



**Massachusetts Drivers With No DUIs Getting a Pay Day On Thursday**

# An MIT professor whose cheers were heard throughout Fenway Park, Paul Lagacé dies at 63

By [Bryan Marquard](#) Globe Staff, Updated August 5, 2021, 39 minutes ago



Dr. Lagacé entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a college freshman and stayed with the institution through his career. WILLIAM LITANT/MIT AEROSTRO

Given that Paul Lagacé's day job was teaching aeronautics and astronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it seemed to follow that when he let loose at Fenway Park with his "Wade call," it could sound a bit like a jet taking off — the cheer trailing off slightly at the end, like an aircraft disappearing into the sky. It went something like this:

"WaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAaaade."

Only with a lot more A's — enough to stretch for more than 20 seconds.

"My longest call is 24 seconds," he said in a 1988 Globe interview about his cheers for Red Sox star Wade Boggs, which could reach home plate from his centerfield bleachers seat. "This year I hope to do a 25-second Wade call, but now it's too early in the season. In late June or July on a steamy night I can get a good 'Wade.' "



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Dr. Lagacé, an MIT professor whose aeronautics expertise was sought by government agencies and aircraft companies, was 63 when he died on [July 16](#) in his Wilmington home. His family did not disclose a cause.

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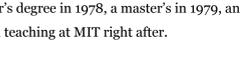
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At MIT, he ran the Technology Laboratory for Advanced Materials and Structures, and his research "focused on the design and manufacture of composite structures and materials mainly used in the aerospace industry," according to the [institute's tribute](#).

"Paul's most significant research contributions were in building an intellectual bridge between the material properties of emerging advanced composites, and their application to and certification in aircraft structures," Edward Crawley, the Ford professor of engineering at MIT and one of Dr. Lagacé's department of aeronautics and astronautics colleagues, said for MIT's tribute.

MIT was Dr. Lagacé's professional and [intellectual home](#) from the moment he arrived as a high school graduate.

"He was a lifer," his wife, Robin P. Lagacé of Wilmington, said in a phone interview. "He entered MIT at 17 and never left."



Dr. Lagacé graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1978, a master's in 1979, and a doctorate in 1982, all in aerospace engineering, and he began teaching at MIT right after.

"Paul had great respect for MIT and its history, traditions, and reputation," his wife wrote in a eulogy delivered at his memorial service.

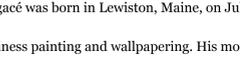
"He would talk with his first-year students in his seminar about what it means to be an MITer and MIT life," she wrote. "Not just the academics, but also things like taking the time to enjoy MIThenge, when sunlight beams down the Infinite corridor twice a year. During the MIT 150 celebration, he even participated in a choreographed flash mob. MIT was a huge part of his life, and it introduced him to other parts of the country and the world, and he developed many professional and personal friendships."

Dr. Lagacé's passions extended beyond MIT and Fenway Park. A longtime high school football official, he was named official of the year in 2001 by the Eastern Massachusetts Association of Interscholastic Football Officials.

That pursuit, he noted, was not without physical dangers, including the occasional inadvertent collision with a player.

"A couple of times I've had to be helped off the field," he told the [Globe in 2011](#).

And the science of making calls on the field tended to be challenged more vocally than, say, a paper published in an academic journal. That was particularly the case with pass interference penalties.



"One thing officiating has taught me," he said, "is you can't please everybody."

The older of two siblings, Paul A. Lagacé was born in Lewiston, Maine, on July 27, 1957.

His father, Lucien Lagacé, had a business painting and wallpapering. His mother, Claire Malo Lagacé, worked part time as a bookkeeper, including for Lucien's business.

Dr. Lagacé graduated from Cheverus High School in Portland, Maine, and found his future calling in his fascination with astronauts and the space launches.

He told the [Globe in 2011](#) that "watching the space boom in the 1960s, when I was a kid," pointed him in the direction of aeronautics and astronautics.

"At MIT, I became even more interested," he added. "I started working in the laboratory."

Playing and watching baseball were always part of the equation, however, and Dr. Lagacé joined friends in Maine on backyard rinks for hockey.

"It would get to 25, 30 below zero," he said. "We had no problems keeping the rinks going."

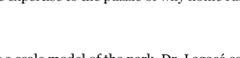
Through mutual acquaintances, he met Robin Pare, who is now retired as an elementary school literacy specialist.

For their first date, he took her to a Red Sox game. "I'd never been," Robin told the [Globe in 2011](#). "We sat in the bleachers."

They married in 1983.

"He was the love of my life, he really was," she said by phone. "And we were definitely kindred spirits."

MIT's tribute noted that Dr. Lagacé "held fellowships with the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the American Society for Composites, and the American Society for Testing and Materials," which is now ASTM International. He formerly was president of the International Committee on Composite Materials.



At one point, he applied his academic expertise to the puzzle of why home runs declined at Fenway Park in the early 1990s.

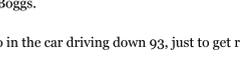
Working with his students, who built a scale model of the park, Dr. Lagacé concluded that construction of the [600 Club](#), an indoor seating area above the home plate grandstand seats, had altered the flow of air inside Fenway, which previously had favored hitters.

While some observers thought the dip in home runs could be attributed to the production decline or outright departure of certain Red Sox sluggers, Dr. Lagacé had a different theory.

He told the [South Florida Sun-Sentinel in 1992](#) that before the 600 Club, "a ball perfectly hit" with an ideal trajectory "would land just over the center field wall. That same ball now lands 8 to 10 feet short of the wall."

In her eulogy, his wife said that Dr. Lagacé also "was a man of strong faith, and practicing his faith was very important to him." She added that "every part of the liturgical year was important to Paul. Especially the music. He loved to sing and raised his voice in joy to the Lord."

A funeral Mass has been said for Dr. Lagacé, who in addition to his wife leaves his brother, Daniel of Voluntown, Conn.



Not surprisingly for an MIT professor, Dr. Lagacé paid close attention to the science of cheering long and loud when he let out his cheers for Wade Boggs.

"Today I let a couple of Wade calls go in the car driving down 93, just to get ready," he said, speaking with a Globe reporter at a 2011 game. "When I was a kid I used to play the saxophone. I took breathing lessons. They used to put a dictionary on my stomach — that strengthens the diaphragm."

From the opening pitch onward, "I do four or five Wade calls in a ballgame, but if it hits extra innings it's tough," he added. "I'm 30 now and I could use a designated Wader. But it's fun, it makes me forget I'm a professor at MIT. Plus, season ticket-holders win a couple of beers betting fans what my profession is."

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