

Paul Ruiz

(June 5, 1943 – August 10, 2018)

Paul Ruiz of Manchaca, TX left his earthly home on Friday, August 10, 2018, to lend heaven his considerable investigative skills, cultivated during years of public service as a decorated street cop for the Austin Police Department.

His pursuit of justice for victims of crime was ever with him. In the weeks before his final illness he was still troubled by an unsolved cold case involving the murder of an exotic dancer. Although years had passed since he first worked the case at the Austin Police Department (APD), like all good cops he was haunted by a desire to solve the case and would frequently go over the evidence and possible suspects.

Paul was born in East Austin on June 5, 1943, to an extraordinary, hard-working mom and dad, Sam and Trinidad Ramirez Ruiz. He and his two brothers and sister often played in the dusty streets where Interstate-35 now cuts a swath through the city. One of Paul's favorite activities was collecting discarded milk bottles to earn money for State Theater movie tickets and to buy Levi jeans and Converse Chuck Taylors. It was during this time that Paul got to know a gruff, plainspoken police officer patrolling Congress Avenue on foot. The officer made sure Paul's milk bottles had really been discarded before he picked them up. This planted the first seed that blossomed into Paul's desire for a career in law enforcement.

Paul graduated from Becker Elementary, Fulmore Junior High and Travis High School. He lettered as a second baseman in baseball and quarterbacked the Rebels' football team. His hands and feet were lightening quick from early boxing lessons taught by his Dad, who sometimes sparred with Golden Gloves boxer Matt Martinez, later the owner of Matt's El Rancho restaurant.

After high school graduation, Paul served in the U.S. Army Reserves. He returned to Austin and worked for a prominent interior design company, where he helped select and install exotic fabrics, carpeting and rugs in West Austin homes.

He fell in love and married Austinite Jimmye Malone; the young couple moved to California where several of his aunts and uncles lived. Paul worked in the banking industry, traveling Los Angeles' busy freeways and experiencing the beauty of the landscape but also the terror of several earthquakes. He and Jimmye welcomed two precious children into their lives, Darrin James Ruiz on April 25, 1966, and Tammi Michelle Ruiz on August 15, 1967.

But they missed Texas. So, the family headed back to the Lone Star State, relocating in Webster where Paul joined his brother, Sam, as a computer data analyst for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston. Paul and Sam were proud to be on the team that witnessed and celebrated the success of Apollo 11, the first manned spacecraft landing on the moon on July 20, 1969.

Austin beckoned Paul and Jimmye home and Paul followed-through on his childhood dream to be an Austin policeman. He graduated from the Austin Police Academy in 1971 and earned a reputation as a doggedly determined investigator. He was attached to Lt. Colon Jordan's Homicide Division, served on Lt. Bobby Simpson's Organized Crime Unit and worked with Lt. Roger Napier, head of the Internal Affairs Division. He and his partner, the late Robert Martinez, liked to call themselves the "shoeshine cops" because they preferred working on the streets rather than behind a desk.

Paul's marriage ended but the friendship continued and he and Jimmye shared parenting duties, shuttling Darrin and Tammi to school activities and Little League baseball and softball games. He coached both the girls' softball and the boys' baseball teams for several years, delighting in the trophies his teams won.

One day, he noticed that a new Austin American-Statesman reporter, Crispin James, had been assigned to the cop shop's 6 am to 2 pm shift. She saw him watching her as she gathered the news of the day for the newspaper's first edition. She liked his handsome, boyish looks and he looked really good in his uniform. Then, he saw her at Travis High School playing tennis with a girlfriend, and again at a movie theater. He told his brother, "I'm going to marry her." Sam said, "No way that's going to happen." But it did. He had to

promise to love her orange tabby kitty cat, Willie Wonka, and he promised he would.

Crispin and Paul were married at Berkeley United Methodist Church with a reception among the peacocks at Green Pastures. These magical days produced a beautiful daughter, Dara Michelle Ruiz, on June 21, 1981, which happened to be Father's Day that year. Her name was chosen to mirror the names of her brother and sister to honor them as the firstborn. Paul and Crispin celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary on April 30, 2018.

Paul considered one of his greatest APD achievements to be the case he and Robert Martinez worked on together, which resulted in a book written by the late Kelly Fero called, *The Zani Murders*. He and Robert were assigned in March 1980 to a seemingly uncomplicated credit card scam. The two detectives dug a little deeper and unraveled a thirteen-year crime spree through Texas, Oklahoma and Mexico by Robert Zani that ended the lives of his mother, several real estate agents and terrorized other realtors in Austin who didn't realize they were showing homes to a murderer and his wife. They also solved the oldest, unsolved murder case in Austin at that time by tracing to Acapulco the .357 magnum that Zani used to kill University of Texas political activist George Vizard in July 1967, in a north Austin Town and Country convenience store. Paul and Robert were feted in Acapulco by the Mexican commandante who handed over the weapon used to kill Vizard. The police department used hypnosis to coax a description of the killer from a customer who had been waited on by the killer 13 years before. When compared to Zani's picture from that time, the portrait that emerged from the hypnotized witness's memory was remarkably similar. Travis County Assistant District Attorney Joe Turner's prosecution of Zani set a national precedent for admissibility of hypnotically-induced testimony in the courtroom. Zani died in prison in Huntsville February 22, 2011. Paul and Robert often chuckled about the journey taken – "Who would have ever believed two East Austin shoeshine cops would have this opportunity to solve the case of a lifetime," they asked themselves.

During his career at APD, Paul worked his off-duty hours as chief of security for the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Lady Bird Lake, where he formed a legion of friendships. After his career at APD, Paul worked as an investigator for Travis

County DA Ronnie Earle. He left that position when he was hired as chief investigator for the Charitable Trust Division of Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox's Office. He retired from the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) as an investigator for the Professional Credentialing Enforcement Department in June 2016.

Paul is preceded in death by his parents, Sam and Trine Ruiz, Austin, TX; his aunts and uncles, ER and Beatrice Flores, Alhambra, CA and Rosie and Willie Ogawa, Huntington Beach, CA; his nephew, Robin Ruiz, Austin, TX; his cousin, Danny Ruiz, Austin, TX; and two sets of in-laws, Ralph and Sylvia James, Channelview, TX and James and Jo Malone, Austin, TX. Also preceding him in death were his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Kevin and Jane James, Owasso, OK.

He is survived by his wife, Crispin James Ruiz, Manchaca, TX; two daughters, Tammi Ruiz Casey (Brent Casey), Sinton, TX and Dara Michelle Ruiz Mistak (Ben Mistak, and Ben's parents, Mary and John Mistak of Savannah, GA. and sister Annie Mistak, Austin, TX), Brooklyn, NY; and son, Darrin James Ruiz, the father of Paul's beloved granddaughter, Hannah Ruiz, and Hannah's mom, Valerie Varela, all of El Paso, TX. Other survivors who grieve his passing are his sister, Mary Martinez (Vince Cartwright), Surprise, AZ. and two brothers, Sam Ruiz, Austin, TX and Abel Ruiz (Jennifer Guevara), Dallas, TX. Also, sister-in-law, Gloria Ruiz, Kyle, TX and his former wife, Jimmye Malone, Austin, TX. In addition, he is survived by brother-in-law and sister-in-law Dusty James (Theresa), Missouri City, TX and sister-in-law Debbie Kocian, New Braunfels, TX.

He is also survived by his nieces and nephews, Sandy Payne (Ian Payne), Simi Valley, CA.; Darlene Dunnet (Doug Dunnet), Simi Valley, CA.; Kerry Martinez (Sylvia Martinez), Columbus, OH; Julie Cram, Weaverville, CA; Brian Ruiz (Becky Ruiz), Hutto, TX; Chris Ruiz, Kyle, TX; Erik Ruiz (Kris Ruiz), Cedar Park, TX; Lisa Ruiz (Lynn), Denver, CO.; Hanna James, Missouri City, TX; Jeff James, Los Angeles, CA.; Evan James, Atlanta, GA.; Melanie LaPorte (Marcus), Austin, TX; Ryan Kocian (Petra Rogers), Austin, TX; Aaron Ruiz, Kyle, TX; Erin James, Fort Worth, TX; and, Denise Frederick, Lakewood, CO.

He leaves behind a number of cousins who mourn his passing: Janie Smay (Cliff), Fountain Valley, CA; and the Flores family, Alice Marie Flores Latham (Jimmy Latham), Austin, TX; Linda Salter, San Diego, CA; Birdie Flores, San Gabriel, CA; Yolanda Flores Yellin (C.R. Flynt), Philadelphia, PA; Daniel Flores, Pasadena, CA; and Patricia Flores and Rose Marie Flores.

Paul's family offers its deepest gratitude to the medical professionals at Dell Seton Medical ICU at the University of Texas for their devotion to Paul and other gravely ill patients. They brought him back to us until the challenges of living became too great for him to overcome and it was time to say goodbye. The nurses and doctors at Dell Seton save people with the best technology available and the most loving hearts. It's how medicine should be.

Our family would also like to thank Allen Sonstein, MD, and his staff, and John Dieck, MD, for the excellent care they provided Paul over the years. He couldn't have asked for better doctors.

Memorial services will be Saturday, August 18, 11 am, First United Methodist Church, 1201 Lavaca St., Austin, TX 78701, with a reception following in the Great Hall, located in the Church's Family Life Center, [1300 Lavaca St.](http://1300LavacaSt)

Donations in his memory may be made to First United Methodist Church; Austin Wildlife Rescue; The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA); or a charity of your choice.

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