

Paul French – Thomas R. Porter Lifetime Achievement Award

Paul's is a lifetime learner. Whether it was camping, sailing, shooting or the Civil War, he dove headfirst into his hobbies.

Growing up, his family moved frequently due to his father's career. When his family bought a farm, Paul enjoyed self-reliance – understanding the inner workings of equipment so he could fix it, working hard while he learned and achieving in the face of obstacles.

The desire to learn started at an early age. He joined Boy Scouts and began earnestly pursuing his badges. He was recognized with honors like Order of the Arrow, attended the National Jamboree at Valley Forge in 1964 and earned his Eagle Scout. This established a lifetime love of camping and thriving in the outdoors.

While in college he served in the Army Reserves as a tank mechanic, taking the mechanical curiosity he learned on the farm to an industrial level. He also honed his leadership skills, rising to the level of Staff Sergeant during one of the most complicated times in American history.

As his kids, Paul & Jennifer, grew, he passed on his love of camping and preparation to his them – serving as a leader with their Scout and Indian Guide groups. There was nothing that couldn't be created or repaired with some rope, duct tape and a sharp pocketknife.

Through a local Scout program, he developed a passion for sailing, graduating from small 21' trailerable boats to 33' open water racing boats. As many know, his focus on details and how things work was perfectly fed by sailing – and his mechanical capabilities were invaluable, as you know if you have ever owned a boat, a hole in the water into which you throw money. He sailed for years in a local sailing club in Texas and would laugh at how local sailors would be concerned about choppy water when, after learning to sail on the Great Lakes, to him it was just good sailing!

He is happy to support Barb, his Wife of over 50-years, as she works with their neighborhood association and music roles in their church.

He has created strong friendships through his work relationships – leading to many new opportunities. He helped build several homes with Habitat for Humanity with a group of attorneys in South Dallas and joined in hunting and sharing deer leases in Central Texas. He loves spending weekends in Brady, Improving the land and conditions on the lease. And while he doesn't have as much time to get down there as he would like, he still enjoys a night sleeping under the stars – even if that means in happens in a tent in his own backyard.

He takes great pride in his grandson Ryan's sporting events and enjoys puttering trying to create the perfect camping backpack for the eventual trip he looks forward to.