecture and Interior Design at Miami University (1992-2007). His enthusiastic support, his curiosity about what was happening in architectural education, and his willingness to bring the many department alumni living in Toledo into contact with and support for the department were priceless gifts as the department went through an energetic period of growth. I will always be grateful for his energy, wisdom, counsel, and friendship which came along with his ability to generate scholarship funds from the Toledo alumni and alumnae. He was one-of-a-kind and generous in every way. The world will miss him but we are all blessed to have known him. May we continue to follow his example in our own lives. He showed us how!

Robert Benson, Professor and Chair emeritus, Department of Architecture and Interior Design, Miami University

Robert Benson - February 02 at 10:57 AM

GF

“ Condolences to a most wonderful family. Your Mom and Dad were amazing people, and I am so glad that I knew them and the beautiful and brilliant daughters that they raised!

Gregory L. Miller, DO, FACOI

Gregory L. Miller, DO, FACOI - February 01 at 10:41 PM

AL

“ When I think of Paul, and Pam, these words come to mind: smiles, joy, peace, harmony, family, LIFE, LOVE. Love and hugs and peace to all the girls, and their families as they grieve and celebrate “The Dad”.

Andrea M Lay - February 01 at 08:19 PM

JD

“ Swimming Team Memories, Visiting Paul and Pam in Indiana, Fond Memories of High School, Hey Paul: I did take Pam out on one date.

Jim Dartt - February 01 at 04:27 PM

LM

“ I’m so sorry for your loss but you were so lucky to have Pam and Paul for your parents. They lived a life filled with love and commitment to their family friends and community. I can see them together now looking down on their girls with such pride and love!

Lindy Maciejowski - February 01 at 02:32 PM

CH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



corey hollenbeck - February 01 at 02:05 PM

SH

“ Paul & Pam Forever.



Sarah Hollenbeck - February 01 at 09:38 AM

NO

“ Thank you my dear friend for being a great lover of all things, not just the beautiful things, but in times of difficulty your love anchored us. You are a beaming light that keeps love alive and working well in my heart and in all those who you touched.
You are so missed in soooo many ways, but “your love keeps lifting me higher”.

Nancy Onderdonk - January 31 at 12:39 PM

LB

What a full tribute to a real Renaissance man. I am so privileged to have known him and shared the delight of Lila's first years with him. And just the very best husband, father, grandfather and friend.

Linda Bubon - January 31 at 10:18 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - January 30 at 06:36 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - January 30 at 01:10 PM