



ASSOCIATION FOR  
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## **Paul B. Deignan**

Paul B. Deignan, MPS, RD, DHCFA, 81, of Gettysburg, PA., died Sunday morning May 23, 2021 at his home. Born February 6, 1940 in Orange, NJ, he was the son of the late Joseph M. and Catherine T. (Driscoll) Deignan. He was the loving husband of Mary E. (Davis) Deignan to whom he was married for 58 years. In addition to his wife, Paul is survived by his four children, five grandchildren, a great grandchild and two siblings.



**The following was contributed by Mary Deignan, Donna Boss, Jerry Berkman, Marge Beasley, Mary Spicer and Mary Keysor.\***

Many in the hospitality industry and myriad organizations Paul Deignan participated in remember him as an enthusiastic, forward-thinking leader, a respected model of professionalism and a generous, insightful mentor. His circle of friends and colleagues encompassed every foodservice industry channel, people in his church and members of the Gettysburg Lions Club.

Paul graduated from Cornell University in 1962 and was the first recipient of a Master's in Professional Studies from Cornell School of Hotel Administration in Ithaca, NY. He worked as a healthcare nutrition services manager for 43 years.

“Although Paul had sight problems, he had excellent vision,” says Jerry Berkman, a foodservice pioneer, director at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, consultant and innovator. “He was very sensitive to people and motivated them to make significant contributions.”

Paul was a mentor to many and a quintessential leader who was always a step or 10 in front of the trends and innovations. He cared deeply for the healthcare associations, his profession and all the people he met. He wanted others to be as successful as they could be so he offered endless hours to support their ambitions and problem-solving. The industry and, of course, his family and friends, will miss him and remember him always.

AHF honors Paul's many years of service, contributions, and expertise. He will be missed by the community and his AHF family.

During his career, Paul worked for several hospital groups, including United and Children's Hospitals in St. Paul, MN., and St. Rose Dominican Hospital in Henderson, NV. He was known for being innovative and forward-thinking, always trying to be one step ahead of the tried-and-true. He kept in touch with people in all facets of the hospitality business so he could bring their ideas and programs into healthcare foodservice.

He often took leaps ahead of his colleagues to conceive of and try out new foodservice equipment to improve employee productivity. His personal and professional challenge was to change the overall image of healthcare food from mediocre to outstanding food and service. For



instance, he installed the first cook-chill system using a tunnel microwave on the tray assembly line at United and Children's Hospitals. Very much in its infancy, the system required continual testing and adjusting. He and his staff tested recipes to discover what this system could and couldn't do well to meet high quality standards. Later, he installed an improved version of the tunnel microwave after experimenting to eliminate the engineering problems. Later, pizza chains used the tunnel microwave system for their operations. The cook-chill component provided the foundation for many systems that followed.

Also at this hospital, Paul put in a revolving circle self-service area for retail menu items that was also used in the Smithsonian at the Air and Space museum.

As a dietitian himself, Paul was a strong promoter of extending dietitians' roles beyond the traditional clinical responsibilities and obtaining additional professional certifications and degrees. Well ahead of other healthcare institutions, his dietitians performed their regular responsibilities and also visited patients and community members beyond the hospital's walls and offered nutritional advice. In addition, always looking out for his employees, Paul challenged his staff members to produce revenue-generating product lines, including Nutritious Cuisine, frozen home meals available nationally. Employees were awarded with a variety of incentives including a bonus program.

Paul repeatedly expressed gratitude for all he received from the hospitality industry and believed in giving back and back and back. He served as the president of ASHFSA and HFM, working to strengthen the organizations and partner with allied associations to expand the interaction and knowledge base among all hospitality professionals. After his retirement he volunteered as a foodservice evaluator of foodservice excellence for Coast Guard award, the Philip A. Connelly program awards for the U.S. Army, and for the John L. Hennessy Awards for the Air Force.

As a mentor, Paul made himself available to everyone who asked for advice and assistance. He listened and responded with what many colleagues described as a sixth, seventh and eighth sense. Despite his legal blindness, he never let it get in his way. Whatever people wanted to develop for their operations or wherever they were in the stages of development, Paul shared his knowledge or connected them with people who knew more. His generosity of time and his patience to help people accomplish what they wanted, whether room service, a meal production system or employee recognition, became legend. And he brought a sense of humor and unique perspective to his comments that always kept interaction with Paul extraordinary.

In recognition of his contributions and character, Paul received many prestigious honors:

- ° One of the top 50 hospitality foodservice pioneers by *Restaurants & Institutions* magazine in its 50th anniversary issue (1937-1987).
- ° The International Foodservice Manufacturers Association Silver Plate Award, 1987.



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° ASHFSA's Jacques Bloch Award

° HFM's Angelo Gagliano Award.

Paul will be missed by all who knew him, but he remains in our hearts and will be remembered always. Marge Beasley says, "Our Heavenly Father broke the 'mold' when Paul was born—and this world will not be the same without his love and kindness for everyone."

*\*Contributors to this memorial are Mary Deignan, wife of Paul Deignan; lifelong friends Donna Boss, editor and communications consultant, as well as retired foodservice directors and industry award winners Jerry Berkman, Marge Beasley, Mary Spicer and Mary Keysor. Beasley was president of ASHFSA and HFM; Spicer was president of ASHFSA, HFM and AHF, and Keysor was president of AHF.*