



## David Paulek

March 12, 1947 - December 12, 2019

David Ray Paulek died December 12, 2019, at his home outside of Keosauqua after living 2 1/2 years with brain cancer. He was 72.

Dave was raised on a 40 acre farm complete with fishing pond and vintage Massey Ferguson tractor outside of Springfield, IL, much like the one he was to build outside of Keosauqua. His dad, Albert, was a millwright for Pillsbury; his mother, a homemaker, who conducted interviews for her prospective collie buyers at the kitchen table. Dave's stories of trudging to the school bus through the snow with his tuba on his back had questionable influence on his own children, but the story was still repeated. He was "baby brother" to older sister, Jo, and older brother, Tony, and used that to his advantage as often as possible. His mother, Opal Paulek, was so disappointed that he had moved "out West" to Iowa and never gave up hope that he would move back home.

He received his BA & MA from Western Illinois University, married Kathleen in 1969, and moved to Keosauqua where they had 3 children, Mark, Adam & Megan, lots of dogs & cats, horses, and that 40 acre farm with fishing pond and vintage Massey.

Most of his life was spent as an educator. He taught English & Speech at Van Buren High School and IHCC for over 40 years. His literature and writing classes gave him lifetime friends in his countless students.

He tried politics for a few years, was one of very few Democrats elected County Supervisor in Van Buren County. Small towns offer many opportunities and Dave enjoyed those: Van Buren Conservation Board President, Van Buren Education Association President, Teacher of the Year, Van Buren Players President, Safe Schools Director, 3X VBHS Graduation Speaker, Rotary Paul Harris Fellow, Van Buren Retired Teachers President, Outstanding Citizen of the Year and Grand Marshall for the 2018 Scenic Drive Parade.

One of his passions was theatre. He and his wife, Kathleen, began directing plays and

musicals for Van Buren Schools, Van Buren Players, and DownRiver Theatre, in the early 70's, over 200 productions ago. Dave enjoyed directing, acting and developing the Roberts Building into a theatre still used by the community today. Having one of the oldest community theaters in Iowa made him proud. He was so pleased to see former students carry it on and keep it alive today.

After retirement he had the opportunity to work with Leroy & Lavern Borntrager in their custom cabinetry business. There he was able to learn furniture making. Friends and family have many pieces in their homes from these years.

Dave was a writer, he recently wrote, "When I was young, I had most things figured out. I knew where I wanted to live (in the south pasture); married to Sharon (I didn't know any Sharons, but I liked the name); and how many kids we'd have: six. It's surprising how many things don't work out the way you had them planned, but at least I was thinking about the future. Lots of things changed, but some remained solid. We did end up on a farm, only it's in Iowa. Kathleen is a far better name than Sharon (apologies to the Sharons reading this). And three kids worked out just fine."

He and Kathleen were married 50 years, they traveled and traveled, but never found any place that they loved more than Keosauqua and that 40 acre farm.

David was preceded in death by his parents, Albert and Opal Paulek. Surviving are his wife, Kathleen, his sons, Mark David (Jeanne) of Concord, MA, Adam David (Anne Tyler) of Farmville, VA, his daughter, Megan Kathleen Kunz (Tim) of St. Paul, MN; his sister, Anita Jo Jakupcak (Mike), his brother, Albert A. Paulek (Teresa), Grandchildren: Olivia Paulek, Elliott Paulek, Curtis Kunz, and Leo Kunz. His "shared cousins", Cheryl & Gerald Clamon of Iowa City. Also, many nieces and nephews. And his dog, Ted.

David's body has been cremated. A visitation will be on April 10, 2020 at Pedrick Funeral Home – Keosauqua with his family present to greet friends in the evening. A Celebration of his Life will be on April 11, 2020 at the Roberts Building in Keosauqua.

Hope Lodge of Iowa City and EveryStep Hospice are his memorial choices. Dave was diagnosed with brain cancer in July, 2017. Words cannot express how important the UIHC Oncology Department has been to his last 2 years. Hope Lodge gave him & Kathleen lodging during several months of radiation. EveryStep Hospice gave all of the family peace of mind and a feeling of not being alone during his last days. Pedrick Funeral Home is assisting the family and online condolences may be directed to [www.pedrickfuneralhome.com](http://www.pedrickfuneralhome.com).



# Comments

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“ Dave and I attended grade school and high school together in the little farming community of Rochester, Illinois. I so treasure the memories I have of those years and the friendships that continue even today. Dave was quiet, talented and a gifted speaker. We both had an interest in public speaking but he was far superior in his abilities than I. He could memorized rheems of pages and deliver their words with great meaning. One speech had as it's topic a simple copper penny. He delivered the reading, penny in hand, with such depth of feeling and uncanny ability to paint a picture with words that I still remember it some 50+ years later. The Rochester High School Class of 1965 has lost an unforgettable classmate. Rest in peace dear friend.....rest in peace!

Phyllis Nevins Dietel



Phyllis Nevins Dietel - December 20, 2019 at 01:08 PM

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“ Cherie Chronis lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



Cherie Chronis - December 18, 2019 at 01:02 AM

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“ Probably one of the best teachers I had at Van Buren. I remember the first day of Freshman English when he walks in and says, "I hate freshmen". So, that was a fun year... but as sophomores on to seniors, there was no bigger advocate than Mr. Paulek. He challenged us and was easy to talk to about all classes at school. He surprised me and told me he was wanting me to go to a writing seminar in Oskaloosa. He saw good things in his students that they didn't see in themselves. Thank you Mr. Paulek.

Joe Bishop - December 17, 2019 at 12:18 AM



“ My thoughts are prayers are with Kathy and family. Dave was a significant mentor and friend who provided wonderful memories to cherish until we have the opportunity to meet again. Cheers to a special man who lived his life well and to the family who loved and supported him.

Jody Jamison Gunn - December 16, 2019 at 05:45 PM

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“ What an amazing man & what an amazing tribute to him! I respected Mr Paulek very much & he had an astounding impact on me in some very hard years. He always believed in me & always pushed me for a bit more. Huge loss in this world, but what a impact he made on so many!

“Catherine Megrath”

Cathy Hamburg - December 15, 2019 at 06:17 PM

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“ There aren't enough words to express what Dave has meant to our family & the loss our community will feel. From teacher to our kids to fellow VB Players members to fellow Rotarian to good friend. Heaven has a new angel to watch over his family & friends.



Sam & Sandy Polonsky - December 15, 2019 at 04:27 PM

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“ Dave Paulek was one of the most influential people in my life growing up. Literally a day does not go by that I don't think of something I learned from him.

Sometimes it's a vocabulary word that I use all the time now. Sometimes it's the fundamentals of public speaking when I'm teaching a lesson in church. From him I learned the importance of a catchy intro, but it MUST BE ON TOPIC (not like the cherry-bomb his college classmate threw into a trash can at the beginning of a speech). He also taught that in inspirational speaking, you should paint a picture of what life would be like if you follow the principle being taught. I've loved that idea and used it many times.

Last night, as I was baking, I remembered him saying he never tried to be exact when baking. That often pops into my head as I measure ingredients, and I'm more like him now.

One time we had to draw topics for impromptu speaking out of a hat. He gave us a chance to draw once more if we didn't like the first topic, but if we drew again, we couldn't go back to the first. He said it's like deciding whether to get married. I still get a chuckle out of that one.

I remember him breaking the news to my class about the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986. I don't remember what he said, just that he felt it deserved talking about.

After my first semester in college, I came home for Christmas and was invited over by his son Mark to watch a movie with him and my aunt Cherie. It was some kind of action movie with little substance, but I remember getting carried away pointing out themes, symbolism, and that kind of thing. Dave, annoyed, said, "sounds like someone's taken a college English class." What I didn't tell him is that I hadn't taken any English classes in college yet, I'd learned all that from him.

Maybe the most important thing I learned from him was how to write. Starting with the fundamentals of paragraph-writing, he challenged me to be clear my writing, which required me to be clear in my thinking. I remember comments from him like "why?" causing me to think more deeply about the opinions I expressed, as well as "avoid overgeneralization." All of this has served me well personally and professionally.

That was all on the academic side, and I can't even begin to list my memories related the life-changing high school and VB Players stage productions. Now that I think of it, his influence as both a director and an English teacher probably explains why I majored in Theatre in college and went on to law school after that.

As one more example of his continuing influence, I have a great print of Mark Twain I found in a used bookstore years ago and I was recently thinking of framing and sending it to him.

Dave, thank you for being an inspiration to me and so many others. Thank you for painting a picture of what life could be like if we follow what you taught. I'm sad you're gone, but grateful for all that I learned from you, and grateful for the memories that I continue to enjoy on a daily basis.

**Helen Anderson** - December 15, 2019 at 01:00 PM

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“ I'm really at a loss. Mr. Paulek was a model teacher, mentor, and community leader. Some of my earliest memories were sleepovers at the Pauleks' home, and Mr. Paulek was a formative influence on me during my adolescent years.

More than any other teacher I know of, he took the time to observe his students and get to know them. This enabled valuable insight into our young lives. Three decades later, I vividly remember his personalized praise and encouragement. If sometimes his counsel was less flattering, it was always accurate, well deserved, and highly valuable. Feedback coming from him meant something. I am one former student. Multiply his good influence over a thousand others young lives over the years. What a legacy.

Though he warmly opened his home to his students, I knew him mostly in his professional capacity. I can only imagine how much his family will miss him. Our prayers are with you.

**Dan Schoeni** - December 14, 2019 at 06:08 PM

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“ I am very sorry to learn of Dave’s passing. He was a wonderful person. I always enjoyed my time with the two of you. In this season of Joy and Hope. May many found memoires warm your heart in those sad moments.

God bless David!

Bob E. Robinson

**bob robinson** - December 14, 2019 at 12:37 PM

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“ To Kathaleen and family, you are in my thoughts and prayers. Dave was an awesome guy to talk to and one of the best guys around. I am so sorry for your loss. God Bless.

**Sheila Poole** - December 14, 2019 at 11:26 AM

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“ Sheila Poole lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



**Sheila Poole** - December 14, 2019 at 11:23 AM

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“ I’m at a loss for words to adequately describe the impact of Dave’s compassion during a difficult period in my life. I am forever thankful for the mentorship and guidance.

Kyla - December 14, 2019 at 11:12 AM

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“ Sorry to hear about your loss the family and friends are in our thoughts and prayers I remember him and Kathleen from School and the Community Plays I was in some of the plays my favorite was Fiddler On The Roof! He will be missed! From Ron, Kayla, and Kara Lewis!



Kara Lewis - December 14, 2019 at 11:09 AM

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“ I was shocked and saddened last night when my sister told me the news of my friend(and much more) David's passing. A feeling of deep regret that I never made it back down to see David as I intended back in July when I talked to him briefly in his driveway. He was out for a walk with his walking stick and his dog. I very rarely make it back down "home" so this was a rare treat. He looked in good spirits and we talked about this and that. I should have kept in touch more. It was so good to see him smiling...that smile that always said so much to me.

So many fond memories of David and Kath from their early days in Van Buren County. The first place they lived...Fred Tisdale's rental house. Speech class that first year. The "Fantastiks". The trip to Des Moines to watch a performance. All the plays in the Roberts Building in the early/mid 70's. "The Music Man". The portable stage we created with wire baskets from Barker Equipment in Keosauqua.

I moved from Van Buren County in 1980. And didn't keep in touch as I wish I had. Every few years I would get down and visit. Not nearly as much as I should have. Dave and Kath helped me so much when I needed help even if I did not know I needed it.

Building sets in the Roberts Building was quite therapeutic for me. I would come in and have had a bad day..in a bad mood. Dave would say "Take that frustration out on the nails". I got good at sinking nails with 2 or 3 hammer strokes. Had to be careful not to miss though as the lumber was donated by Paschal Lumber and when we took the stage down the 2 boys went back to Paschals.

I have so many fond memories of the 70's and the time I spent with Dave, Kath, and Mark. One that sticks out the most is one Christmas my present was a new hammer(I still have to this day and is in very good condition yet) with a card that read "Let life

happen rather than trying to make it happen". Of course being me I didn't follow that advice for a long time...but it was one of the things I always remember and should have used that wisdom.

My biggest regret(as with my uncle Carrol) is that I never told David how I considered him one of my father figures since my real father never really wanted the job. I hope David knows....I think he does.

My prayers to Kath and family.

Ron Canaday



Ron Canaday - December 14, 2019 at 10:47 AM

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“ What a great loss to his family, Van Buren County and the world of education. I was so happy that all three of my children had the opportunity to have Dave as their teacher. Dave was truly a Renaissance man and will be greatly missed.

Karen Stinson - December 14, 2019 at 09:40 AM

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“ Karen Stinson lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



Karen Stinson - December 14, 2019 at 09:38 AM

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“ DAVE WAS A GREAT PERSON AND A GREAT ADDITION TO VAN BURN CO.HE WILL BE MISSED GOD BLESS HIS FAMILY AT THIS VERY TRYING TIME GENE AND LINDA STINE



**Gene stine** - December 14, 2019 at 09:30 AM

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“ We are so sorry for your loss. We have so many wonderful memories with Dave. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of the family. Rich and Connie Lytle

**Connie and Rich Lytle** - December 14, 2019 at 07:52 AM

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“ Mary Shafranek Dickinson lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



**Mary Shafranek Dickinson** - December 14, 2019 at 01:03 AM

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“ Insight, patience, and an ear for the English language... thank you for these gifts, Dave. You were a blessing in my life.

**Elizabeth Hervey Osborn** - December 13, 2019 at 10:30 PM

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“ Elizabeth Hervey Osborn lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



Elizabeth Hervey Osborn - December 13, 2019 at 10:28 PM

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“ Dave Paulek had such a major impact on me. Mr. Paulek taught me about performing with confidence, debating, writing, and humor. He helped through some difficult times as a young(er) person. He let me grow up and discover my love for the stage in the VB Players. Thank you for your life and for being there for all of the people you touched.

Adam Kirchner - December 13, 2019 at 07:26 PM

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“ Kathy, Mark, Adam, and Megan -

I was terribly saddened to hear this news today. Working with Dave as part of the VB Players are some of my fondest memories of my time in Keosauqua. He was a great friend and informal teaching mentor at a time when I was still learning how to reach teenagers...something for which he had a remarkable talent. His demeanor and sense of humor made him a fun person to be around. My thoughts and deepest condolences to all of you—he is an amazing human being who will be dearly missed.

Tom Merrill

Tom Merrill - December 13, 2019 at 07:01 PM

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“ Linda (Canaday) Wilson lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



Linda (Canaday) Wilson - December 13, 2019 at 06:37 PM



“ My condolences to the family. Mr. Paulek was a wonderful teacher and an even more wonderful human being. He will be missed by so many who benefited from his light and wisdom. The world is a better place as a result of his influence on young people.

**Linda (Canaday) Wilson** - December 13, 2019 at 06:32 PM

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“ Kathy and Family,  
My condolences to you at this time of your loss. Many years ago I was introduced to your family thru Dave and Linda Mitcheltree. I didn't know where it would lead, but I has been a pleasure! Sharing your land with me, my grandkids and others has been a true blessing. Dave, afforded a once in a lifetime happening...I was able to watch my 3 year old grandson catch his FIRST fish! Along with sharing with my disabled hunter, Andrew "Rooster" Tressel the chance to catch some beautiful bluegills.....what blessings  
Dave created a beautiful arrowhead shaped plaque for the "acorn buck" (remember Kath?) I harvested on the farm after a 5 year drought In hunting deer. That buck has a special place in my Man Cave, with special memories. Dave was a beautiful woodworker and I appreciated his work. Was he a "giving person? YES he was! Sharing so much with so many. God puts people in our lives to help make us better people...Dave did that to me and I'm a better human because he lived. I truly believe, that if we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved and be reunited with Dave in heaven God had prepared a place for Dave ahead of time and has welcomed him home. The angels greeted him and said...."no more pain, Dave! Come on in...we've been waiting for you"! You will be missed my friend(I call you that because that's what you are) but you have touched so many lives...rest in peace. Remember, Dave's not gone.....no...he just started up the tractor and drove over to the other side of the farm.....  
God Bless You Sir,  
"Cork" Battey

**"Cork" Battey** - December 13, 2019 at 06:13 PM

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“ I had the privilege of being both Dave's student and colleague. He gave me a great deal of advice throughout my life but the 8 words he gave me in May of 1985 are words which have helped guide my life; Be Good, Keep Clean, Study Hard, Hurry Home. Prayers to all who will feel this loss, especially his family.

**Julie Chapuis** - December 13, 2019 at 05:58 PM

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“ Rosemary Charbonneau lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



Rosemary Charbonneau - December 13, 2019 at 05:55 PM

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“ You were one of the greatest teachers I've had the fortune to encounter, Dave. I cherish the days I had with you in class as well as those we spent working together on the light and sound for the high school and community theater productions. May you rest in peace and my heartfelt condolences to your family.

Rich Lowe - December 13, 2019 at 05:47 PM

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“ My thoughts and prayers are with you all. Some of my fondest memories of high school was working on the play and helping at the community play with the sets. I never wanted to be on stage with ETC but he continually pushed to get me there. He succeeded my senior year even if it was just a walk across with an "Act" sign. Dave was always encouraging, supportive, but brutally honest with me when I needed it the most! He always treated me with respect and had conversations instead of talking down to me. He had an impact on so many. His teachings have been with me throughout my life and I am sure many others! Thank you for the memories, Mr. Paulek! RIP



Kaye Sickels Gilbert - December 13, 2019 at 05:21 PM

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“ Mr. Paulek helped make my high school years tolerable. He truly made me feel that I had great potential and I will always be grateful to him for that. He will not be forgotten.

Lori Keehner - December 13, 2019 at 05:18 PM



“ It’s hard to think of the Van Buren high school experience without thinking of Mr. Paulek. His love for theatre and writing caught me and I think of him still today and as my kids discover the same. He was a warm host in his home, a servant in the community, a challenging teacher and director, and I know he leaves a legacy that will not soon be forgotten. I offer deep sympathy for all those grieving and especially his family.

**Erin Brauns Foerch** - December 13, 2019 at 04:01 PM

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“ Mr. Paulek was my favorite teacher through high school, such a calm and witty personality. My deepest sympathies to the family.

**Brad Trueblood** - December 13, 2019 at 03:35 PM

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“ Mr. Paulek was a teacher I remember so well. His curriculum was challenging and he pushed you to give your best work. When you received a good grade from him you knew you had truly earned it and it felt very validating. He taught me so much about writing which served me well throughout my career. He definitely made an impact as an educator. I’m so sorry for this tremendous loss to his family and close friends. My thoughts are with all of you.

**Judy Shelangoski Patrick** - December 13, 2019 at 02:58 PM

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“ Charles Lazenby lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



**Charles Lazenby** - December 13, 2019 at 02:33 PM

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“ Roberta Parks lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



**Roberta Parks** - December 13, 2019 at 02:12 PM

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“ Dave influenced a lot of individuals throughout his life. He was a role model, teacher, and friend to many. We will miss him and thank him for the times we had and memories that will last many lifetimes.

**Quenton Dodson** - December 13, 2019 at 02:01 PM

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“ Toni Pfeifer lit a candle in memory of David Paulek



**Toni Pfeifer** - December 13, 2019 at 01:42 PM

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“ Sad to read about Dave's passing. What a huge loss for his family, as well as for Keosauqua. Prayers to Kathy and family for acceptance and peace.

**Bobbie Boyd** - December 13, 2019 at 01:35 PM

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“ I have great respect and appreciation for Mr. Paulek. He was one of those teachers that could be tough and supportive at the same time. There are things he said to me in high school that stuck with me through the years. I always felt he saw something in me that I never truly saw in myself and he pushed me to have faith in myself and my abilities and not be afraid to display it to others. Recently, I moved back to Keosauqua and had the pleasure of seeing him briefly. During our short visit, he told me "the good ones always come home". It was heartfelt and honest, as he always

has been, and deeply moved me. I agree with others, he definitely leaves a great legacy and I am lucky to have known him. My sympathy to the family. Sending you all prayers of peace.

**Emily Starnes** - December 13, 2019 at 01:13 PM

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“ Mr Paulek was one of the best teachers I've ever known. He taught us to write what we thought and think about what we wrote. He treated us like equals and never like kids. He was an amazing educator and a huge party of the community and he will be greatly missed. He leaves a legacy in those who were lucky enough to be his students. Prayers to his family.

**Karoline Thornsberry** - December 13, 2019 at 12:45 PM

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“ I'm a Barn person, so when good Good Neighbor Dave remodeled his Barn it was love at first sight, you put up a good fight against that horrid C word, so see you on the other side Dave, Prayers for Comfort and Peace to Kathy,Mark,Adam and Meagan.



**Marilyn M. Wiley** - December 13, 2019 at 12:30 PM

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“ One of my favorite teachers. There are certain ones you remember forever and they inspire you. He was that kind of teacher. Sending condolences to his family. Just know he touch so many lives in a positive way

**Lynn Schwantes Hackwell** - December 13, 2019 at 12:24 PM

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“ Wow, Mr Paulek is one of teachers I remember most about HS. I loved working behind the scenes on plays and even those times he would call me “mouth” because of my talking. I also loved learning to drive a stick on the column, what a hoot. Dave and Kathleen were just great people. God Bless you all and thanks for being memorable teachers

**Lora Grubbs Burns** - December 13, 2019 at 12:18 PM



“ Mr.Paulek was a great teacher and an awesome listener when a student needed to talk. My sympathy to the family and community.

**Pam Ritz Mier** - December 13, 2019 at 12:52 PM



“ My favorite teacher ever. He always wanted to see kids succeed. My favorite saying was “be more, don’t be one of those kids that don’t graduate from the parking lot.” Prayers to the family, he always spoke lovingly of them.

**Crystal Weaver Lavin** - December 13, 2019 at 06:37 PM

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“ I am so saddened to hear about Dave's passing. I talked to him at the fall festival in Keo just 2 months ago and he showed me the wood work he did in his brother's antique car. What an honor to be able to hear how Dave created the perfectly smooth wood trim and console storage.  
Dave had a great influence on my writing and love of literature when I was in high school. His classes were always a respite from the other classes & teachers!! :) He inspired my passion for creative writing which grew into writing articles for the college newspaper.  
Thank you Dave, for encouraging me and forming my desire for writing. You and Kathy are such a blessing to our community!

**DiAnna Allen** - December 13, 2019 at 11:59 AM

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“ My condolences to the family.

What a gift Dave and Kathy were to my growing up years. Such a gift. I was able to attend and enjoy so many of the productions and later was able to be part of many high school performances.

The Pauleks helped me learn to communicate -- to think -- to write.

Most important, they communicated love and care to us.

Love to all the family.

Chris Brauns  
Stillman Valley, IL

**Chris Brauns** - December 13, 2019 at 11:41 AM