

# Bozell & Graham Column: Heaven's Newest Angel

By [Brent Bozell](#) and [Tim Graham](#) | June 5, 2018 11:39 PM EDT

There are those who believe he should never have been allowed to be born.

He came into this world prematurely with severe spina bifida, Chiari II malformation, hydrocephalus, autonomic dysreflexia, central sleep apnea, dysphagia, hypotonia, and paralyzed vocal cords. He would develop chronic lung disease, anemia, kyphosis, knee contractures, osteopenia, and so much more.

In layman's terms, he was paralyzed, except for partial movement of his arms. He couldn't speak because his vocal cords were paralyzed, nor could he eat or even breathe on his own. His own family can't remember how many times the ambulance raced him to the hospital to save his life. One doctor called this child "sometimes the sickest boy in America."

His mind was supposed to be in a vegetative state – except it wasn't. This little boy was bursting with life. He learned to spell, read, do basic math. He could even sign, a talent he employed, along with his beaming smile, to shower affection on the world. For eight years, against all odds, he persevered.

But then one night, Paulie fell ill and within 24 hours, he was suddenly gone. When the news came out, an entire community was shattered.

On a somber Thursday morning, hundreds arrived at the funeral home. Paulie had countless doctors and caregivers, some 40 nurses just at the house alone. Many came to pay their respects. So did the head of Special Needs care, his teachers and therapists; as did the firefighters, paramedics and the bus drivers; as did his neighbors and so many more who'd come to know this special lad. On their lapels many wore ribbons adorned with Sesame Street characters. Paul Ribbons, they called them.

The Make-a-Wish Foundation along with the Shawmut Construction company had built "Fort Paul," a custom backyard playground for the child. Over 100 people had participated in the project. Many of these volunteers were there. Two crews from South Windsor Public Works arrived in massive dump trucks, lights blinking. Paulie liked dump trucks, you see.

Paulie's parents regularly would take him to a street corner across from church so from his wheelchair he could smile and wave at passing motorists. They in turn would tap their horns and wave back. It came to be known as "Paul's Corner."

At the funeral a young police officer recounted to Paulie's grandmother how, when he was having "a bad day, or was feeling low," he'd intentionally drive to Paul's Corner just to catch the angelic smile.

There was another Connecticut State Trooper there that day. He lived near Paul and on his way from work would sometimes flash his lights, or turn on his siren, or call out his name over his loud speaker. Paul liked that, too. He'd deputized Paulie last year, as had two other troopers from nearby towns.

After the funeral an endless trail of cars followed the hearse for the burial. One police car roared by and placed itself in

front of the hearse, lights blazing. A second squad car zoomed past and pulled in behind it. Together they cradled the boy. Police cars blocked the intersections allowing the vast motorcade through. Construction crews on the side of the road stopped working while burly men stood at attention, heads bowed, hands clasped.

The motorcade passed Paul's Corner and some people gasped. The boy's wheelchair was there, adorned with balloons and flowers, with neighbors asking for a final tribute, holding a "Honk for Paul" sign, which of course they received. A policeman stood silently next to the chair, head bowed, hands clasped.

Hours later, after all had left Paul's Corner, the wheelchair remained, still adorned with its decorations, but now on top, in silent tribute, a "CT State Trooper" hat.

"He was undersized but larger than life. He could not speak but had no trouble letting you know what he had to say. He couldn't get around very well but had literally hundreds and hundreds of friends. He created immeasurable love and caused just as much trouble. So many people spent so much time and effort working on how to care for him. But it was Paul who taught us, nurtured us, ministered to us even. He made us our best selves.

"By worldly standards, he was the least among us. But by the standards that matter most, he was perfection. There was never a nastier, more rotten, disobedient, redheaded, innocent, angelic, gorgeous, kind, amazing boy."

Those were the tender words spoken by Paul's father at the funeral. Grown men wept.

