

IN MEMORIAM

Paul Fitzgerald

BY: D'ARCY JENISH

November 19, 2014

Risk manager, solar-energy advocate, political activist. Born on Jan. 18, 1953, in Peterborough, Ont.; died on Aug. 13, 2014, in Toronto, of esophageal cancer, aged 61.

Paul lived a full life and a good life and he fully expected to enjoy a long, active old age - skiing, golfing, cycling. But he was denied that dream by a cancer that was advanced, aggressive and pervasive when diagnosed and could not be beaten into submission or even halted temporarily.

All who knew Paul personally knew him as a devoted husband, a loving father and a loyal friend. Those who knew him professionally - first as a risk management expert and later as a passionate advocate for solar energy - knew him as a talented, ethical and likeable guy to work with.

Paul was a risk management professional, first in Edmonton and later in Toronto, and his practice focused on the mining industry. He had a real enthusiasm for mining and travelled to sites in North and South America, Europe and the Mediterranean to advise mining executives. He created innovative insurance products to ensure that mining companies had the financial reserves to cover major equipment failures and environmental disasters.

He was also an active member of the Ontario Risk and Insurance Management Society, mentoring younger practitioners, organizing conferences and contributing articles to the society's newsletter.

In the mid-2000s, when the Ontario government announced plans to diversify the province's energy supply to include solar and wind-power generation, Paul and a group of partners formed ArcStar Energy Ltd., which he believed would make a significant contribution to a greener Ontario. The company now has dozens of solar-power projects in the works.

Paul had many passions, one of which was politics. Starting in his mid-30s, he was an enthusiastic volunteer at the constituency level. He worked for the provincial Progressive Conservatives and for the federal Tories; for several years, he was president of the Conservative Party of Canada's Richmond Hill Electoral District Association.

He participated because he believed in a set of principles and, like volunteers in all parties, he helped keep our democracy healthy and robust, serving his party without expectation of reward or recognition.

Paul grew up in Peterborough, Ont., and spent most of his adult life in the Toronto area, but had a lifelong love of Alberta, the Rocky Mountains and skiing. He headed west in the late 1970s after university and landed a job as a Brewster bus driver in Banff. He ferried skiers to and from the Sunshine Village resort on a one-lane road, zigzagging along the side of a snow-covered mountain. It was a treacherous trip but skiers were in good hands when Paul was behind the wheel.

He had an unusual ability to form friendships, which endured because he was such a warm, outgoing, fun-loving individual.

A celebration of his life in August, arranged by his wife, Holly, and children Lauren, Dale and Christine, drew friends from his childhood in Peterborough, from his time at Western University in London, from his bus-driving days in Banff, from his years as a risk manager in Edmonton, and from his later years in Richmond Hill.

Paul's passing came far too soon, but he left us all - family, friends old and new, business associates and acquaintances - richly endowed with cherished memories.

D'Arcy Jenish is a lifelong friend of Paul.