

COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens

September 4, 1946 - November 11, 2024

COL (Ret) Eugene Paul (“E. Paul”) Semmens passed away on November 11, 2024, in Fort Payne, Alabama, at the age of 78. Born on September 4, 1946, in Long Beach, California, Paul’s journey was marked by a distinguished military and civilian career as well as a profound commitment to his faith, family and nation.

Paul graduated from St. Mary’s High School in Colorado Springs, CO in 1964, and went on to earn both his Bachelor’s (1968) and Master’s (1969) degrees in History from Colorado State University. In 1968, he was commissioned as an Air Defense Artillery officer in the United States Army.

During his military service, Paul was a dynamic leader who displayed tactical brilliance and generational influence as an instructor who impacted untold scores of Air Defense Artillery officers and soldiers. Highlights of his service included being an Instructor of Military History at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO; Director of Tactics for the Air Defense Artillery School, Fort Bliss, TX; Commander of the 10th ADA (PRIMA) Brigade, Darmstadt, GE; and Commander of U.S. Army Space, Colorado Springs, CO where he was instrumental in developing the first ever Theater-level Force Protection Tactical Operations Center (FPTOC).

After retiring from the military, he continued serving his country within the

defense industry as President and co-owner of PRIMA Enterprises, Inc. where he focused on training national and global missile defense forces from 1995 to 2004. In 2005, Paul co-founded Imprimis, Inc. which was responsible for developing and implementing the first training baseline for the U.S. Army's Theater High-Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) program and subsequently trained THAAD officers and soldiers until his retirement in 2016.

Paul was a devout member of Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in Fort Payne, AL where he served on the Finance Council and as Guardian of the Facilities and Maintenance. A life-long Catholic, he fully embraced his faith after living his Cursillo weekend and served on both the Cursillo diocesan and regional service teams. Paul eventually found his saintly models in Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi, and devoted himself to living as a Secular Franciscan. He humbly served the Channel of Peace Fraternity in Chattanooga, TN as both the Formation Director and the Fraternity Minister.

He was an avid life-long New York Yankees and Boston Celtics fan; lover of cycling-completing the Tour de Tucson metric century; riding the Camino de Santiago in Spain, and each year, faithfully following the Tour de France; but most of all, he enjoyed spending quality time with his family and friends.

He is survived by his wife, Christina, his sons, Robert, Michael, and Sean, and one grandson, Grant. He is also survived by his brother, Michael. Paul was preceded in death by his parents, Clifton Paul and Mary Semmens.

A Funeral Mass will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, November 16th at Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in Fort Payne. He will lie in state at Our Lady of the Valley from 12 noon until the 2 p.m. hour of service. The family will also receive friends on Friday evening at Wilson Funeral Home in Fort Payne from 5 until 8 p.m. with a Rosary and Prayer service beginning at 7 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Channel of Peace Secular Franciscan Fraternity, Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church, or the Tunnels to Towers Foundation that assists veterans. Each of these organizations is representative of Paul's own life-long commitment to his faith, community, and nation.

Wilson Funeral Home and Crematory of Fort Payne is assisting the family with arrangements, ensuring Paul's legacy is honored and remembered.

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV **15**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Wilson Funeral Home
3801 Gault Ave. N
Fort Payne, AL 35967

Rosary

NOV **15**. 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Wilson Funeral Home
3801 Gault Ave. N
Fort Payne, AL 35967

Visitation

NOV **16**. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church
2910 Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne, AL 35967

Funeral Mass

NOV **16**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church
2910 Gault Avenue North
Fort Payne, AL 35967

Tribute Wall

JS

“ *E Paul was a legion in the Air Defense Artillery Branch, and touched more life's than he could have imagined. He was my mentor as a young Lieutenant and gave me the honor of serving with him as a Captain when he commanded the Army Space Command. He would never hesitate to take time for individual training and counseling as mentor, and also as a very scary Colonel when it was well deserved.*

Thanks E Paul for the memories in Fort Bliss, Germany and Colorado Spring. You will always be an example to follow and will be greatly missed.

RIP Sir, I'll see you in the other side.

James Spangler - September 04, 2025 at 04:02 PM

DA

“ I knew E. Paul Semmens. Back at Colorado State University, he was my fraternity brother. To paraphrase a fraternity song, "Paul Semmens is a man who stands way above the rest, to all fraternity men he represents the best." Paul was an outgoing, personable brother and an able ambassador for our fraternity chapter. He and some of the other brothers began speaking to each other in half words. Paul's favorite music group, the Beatles, became "...the tles." Each morning before class we would have a cup of "...fee." And he drove a pink 1955 Chevrolet that was, of course, the "Pink Panther," but, to him, it was "...the ther.."

Everyone in a fraternity has a nickname, and Paul's was "Points". He came about it this way. After classes one Friday the brothers gathered behind the fraternity house to play volleyball. The two teams were chosen at random as people showed up, but it became apparent that the tall and athletic players were on one side and the shorter and more studious ones were on the other. When Paul arrived, we encouraged him to get on the side of the shorter players to kind of even up the talent. They would have none of that, and Paul ended up with the taller athletes. But things weren't going particularly well. The team that should have been overwhelmed held their own and, in fact, seemed to be winning. At that point it became Paul's turn to serve. He quickly ran off eight points, leading his team to victory. When the losing team demanded a rematch, Paul was responsible either as a server or setter for 11 of the 15 points scored. He would forever be known as "Points."

Paul had a secret ambition he confided to me. He said his goal in life was to back the line at Notre Dame. I told him he wasn't big enough. But if grit and determination meant anything, he probably could have done it..

It is appropriate that Paul will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery where he will be among his peers. Everyone will stop and listen when they blow Taps, one more time, for Col E. Paul Semmens, USA (Ret), and the honor guard will present a carefully folded flag to Christina.

RIP, Points, you are the best.

Daryl Youngstrum

Dar - December 17, 2024 at 01:45 PM

FR

“ I met then LTC Semmens in 1985 when he was in command of the famed "double five deuce" at the 24th ID/Ft. Stewart GA - I've attached a picture of our PT shirt that had designed. He was the first Battalion Commander I served under, and I was his second (!) favorite S2 Officer ;-) I will say that Paul Semmens was simply larger than life, and I needed time as a freshly minted 2LT to catch up to him. He supported and challenged me mercilessly in what I can best describe as a drive to get me to believe in myself. I later told countless junior officers that Paul's leadership DNA is on me, and now some of that DNA is on them ... I will always remember him and I am grateful for his leadership that launched my career. COL (ret) Fred Ehrman, aka "S2"



Fred - November 16, 2024 at 08:31 AM

CS

Fred, thank you for sharing your story AND the picture of the PT shirt. Untold numbers of others (including myself!) can identify with your observations of Paul and his drive to make himself and all the others around him their best selves. May his "leadership DNA" continue to form others for the good for many years to come. 🙏

christina Semmens - November 18, 2024 at 08:11 AM

AS

“ *All the von Spakovskys purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.*



All the von Spakovskys - November 15, 2024 at 08:54 PM

RM

“ *Connie and I send our condolences to the family and friends of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens! He was truly a great Warrior and leader in the Army and Air Defense Artillery Branch. His impact on the Soldiers he led and on the Air Defense Branch cannot be understated. I was fortunate to call him my mentor while serving at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, CA, and thereafter. He was as tough as nails and someone I was proud to call my friend.*

Roger Mathews - November 15, 2024 at 01:57 PM

CS

Roger, Thank you for your condolences. Couldn't agree more with you about Paul's impact on those who served for and with him. Am sure he is getting folks in Heaven squared away and on target!

christina Semmens - November 18, 2024 at 08:44 AM

AM

“ *Our deepest condolences to the whole family from Heather and I. COL. Semmens (07) was our boss several times in the Army and as a contractor. He was a great leader. A great soldier has passed on to eternal life, but his memories remain with us. We were blessed to be able to visit with him recently, war stories were told. May God Bless him, Christina and the entire family.*

Armando Macias - November 14, 2024 at 11:26 PM

RS

“ I was lucky enough to serve under then Lieutenant Colonel E. Paul Semmens at Fort Stewart, GA as my first duty assignment as an Officer. He was bigger than life and so charismatic as the Battalion Commander. I thoroughly enjoyed any interaction with him. He was highly respected and believe that was true throughout the 24th Infantry Division for his unyielding passion and consistent drive for excellence. I was later fortunate enough to command a battalion of my own, and I owe a great deal of my foundation as an officer and leader to him. An amazing man and my heart-felt condolences go out to his family. I was beyond honored to have served with such a wonderful leader and a great man!

Rick Starkey - November 14, 2024 at 10:04 PM

MS

Thank you. My Dads impact will last for years and years. I remember those fun runs when he was a battalion commander. Thank you, Mike Semmens

Mike Semmens - November 14, 2024 at 10:52 PM

HB

“Doris and I are very sad about this news. We extend our condolences to the family of COL(R) E. Paul Semmens. He was a patriot. I first encountered him in the spring of 1985 when he was busy commanding the 5th Battalion, 52nd Air “Attack” Artillery; at the time part of the 24th Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia. He made quite an impression upon me - at the time a young captain, and I know he did the same to many others. There were times when I wondered what I had gotten myself into; stories for another time perhaps. Driven, relentless, and very unique...he was a force of nature, and as it turned out it was my, and others, good fortune to have had the chance to serve with him. Numerous officers from that unit went on to command battalions and brigades of their own, and they owe at least a portion of their success to the mentorship of E. Paul Semmens. We stayed in touch over the years although I should have done better with that. I’m very happy to have had the chance to speak with him recently and thank him again for everything that he did for me and my family. Rest easy sir, God Bless you.

Harry Bloomer - November 14, 2024 at 12:29 PM

MS

Thank you for the kind words. Every once in a while I would come across an old LT or CPT of my Dads and they would echo the same. All the best, Mike Semmens

Mike Semmens - November 14, 2024 at 10:50 PM

HA

Your father was an awesome soldier. Truly sorry for your loss. I know it's tough. My own father - a veteran of WW 2, the Korean War, and Vietnam passed away a few years ago. He and my mother are interred together at Arlington. Will your dad be going there? If so and if possible please let me know when those arrangements are finalized. V/R Harry

Harry - November 16, 2024 at 09:02 AM

CS

Harry, in answer to your question, yes, Paul will be interred at Arlington. Now beginning that process to secure a spot and date, but will be sure to reach out and let you know. All the best, Christina

christina Semmens - November 18, 2024 at 08:53 AM

HA

Thank you Christina.

Harry - November 18, 2024 at 01:48 PM

AA

Condolences Christina on the passing away of your dear husband. Prayers for his resting in peace.

Albert Azzopardi - Malta.

Albert Azzopardi - December 04, 2024 at 03:22 PM

RM

“ God bless and keep you Paul and let Hos face shine upon you. Thank you for your service to God and country. Our prayers and condolences to Christina, Sean, and family...God be with you as always during this tough time.

Randy and Beth Matteson - November 14, 2024 at 11:06 AM

RS

“ E. Paul and I first met September 18, 2008, one week after my mom passed away. We were table brothers at Cursillo #114. The theme of our weekend was: "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom." I can't help but tear up when thinking about that. We became brothers that weekend--a brotherhood that lasts even now. We grouped weekly for years with various Cursillistas. We shared many, many happy stories, leaned on each other in tough times, and always prayed for each other. After he moved to Ft. Payne we didn't see as much of each other, but that didn't break the bond that we share. I love the picture associated with this obituary--it captures him. I shall miss him--i already miss him. But i am SO very happy that he has WON his race, and is now in the presence of his creator, his savior, his Lord. Rest in peace my brother. I love you. Deacon Bob Becher

Robert J. Becher, Sr. - November 14, 2024 at 09:08 AM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.



November 13, 2024 at 08:14 PM



“ Divine Light was purchased for the family of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.



November 13, 2024 at 04:47 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.

November 13, 2024 at 04:47 PM



“ nrlong8022@gmail.com, Paul is my spiritual adviser! One month, every Tuesday at 1400, he had me present 500 years of Catholic Church history. It was quite an experience doing the research and doing 45mins of presenting church history and 15 mins of him praying for us both.

I will never get over this SAINT'S LIFE & another SAINT, His wife, CHRISTINA!

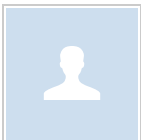
SAINT PAUL PRAY FOR ALL OF US WHO KNOW HIM, MAY WE JOIN HIM IN PARADISE, WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE HOLY FAMILY, SAINTS, PROPHETS, APOSTLES, MYRTERS, & GOD THE FATHER! AMEN!

Roy Long - November 13, 2024 at 04:26 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.

November 12, 2024 at 06:34 PM



“ Enduring Grace was purchased for the family of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.



November 12, 2024 at 04:56 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.

November 12, 2024 at 04:56 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of COL (Ret) E. Paul Semmens.

November 12, 2024 at 02:09 PM