

Nathan Paul Goodiron was born on October 8, 1949 in Bismarck, North Dakota. Paul was a member of the Low Cap clan and was known as Dream Traveler, a name given to him by Sam Little Owl. Paul was the second of three children born to Gilbert and Alfreda Goodiron (Mandan). Paul's brothers and sisters are Vance, the late Sarah Sue, Karen and Rosie (Ric). Paul attended grammar school at Marty Indian School in Stephan, SD and in 1959 moved to Chicago, Illinois. He attended Tuley High School in Chicago for three years and returned to Mandaree to finish his senior year. He lived with his Aunt Eloise Johnson in Mandaree while he attended school and graduated in 1967. Paul returned to Chicago after graduation and found work with the Ironworker Local 1. During his time as an ironworker he worked on such notable buildings as the Sears Tower, the John Hancock Building, the Standard Oil Building and many other high rises around the city. Paul later graduated from the University of Mary in Bismarck, ND in 1992 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business and a minor in accounting.

Although Paul was draft exempt due to possessing critical skills deemed by the Ironworkers Union in Chicago he enlisted with the Navy in January 1969. He volunteered for active tour duty and did three tours while the war in Vietnam was raging. Our country had lost many of their boys in Vietnam but Paul had a strong desire for military duty as his father was a Purple Heart veteran of WWII (Army-North Africa and Italy) and his paternal grandfather was a WWI Lakota Code Talker. Paul had many other relatives including uncles, an aunt and first cousins who were in the armed forces so the inclination to serve his country was strongly embedded in his blood. Paul was honorably discharged in April 1972 and received the following service medals over those three and a half years: National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars. There were no parades for the servicemen returning from Vietnam, no jobs, no loans. The U.S. did not open its arms to welcome our soldiers back home as it was not a war that our country embraced. This was something that stayed with Paul for a long time and he did what he could to ensure that any returning veteran would get a proper honoring and reception.

After Paul's stint in the service he returned to Chicago where he stayed for a short time. Paul was dealing with the after effects and post-traumatic stress of his military experience and became restless. He decided he had enough of city living so he returned to his native home. Paul packed up his belongings and started out on the long trek to North Dakota on his ten speed bike. He made it as far as Minneapolis (410 miles) when his old bike finally broke down and he had to hop on the train for the rest of the journey. He remained in the Mandaree and New Town areas up until his death and became a prominent member of the community.

Paul eventually met Harriet Bears Tail and they married in July 1980. They had two sons together, Nathan Joel in 1981 and Corey Paul in 1986. Paul and Harriet were proud parents and supported their sons in all of their school activities and sporting endeavors. Paul was the statistician for the Mandaree Warriors and kept meticulous notes on every basketball game and track event that his sons were involved in. Later in life he wrote a book commemorating the Warrior's 1998-1999 basketball season. Paul raised his sons in the Indian way and taught them how to dance, hunt and fish. Paul would often take off on the spur of the moment to hunt and would be gone for several days. He always had a bounty of deer and fish on his return so that he would have enough to give to his aunts and uncles. Paul and his family were a constant presence on the pow wow trail and they worked on the Mandaree pow wow committee for many years.

Always an outspoken and civic-minded man, Paul was elected to the Tribal Business Council and served from 1981 to 1984. He was also a member of the ND State Judicial Conduct Commission from July 1986 to July 1989. Paul's maternal grandfather, Arthur Mandan, was the first tribal chairman for the Three Affiliated Tribes in 1936 and drafted the by-laws and constitution for the Three Tribes. During these years Paul hosted an annual Sundance and welcomed people from all over the world including the U.S., Germany and France who would take the long journey to participate in the ceremonies. Paul built his own sweat lodge in the Mandan style and would go in regularly to cleanse, pray and help heal those who were in need. The last Sundance he held was in 2006.

In December 2003, Antwone Noah was born to Corey and Starr Mata. Noah was Paul's first grandchild and became the apple of Paul's eye. As much as possible Paul and Harriet spent every Christmas with Noah as he was a Christmas Eve baby. Paul loved that boy dearly and would take him everywhere with him when Noah lived with him in Mandaree. Paul was always in a hurry to get somewhere, always on the go and never stayed anywhere too long. When Noah wasn't fast enough to move to Paul's liking he would just pick him up and carry him on his back like a sack of potatoes to get him out the door. That's just the way Paul was. Prior to his death Paul was living with Corey in New Town and was very proud that Corey was returning to college to finish his degree.

In 2006 Paul's oldest son Nate enlisted in the North Dakota Army National Guard and was assigned to Battery F of the 1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery. Nate was deployed in March 2006 to Qarabagh, Afghanistan with orders to provide 24-hour security to military members both on and off military installations, one of the most dangerous assignments. On Thanksgiving Day, November 23, 2006, Nate's vehicle was hit by a rocket propelled grenade and he was killed instantly. Since then Paul did everything he could to keep Nate's memory alive – he held memorial pow wows, he attended veteran functions throughout the U.S., he wrote books, he created plaques, medallions, decals, t-shirts. Paul wanted to make sure that Nate's memory was never forgotten.

Paul loved to travel and to meet people from all walks of life. He would talk to everyone he met and made friends everywhere he went. People knew when Paul was coming as "ole' Blue" was clearly recognizable from a distance. His car belonged to his late son Nate and it became his second home along his many trips in recent years. He took the utmost of care to maintain it and to preserve his son's memory – the last mileage count on Ole' Blue is 646,000 miles. Everyone that saw his car would salute it, give Paul the thumbs up sign or ask questions about the history of the decals. Paul was always more than willing to share his stories with strangers and to meet and talk to other veterans on the road. Paul's constant companion on the road was his music. Before Paul went anywhere he made sure his tape was fully stocked with hours of R&B, soul music and oldies to get him through the long drive ahead.

He was a natural born talker and took to the written word in his later years. He wrote several books and pamphlets to maintain and honor the memory of his son, to chronicle the feats of his beloved Mandaree warriors during their "golden years" and to talk about his experiences dealing with PTSD. He was an active voice with many veteran groups across the country and participated in many, many conferences, memorials and services honoring those who were actively enlisted and those who had given the ultimate sacrifice to their country. In 2013, he was invited to participate in a once-in-a-life opportunity to jump with the U.S. Army Gold Knights Parachute team as part of the Leap of Faith seminar at the Homestead Air Force Base in Florida. His thoughts along his freefall were about his sons, all the men who died in service and of the veteran community at large. In recent years he took to giving presentations of the effects of PTSD on veterans as part of his own healing process and to educate others.

Paul was an early taker to the computer and later found that Facebook was the perfect venue to chronicle and share news, his travels, events and photos with his large family of friends and relatives. He was akin to being the village voice for the people of Ft. Berthold and for those of us who lived in other places. He had legions of followers who would check in to see what he was doing, where he was at or what the latest news was. He loved to take photos and videos along his journeys and post them so that he could share them with all of his family and friends.

Paul was a member of the VFW, Post 9061 and Myron B. Johnson-Nathan J. Goodiron American Legion Post 271 where he helped with organizing military services for New Town and Mandaree funerals for veterans. He was always one of the first to start organizing the Posts and would work quietly in the background to handle arrangements so that our veterans would receive their proper military honors upon death. He was such a help to the family of the deceased as they were dealing with their own grief and the multiple tasks that go along with an Indian funeral. It was his way to help honor, remember and do what he could for his fellow veteran.

In Paul's book *Death & Grief: An American Indian Perspective* he wrote that he did not think the weight on his back would be remembered when he passed into the spirit world. The spirits watched over him while he was in Vietnam because it wasn't his time and they had work for him to do. He would question what that work was but always hoped that he was doing what the spirits had intended him to do and that he was doing it right. Rest easy, brother, as your work here is done now and you are finally free of the weight that you carried. We will never forget you and we will keep your memory alive. Safe travels as you journey to the other side. AHO!

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*The Family wishes to express sincere gratitude to all who have supported us during our time of sorrow. Special thanks to his brothers and sisters in Phoenix for looking after Paul and for making us feel like we were at home. We are forever grateful to all.*

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