



*Paul Richard Carey Weaver*  
(1927–2005)

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I write about Paul Weaver as an academic colleague and friend. In one of my recent visits to Paul at home in Campbell, to which deteriorating health had confined him, Paul asked, to my surprise, if I wouldn't mind getting printed off at the University an article he'd just finished and was now ready to submit for publication. This was something I should not really have been surprised by—it was typical of Paul's firm and unshakeable determination, in spite of his failing health, that I well knew lay behind his deceptively mild and genial manner. And it was a vintage Weaver piece, concerned, as those of you who know his scholarly work would expect, with the Byzantine workings and intricate details of the personnel of the Roman imperial bureaucracy. A number of inscriptions, scattered around the Empire, and some literary allusions all appeared to refer to an imperial slave named Phaon, known to have been a personal assistant of the Emperor Nero—and previous scholars had combined all these testimonies to build up an impressive profile and entrepreneurial career for Phaon. Paul, however, by close invocation of Roman legal texts and precise examination of nomenclature, demonstrates that these documents cannot legitimately be combined, that some have to be separated in time by over a century, that some of the Phaons indeed are of different legal status, and he concludes that there was not just one but indeed demonstrably several imperial bureaucrats sporting the same name of Phaon. It is a feat requiring ferocious accuracy, painstaking concern for detail, an appetite for the intricate niceties of the Roman legal system, and a tenacity to work his way through a veritable mountain of laconic inscriptions—and an analytical ability, logical clarity of mind and the powerful drive of the dedicated scholar to make sense of it all.

This article has now appeared posthumously, in a field in which Paul's first academic articles appeared some 40 years ago, in 1963 and 1964.\* It is indeed a field Paul virtually created on his own, revealing a whole new world of beavered slave and freedmen bureaucrats working behind the Roman Emperors, with their secrets and subtleties of career structures. I quote from the citation that supported Paul's election as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1975:

Professor Weaver has been a pioneer in a new field of social and historical investigation—the workings of the bureaucracy in the household of the

Roman emperors. From his raw material of inscriptional evidence (plus scattered legal texts) he has contrived to construct sophisticated techniques for dating his material; from that base he has been able to investigate the changing patterns of recruitment, marriage, manumission and social mobility amongst the ranks of Caesar's slaves and freedmen, and to analyse the career structure and promotion procedures within the imperial service.

'The publication of his monograph *Familia Caesaris* by Cambridge University Press (1972) was the culmination of over a decade dedicated to painstaking study and research in this field.' It is indeed a masterpiece and remains a fundamental work in the field. Paul expanded that work to include aspects of the Roman family generally, not just of the imperial *familia*, winning two ARC Large Grants for research in this area, contributing to Emerita Professor Beryl Rawson's volumes *The Family in Ancient Rome* (1986), *Marriage, Divorce and Children in Ancient Rome* (1991) and collaborating with her to produce *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment and Space* (1997). And Paul leaves behind an all-but-complete repertorium of data on all known imperial slaves and freedmen, an achievement that has taken a lifetime of scholarly endeavour to amass, still to be published.

But it would be false to leave you with the impression that Paul was some narrow specialist albeit enjoying a highly distinguished international reputation—hence appointments to Visiting Fellowships at Churchill College, Cambridge (1978), The Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (1986–87), St John's College, Cambridge (1990–91). No: by taste and training, he was far more than that. After his education at King's High School in Otago, New Zealand (1940–44), a Bachelor's degree in general Classics at the University of Otago (1945–47), and a Master's degree in Latin at Canterbury University College (1949), Paul went on to King's College, Cambridge to do the second part of the Classical Tripos (1953–55), characteristically choosing a smorgasbord of language, literature, philosophy, archaeology and history, with the last as his special topic. For this he was awarded a First and the AA Leigh Studentship for research by his College. This training meant Paul was a versatile teacher, happy to teach language and literature as well as ancient history, and leaving behind a legacy of generations of students who remember him with affection and gratitude. He was one of the fast-disappearing breed of classicists who believed that *all* aspects of the subject should form part of the cultural understanding of the ancient world, maintaining—with conscious provocation—that what was really worthwhile to teach in Classics were Greek Literature and Roman History. This openness of interest meant he was elected President of the Australian Society of Classical Studies for a term (1981–83) and served as editor of the Society's journal *Antichthon* for a decade (1975–85). No surprise, therefore, that in retirement years Paul and Alleeta, his wife, regularly studied Biblical Hebrew together.

But Paul also exemplified another fast disappearing virtue—collegiality—a virtue so fast-disappearing that many colleagues nowadays would no longer even regard it as a

virtue. Let me illustrate this characteristic of Paul's with three examples. First, I quote from Emeritus Professor John Jory, a colleague of Paul's from the University of Western Australia, where Paul taught from 1957 to 1966. Emeritus Professor Jory writes:

My own recollections of Paul are very vivid and he had a great impact on my life when I was at a very impressionable age. I arrived in Perth in March 1959 at the tender age of 22, outwardly perhaps brash and confident, inwardly shy and with a feeling of inadequacy for the position that I had fallen into. Paul immediately became a confidant, friend and strangely enough for a person only a decade older, a father figure. He was also a wonderful role model. He invited me to his house and I felt almost a member of the family, dropping in at all hours of the day and night and always being hospitably received. Tolerance of the young was one of his many virtues and years later when I had a family of my own I realised how much I must have tested the limits of that tolerance. After all, few men with a young family would welcome in a colleague carrying a carton of beer after the pubs had closed, something that happened more than once, particularly when that colleague was accompanied by some boisterous mates ...

One thing that Paul was not tolerant of was sloppy scholarship. His own painstaking attention to detail was a model to a beginner in the academic stakes. I learned much from him to such an extent that I sometimes think that in my own publications the footnotes are the most important and interesting bits. While others can let the detail overshadow the main picture that was never the case with Paul.

Second, I quote from Dr Paul Gallivan, a colleague of Paul's from the University of Tasmania, where Paul occupied the Chair of Classics from 1967 until retirement in 1992. Dr Gallivan writes:

When I was a postgraduate student about to complete a thesis at Monash University and therefore searching for a respected mentor under whom to further my training, it was Paul Weaver's name which was suggested to me by my supervisor. Professor Clarke recommended Paul Weaver on the grounds that he was one of the leading Roman historians in Australia. As luck would have it, a Rothmans's Fellowship enabled me to travel to Tasmania to work with Paul. This turned out to be the beginning of a friendship that would last for over thirty years ...

Paul took me under his wing and despite enormous pressures that fell upon him when trying to run a rather disparate department in the early 1970s, he always found time to act as advisor and kindly critic of my research and fledgling efforts as a teacher. His constant encouragement and preparedness to discuss a wide range of issues in these years provided a very solid foundation for my later career. His unflappable approach to even the most difficult of problems taught me a great lesson. He taught me, too, the value of gentle humour as a means of defusing even the most explosive situations.

And Gallivan continues:

Paul Weaver was a gentle man but also a man who held strong beliefs especially about the importance of the Humanities in a civilised society. He was a very loyal friend, a generous host and someone to whom one could go for advice at any time. As a friend and colleague he has few equals. I will never forget his famous Fiat 500 proudly placed in the car park next to the Vice-Chancellor's limousine; nor his famous home-made sandwiches which were such a talking point in the tea-room; most of all I will always remember (so will my liver!) the ramifications that flowed from his notorious decision to drink up the contents of his wine cellar when he became convinced that it was about to 'go off'.

And thirdly I would like to add my own to these testimonies. When we were colleagues together at the University of Western Australia in the early to mid-sixties, it so happened that Paul and I were both short-listed for the vacant chair of Classics in the University of Otago, and we both flew over together to Dunedin for interview (1964). I think to the relief of both of us, neither was appointed. Again, shortly afterwards, we were the two short-listed candidates for the vacant chair of Classics in Tasmania—to which Paul was rightly appointed (1966). But on neither of these occasions was there any hint of rivalry, any awkward tension of competitiveness. Subsequently, Paul, knowing that I was keen to get back from the West to the civilisation of the East Coast, went to great pains to contrive to get for me, with great generosity, the offer of a Readership in Tasmania. After making all this effort, he must have been furious that I took up in preference in 1967 a Readership at Monash University. I've always felt guilty about this but Paul never expressed openly any of the resentment he must have naturally felt at my ungrateful rejection of all his trouble. Instead, it was always comfortable business as usual with Paul. As his NZ coeval Emeritus Professor Judge has expressed it: 'We have never maintained regular contact, yet we were always there for each other as occasion arose. I was always at ease with Paul. Nothing needed to be explained. It was like being at home, or better, like picking up again with a sibling after absences'.

Of course, you can foresee what happened to Paul during his long tenure of the Chair of Classics in Tasmania, being endowed with all these ideal personal attributes. By temperament, he was the perfect administrator: quietly efficient, with a highly developed conscientious work ethic, wonderful soundness of judgment ('sagacious' is the word that comes to mind) and a positive relish for the intricacies of bureaucracy and administrative procedures; able to regard with a wry eye the shenanigans of his more turbulent colleagues (and you can be sure that a small university in a small town could be relied upon to continue its well-established tradition of generating any amount of drama); and possessing an ironic detachment, ensuring that fraught situations never got overheated. His skill was legendary. All this is summarised in the deceptively bland officialese from the Registrar of the University of Tasmania: '[Emeritus Professor Weaver] also served the University with distinction as an

administrator, holding important posts under different Vice-Chancellors, including chairmanship of the Professorial Board'. That speaks volumes.

Little wonder, in his so-called retirement in Canberra, that Paul was snapped up to serve on the Council of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (1995–2000) and to act as its Honorary Secretary (1996–2000) and to play a major role in the establishment and management of the Cambridge Australia Trust.

While we are mourning the passing of Paul Weaver, we are also celebrating the achievements of a good life, well-lived. But at the same time, we are aware—painfully aware—of the special pain of loss that Paul's wife, Alleeta, and his immediate family are suffering.

I know it is minimal comfort but it is at least some comfort for them to know that we do understand with deep sympathy what they are now feeling.

Requiescat in pace. May he rest in peace.

*Graeme Clarke*

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\* Paul Weaver, 'Phaon, Freedman of Nero?' *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 151, Bonn, 2005, pp. 243–252.