

Purpose of the Foundation

The purpose of the Horner Foundation is to honor the legacy of Paul Horner (Sanderson High School '87) by encouraging young people to pursue the road less taken. Paul's generous but self-directed life was exemplary to many and reminds us of the lines of Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken":

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference

The Foundation wishes to further the spirit of Paul by identifying and nurturing a Wake County public school student each year who wishes to engage in an unusual endeavor which might not necessarily be encouraged by his peers or the society around him. The Foundation believes it important to support young people who pursue uncommon goals in a spirit of kindness

and individuality. The Foundation will fund a full scholarship to allow this young person, via a summer experience, to pursue an uncommon dream and thereby inspire those around him.

About Paul Horner

Death of a Local Hero By Beezer Molton

On January 20, 2002 Charles Paul Horner of North Carolina was killed while paddling the Oyacachi River in Ecuador. Fulfilling a long-held dream, Paul had traveled to Ecuador to explore little-known forests and rivers, speak Spanish, and soak up a local culture which he quickly learned to love. The rapid that claimed him was formed by a sieve with a tapering outlet, leaving no room for a swim out of the bottom. It was here that Paul became encumbered. This sieve could not be seen from boat scouting and probably would not have been recognized from the riverbank. It apparently developed in the floods of this past rainy season and was a new feature of the river. The sieve allowed no opportunity for self or assisted rescue despite the best efforts of his two very capable companions. Ever ready with the well-timed quote, but generally using words sparingly, Paul loved the written word, and fueled his passions with a voracious appetite for books. This hunger for words and ideas was born in the Wake County Public Schools, where Paul attended Effie Green Elementary, Crosby Garfield Sixth Grade Center, Carroll Junior High, and Sanderson High School, from which he was graduated in 1987. Paul and I became friends in the classrooms of the English department in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1989. It was there in the words and pages of the Greats that I think Paul's quest for adventure truly was born. Though intensely attached to local traditions as diverse as Doc Watson, square-dancing (barefoot), Umstead Park, grits, and full moons on Cape Hatteras, Paul made world travel a priority. In the next ten years Paul would visit China, Africa, Europe (four times), Costa Rica (twice), Chile, Brazil, and Ecuador. As his taste for travel became more crystallized he realized that almost everywhere he wanted to go had either rivers or surf. And with that, the groundwork was laid.

Paul was a gifted athlete who set high standards, and trained for some sport or another daily. As a youngster he was small for his age and focused on sports which didn't depend on great size, such as diving and skateboarding. Paul made several of his own skateboards and generally reveled in the off-beat nature of the sport and those who

participated in it. Physically a late bloomer, Paul did not excel in sports in high school, and it was only in his freshman year at UNC Chapel Hill that Paul grew six inches, and blossomed into a striking, six-foot, two-inch figure. Paul retained his love of boards, and quickly picked up snow-boarding and surfing. In addition to paddling, Paul was an aerobic athlete, and his accomplishments were well known. He won several local mountain bike races and participated in triathlons. For three consecutive years after college he ran the Cooper River Bridge Run (10k) in around 37 minutes, once posting a time of 34:34, despite staying out most of the prior night celebrating with old friends. In 1999 he ran the NY marathon in 3hrs 2 minutes. Shortly after that run, Paul dropped all other sports and committed himself to kayaking in earnest. In the next year Paul treated paddling like a job. He had a work ethic in place; he trained and sought education, and had goals for improvement. Paul eschewed paddling competitions, and instead embraced the chance to be simultaneously alone with the river and in the company of paddlers he could both learn from and teach. Being on the river was his love, and it perfectly mirrored his disdain for the commercial world. The Narrows of the Green River in western North Carolina became his own personal training ground and refuge, and at times must have seemed like an indifferent but exquisite lover, for, as many paddlers know the challenges there are impressive.

Paul, myself, and some other college friends all started paddling together in 1994, in the more forgiving rivers of western NC, and Paul quickly developed past most of us. Paul became passionate about paddling during early trips to the Chattooga River in Western South Carolina. Section IV of the Chattooga troubled our dreams and kept many of us talking, analyzing, and bonding throughout those early years. For Paul, the sport was at its very best midway through the five falls of Section IV when the world drops away and everyone's goal becomes making it to the lake safely. Pure joy, fear and success occur in the missed and the nailed lines of those legendary drops. Good friendships turn to gold in the passage of that descent, as requirements demand the selfless observation and care of your fellows. The reward of the run is the two-mile paddle out on Lake Tugaloo, of which many kayakers complain. Paul taught us that it was an earned honor, another chance to savor the splendor of upstream before reaching the compromised world re-found at the boat ramp.

In 1997, Paul's job moved him to New York City to work with the family business. Paul took full advantage of his new home and traveled to most of the rivers in the Northeast, developing a particular fondness for the Yough, the Moose, the Deerfield, and the Gauley, all of which were within an afternoon's drive of the City. Many a blasé New Yorker was surprised by the Sunday evening sight of a red-hatted southerner, who parked a pick-up truck on a Greenwich Village street and hauled a kayak or two up the five flights of stairs to his apartment. Paul often traveled solo, as the open road was a friend, and the perfect time to listen to all of the great music that he somehow seemed to find before everyone else. He had a perceptive ear, and managed to keep legions of friends musically in the know. Whether it was Radiohead, Lucinda Williams, Ryan Adams or Sublime, Paul was always aware and his passion for tunes was a gift to us all. In New York spots like the Lakeside Lounge and the Knitting Factory, Paul followed new, often, odd music, just as he had at the Cat's Cradle in Chapel Hill or the Brewery in Raleigh. Just about all of his friends had a story of showing up in a club to see a band, only to

notice Paul standing in the back by himself, smiling and listening. But living in New York City with a full time job had limitations, and in the late winter of 2000, Paul tactfully exited the business and left New York behind for Asheville, and the loving arms of Appalachia.

He found a perfect little log cabin, with really good acoustics, a wood stove, and a beautiful view of Mt Pisgah in the distance. His days revolved around music, books, and paddling forays, most starting and ending on the Narrows of the Green river. In the late spring of 2001 he took an extended road trip with some Green river brethren to Colorado and the run-off. Together they paddled Gore Canyon, the Animas, and the Big South, but the day everyone was to paddle the Vallecito, Paul elected to walk. Careful and methodical, Paul had been trained in swift water rescue, had received his Wilderness First Responder, and knew his own limits. Later that summer at a paddling movie premiere and party in Greenville, SC Paul would howl in regret at the footage of the Vallecito.

In November of 2001 Paul summed up his situation best in an email to a friend living in L.A.:

I no longer live in Asheville. I didn't even move, I just found myself in Pleasantville where it is 65 and sunny everyday, cold enough for a fire at night and it NEVER rains. Rain is a good thing you see, for those rivers. Fortunately we have the Green 45 minutes away. It is a stunning steep Creek that has a hydro plant at the top so it runs almost every day, and I am there almost every day. I have run it about 60 times since I moved here, and I finally screwed it down and ran Gorilla the other day, after portaging it about 50 times. It is a super technical 25-foot waterfall that lands in about a foot of water and it keeps lots of people around here up at night. So while y'all are making movies, getting hitched, and having babies, that is my accomplishment of the season. So my life here is quite simple. I kayak daily, hang out with local misfits some nights but most often cook dinner and read by the fire. Asheville is the perfect base camp for me. I can run a class V river, get in a quality two-hour mountain bike ride and be home by 4. There is a great crowd, good music and the smaller town thing seems to suit me well. Right now I am digging on The Strokes and typing after a day on the Green. I am going to spend the first three months of 2002 in Ecuador so bring that noise on down South.

Paul

In all regards Paul was a tough act to follow, and leaves behind a soulful legacy of discernment. He despised television and fast food, never listened to commercial radio, and was generally suspicious of the corporate world, but was never self-righteous or prudish. He basically loved to challenge himself, and found every aspect of life worth examining. Descending rivers with close friends became a spiritual calling and a pursuit that he found to be true. His death is not to be compared with those of the inexperienced or the foolish, nor was it the result of a dreadful miscalculation brought on by a driving ego. Paul was simply pursuing his dream and it delivered him to this place, a beautiful jungle river in rural South America and the company of friends. A hero's death.

Charles Paul Horner, September 14, 1969 – January 20, 2002

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Award Information

Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to Wake County Public School students who will satisfactorily complete their sophomore or junior year of high school in June 2011. The scholarship is not awarded primarily on academic merit, but on the “Paulness” of a candidate’s dream. The Foundation is especially interested in identifying candidates from challenging circumstances. In order to be eligible for an award, candidates must submit an application and recommendation, as described below, prior to April 30, 2011.

Application

Interested candidates may download and complete the following application: The Paul Horner Foundation Application.dot The completed application must be emailed to the following: application@hornerfoundation.org.

Recommendation

Please have an adult who knows you write letter of recommendation to the following email address: recommendation@hornerfoundation.org. Please insure that the subject of the email is “Recommendation for (Name of Candidate)”. The adult making the recommendation could be a teacher, coach, mentor or some other person who can speak to your pursuit of personal goals. All recommendations must contain the following information:

A. Candidate’s name B. Name of and contact information of person making recommendation. The contact information must include an address and phone number

Award

Finalists will be invited for an interview in May and a winner will be announced soon thereafter. The winner will receive a scholarship towards a summer activity that reflects the spirit of Paul Horner and the goals of the winner. An explanation of this activity and why the candidate wishes to engage in it are an integral part of the application. The scholarship will cover all reasonable expenses related to the activity, such as supplies, travel expenses, and program fees. The Foundation reserves the right to award scholarships to multiple candidates.

Contact

Jerry Horner
5304 Emerson Drive
Raleigh, NC 27609
Ph. 919 787 3112
Email. hornerjerr@aol.com