



# Edward Emery Paine

OCT 16, 1924 - DEC 7, 2025



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# Edward Emery Paine

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**E**dward Emery Paine died Sunday, December 7, 2025, at his home in Decatur, after a short illness. He was 101.

Edward was born in rural Greenville, IL, on October 16, 1924, the second son of Thomas William Paine and Emma Verana (Mueller) Paine. To the extended family and community around Greenville, he was known as Emery, while later in life he went by Edward or Ed.

He graduated from Greenville High School, and enlisted in the U.S. Navy on October 24, 1942, at Chicago. He eventually served on the heavy cruiser USS Chicago (CA-136), and earned the WWII Victory Ribbon, American Theater Ribbon, and Asiatic Pacific Ribbon. He separated from the Navy with the rank of Ensign. He was a life-long believer in defending democracy and preserving the Earth for future generations.

He attended classes for the Navy at Blackburn College, University of Illinois, and Illinois State University (then Illinois State Normal University) and, over the years, took courses on numerous campuses, including Notre Dame, Purdue, and UW-Superior.

After the war, Edward studied to be a teacher at Illinois State Normal University. In a biology class, he met Barbara Louise Kinder. The two soon began a partnership that would last more than 70 years. They married on June 11, 1948, near Bloomington, Illinois.

Ed began his career as an educator in 1948, teaching at schools in Virden, Illiopolis, and Taylorville, before moving to Decatur in 1957, where he became a science teacher for District 61. While teaching, he continued his studies, earning a master's degree from University of Illinois. He retired from Decatur Public Schools in 1985.

Ed's commitment to preserving and protecting the natural world led to his involvement with the Macon County Conservation District during its early years, and he served as the MCCC's first



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naturalist. Hikers on the Lookout Trail at Rock Springs Conservation Area can rest on a bench installed in his honor by family and friends, next to a bur oak dedicated to Barb. He and Barb also were involved in restoring native prairie plants on their property in Decatur and in Montgomery County.

During the 1960s, Ed and Barb made many treks to Ed's summer position as a ranger-naturalist in Crater Lake National Park in Oregon, with their four children in tow. In later years, the couple traveled by car around the continent, from the Everglades to the Arctic Circle. They became "Winter Texans," square dancing, socializing, and birding in the lower Rio Grande Valley for more than 20 years. They relished the role of tour guides there for visitors from up north, including Jim and Judy Oettel and many other friends and family members.

He was a member of the American Legion, Phi Delta Kappa, and the Decatur Area Retired Teachers Association. He and Barbara were members of First Presbyterian Church of Decatur, the Decatur Area Audubon Society, and several square dance organizations.

A host of friends from work and their leisure activities enriched their lives. Ed often credited longtime friends Carl and Doris Jacobs with introducing them to square dancing, an interest they enjoyed for more than 40 years. His other hobbies included archery, birding, hunting, maintaining a large garden with Barbara, and following the Cardinals, Blues, Bulls, Bears, Blackhawks, and UIUC sports.

Ed participated in a 2014 Honor Flight to Washington, DC with dozens of other veterans, and at age 101, he took his second Dream Flight in a WWII-era Stearman biplane like the one he trained on in the Navy.

When asked for the secret to reaching one century of age, Ed recommended, "Choose your parents carefully. Don't make dangerous decisions. Have good friendships. Stay as healthy as possible. Keep moving."

He was preceded in death by wife Barbara, his parents, his brother Thomas Samuel Paine, nephew Gary Geer, and son-in-law Durango Mendoza.

Surviving are daughter, Jean Mendoza (Durango) of Urbana; sons Ted (Georgiana) of Decatur, Bill (Laura) of Columbus, WI, and Jeff (Malinda) of Chatham, IL; grandchildren, Andrew (Michelle),



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Daniel, Virginia, Emery, David (Molly Kincaid), José, William Mendoza (Diana Lowry), Thomas Mendoza (Flora), Robert Mendoza (Kristen Stott), and Aimee Mendoza Lafontaine (Benjamin); and great-grandchildren Will, Jack, Lola, Kaya, Ava, Scarlett, Tobi, and Ella. Also surviving are cousin F. Samuel Bauer (Karen), and nieces and nephews Richard Paine (Mardell), Patricia Paine, Andrew Kinder (Cindy), Elizabeth Kinder, Tim Kinder (Pat), Barbara Geer Newsome (Keith), Lynette Geer Schuh (Michael), and Cyndy Storm.

Edward's family would like to thank the kind hospice professionals and the CNAs who helped him and them during his last weeks, and the doctors who enabled him to maintain his health for so many years.

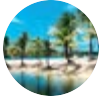
Contributions in Edward's memory can be made to the Macon County Conservation Foundation (<https://www.maconcountyconservationfoundation.org>), the Friends of Crater Lake National Park (<https://www.friendsofcraterlake.org/join-us>), the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation (<https://www.irtaonline.org/foundation/>), or a charity of one's choice.



## Tribute Wall

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**Becky Campbell** posted:

Ed and Barb Paine were my neighbors in South Shores. They lived two doors down. I knew Jeanie and Teddy and they were playmates with me and my brother David Clark. Later on I saw Mr Paine teaching science at MacArthur High School. He was a very nice man and I liked the family very much. Becky Clark Campbell

December 29 at 4:34 PM



**K Scot Reynolds** lit a candle in honor of Edward.

I was a colleague of Ed's when I taught Science at MacArthur High School back in the 1980's. I had many good conversations with Ed and remember him most as the school AV man. May his memory be a blessing to all.



December 13 at 10:13 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Edward by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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