



# Richard "Rich" A. DeColibus

MAR 18, 1947 - MAY 15, 2021



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## **Richard "Rich" A. DeColibus**

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**R**ichard DeColibus was born on March 18, 1947 in Cleveland, Ohio to Jeanne and Rudy DeColibus. Rich was enrolled at St. Leo's the Great for grade school and transferred to St. Ignatius for a year. He completed his high school education at Rhodes High School which is the school where his mother graduated.

Rich was proud of his four incredible children: Michelle DeColibus who lives in Texas; Marie DeColibus of Kentucky; Dawn (Alex) Koenig of Mentor, David DeColibus of New Mexico, and stepchildren: Nicholas (Jackie) of Elyria, Christopher of Garfield Hts., Jessica (Chris) of Stow. He loved his 3 grandchildren Evan, Kylie and Maya and 8 step-grandchildren; brother Ray (Elaine) DeColibus.

Rich and Sharon Bastian met in 1970 when Richard was a teacher and Sharon was a student at Mooney Junior High School. They dated and years later, in 2003, Rich married Sharon and they have been married for eighteen years.

As a teacher in Cleveland Public Schools, Rich was known as a brilliant, dedicated science teacher with a specialty in chemistry. His students always did well, and Rich was respected by his colleagues. Rich was a thoughtful and genuine person and the saying "He did not suffer fools" is perfect to describe Rich. He was one of the most knowledgeable, well read, thoughtful intellects on a variety of topics that many people would ever know.

His intelligence, leadership qualities, activism and respect for the teaching profession were the driving factors for his election as the President of the Cleveland Teachers Union in 1988. Rich was a tough negotiator and an innovator among the ranks of the labor union activists. He always let you know where he stood on an issue. The one thing everyone could always be certain of is that you always...always knew where Rich stood on an issue and that he had a plan for resolution of a problem. He led the Cleveland Teachers Union through tumultuous times and would always strive to negotiate the best results for teachers and students. He was respected as a union



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leader among politicians and leaders. His leadership and respected reputation went beyond Cleveland to both the state Ohio affiliate and with the national United Federation of Teachers. He understood the future success of any community, the state and the nation depended upon students receiving a quality public school education. He saw the goals of the union and the success of the student as inextricably related.

Rich retired from public service in 2004 and during retirement, Sharon and Rich spent their time socializing with friends and family, going to Holden Arboretum, Punderson State Park and taking long peaceful walks at the lake and French Creek. Although they loved to watch the sunsets together, Sharon could always count on Rich to give a science lecture on astronomy while enjoying the sunset. He also enjoyed gardening, computers and reading. Perhaps the best times were the times they spent with grandchildren and most especially at the Christmas holidays. As Rich's health began to deteriorate, he was forced to move from home where Sharon cared for him, to a nursing home. At the nursing home, Sharon maintained a vigil and never left his side. She would slip out only to grab a bite to eat. Although their conversation was little, she remained by his side day and night.

One day as he was laying in his bed, he opened his eyes and smiled at Sharon. He looked at her, gave her a cocky little wink, and said I love you! So each night when she prepared to leave to go home to shower and to change her clothing to return again, she would lean over and give him a light kiss. He would open his eyes and whisper I love you, and she said it back to him. It became their ritual.

And so it was time, Rich has left us. And as we all know, if he were here with us, he would be the consummate leader again. He would tell all of us not to focus on sadness. He would give us the Rich DeColibus look, and tell us to celebrate.

So we must celebrate his life and keep each of our memories of Rich alive, and by doing this, Rich will never leave us!

Visitation will be private. Mass of Christian burial will be Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 10 am at St. Peter Church, 35777 Center Ridge Rd., North Ridgeville, and will be livestreamed on [www.stpeternr.org](http://www.stpeternr.org), with burial at St. Peter Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Blessing House



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[www.blessinghouse.org](http://www.blessinghouse.org) or St. Jude Children's Hospital [www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org). Arrangements by Bogner Family Funeral Home, North Ridgeville. For further information or to leave an online condolence, please visit [www.bognerfamilyfuneralhome.com](http://www.bognerfamilyfuneralhome.com)





## Events


**Richard "Rich" A. DeColibus**

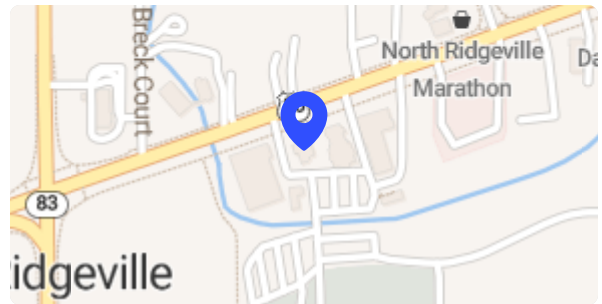
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### Funeral Mass

 **Thursday**, May 20, 2021

 10:00 AM ET

 **St. Peter Catholic Church**  
35777 Center Ridge Road, North Ridgeville OH  
44039



### Cemetery Details

 **St. Peter Cemetery**  
North Ridgeville,



## Tribute Wall

**Richard "Rich" A. DeColibus**

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SD

**Sharon Decolibus** posted:

I will always love you. I miss you very much.

April 19 at 5:22 PM

CS

**Cheryl Stefanik** posted:

Thanks, Rich, wherever your "spirit" might now be, for all you did for CTU. You left this earth on my birthday, May 15, 2021, during COVID times and when David and I had, had just arrived in our new home of Des Moines, Washington! -----Cheryl Stefanik, former Executive Secretary of the Ohio Fed. of Teachers.

September 25 at 6:16 PM

DL

**Donna C Lavdis** posted:

My deepest sympathy. We attended a union meeting together and we all supposed to bring ID. Richard forgot his. I assured the administrators he really was President of the CTU.

June 18 at 7:27 AM

JL

**Janet Lesko** posted:

I am so sorry to hear that Rich passed away. He was teaching science at Mooney Jr. High in 8th grade and then he went on to teach Chemistry at Rhodes High School. He had a lot of spunk and energy. My condolences to the family. He was one of my favorite teachers ever because he made learning fun.

May 30 at 4:45 AM

PC

**Pat Cudnik** posted:

I met Rich when he was a student at Kent State and I was at Our Lady of Cincinnati. We worked on playgrounds in the summer with other college students and had wonderful times. When I was a young mother in nursing school and struggling with chemistry, I called upon Rich and he came to my aid. We exchanged Christmas cards and an occasional correspondence, but I regret that I had not seen him in 40 years. During the pandemic, we reconnected by e-mail and I will miss his intelligence, wit and outlook on life. God Bless You, Rich, and my condolences to Sharon and your family.

May 19 at 1:15 PM



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**Ted Wootan** posted:

I was saddened to learn of Mr. D's passing. I was a chemistry student of his at Rhodes in 1972, and worked as a lab assistant for him in 1973. He named a recurring character in his chem tests after me, and I was also a member of the DeColibus Secret Police. He made Chemistry fun, and was a good person as well. May he Rest in Peace. Ted Wootan

May 18 at 6:53 AM



**James Heffernan** posted:

Let us celebrate his life He was a very positive influence in my life as a Cleveland School teacher His commitment efforts in tough times has born much fruit in my family..👍👤❤️ Jim Heffernan

May 18 at 6:33 AM



**Doug Tagg** posted:

I am sorry for your loss. Thank you Mr DeColibus for your instruction in Chemistry at James Ford Rhodes.in 1975. What you showed me has carried me throughout my life. Thank you again for what you shared.

May 18 at 5:16 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the DeColibus family.



May 18 at 5:13 AM



**John Clough Md** posted:

Sharon,We are so sorry to learn of Rich's death. He was certainly a person of high ideals who fought effectively for his beliefs and won the respect of those who supported and opposed him alike. He will be long remembered.John Clough

May 18 at 3:01 AM



**Sharon Decolibus** May 22 at 5:40 PM

Thank you, John. I will miss him dearly.



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KB

**Kathie Bracy** posted:

My heart goes out to all the family for their loss. His beautiful soul was taken from us much too soon. We all have wonderful memories to cherish. Hang onto those; they will get you through the tough times.

May 17 at 8:48 PM

LR

**Lisa Ruda** posted:

Rich was a great guy. He was a partner when we worked together and a friend long after that. My heart is filled with love and respect for him. May he rest in peace.

May 17 at 1:33 PM

SS

**Scott Stephens** posted:

It is hard to imagine a kinder, more intelligent man than Rich. He was completely genuine and totally without pretense. I am a better person for having known him.

May 17 at 8:36 AM

SH

**Stephanie Henderson** lit a candle in honor of Richard "Rich".



May 17 at 4:05 AM

SD

**Sharon Decolibus** posted:

To the love of my life, I will miss you always, but I will remember the good times. Even when you were close to death, we had good moments that live within my heart.

May 16 at 4:35 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Richard "Rich" by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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