



Ralph Dean Cole

September 23, 1954 - February 7, 2021

With a breaking heart, we remember Ralph Dean Cole, the son of the late Charlie and Gladys Cole; born September 23rd, 1954 and died unexpectedly of a heart attack on February 7th, 2021.

Ralph is survived by his wife, love, companion and confident of 35 years, Wendy Louise Cole.

Although Ralph moved away from his native West Virginia over 45 years ago, he was very close with his siblings: Reva & Philip Hagerman of Paynesville, WV; Bob Cole of Grundy, VA; Andy Cole & fiancé Melanie of Pounding Mill, VA; Sheila Metz of Huntington, WV; Calvin & Joyce Cole, Sandra & Dan Shull, and Glenna Hagerman -- all residing in Ligonier, IN. He spoke with them weekly and traveled to West Virginia each 4th of July for their annual family reunion which was a highlight of his year. He and his siblings took great joy in friendly competition in many activities; fishing, bowling and golf to name a few.

He is also survived by his stepson Yanni Athanasiadis, three grandchildren: Micah, Devra and Macy Athanasiadis, Godson Alexander Dowell, nine nieces, five nephews, and a host of friends and family who mourn his passing, including his best friend of over 40 years, Byron Dowell.

Preceding Ralph in death were his sister-in-law Debbie, brother-in-law Bill, stepdaughter Mari, and his mother-in-law Ann Monroe. Following Hurricane Andrew in 1992, Ralph and Wendy welcomed Ann into their home. She lived with them until her passing in 2015. He was always patient, kind, and protective of Ann which was indicative of who he was as a man.

Ralph enjoyed his everyday life to the fullest. He never seemed to have any regrets and kept a smile on his face. He especially enjoyed running, golfing, fishing, playing chess, and spending quality time with his family and friends. Ralph loved playing guitar, banjo and singing karaoke. Two of his favorite songs were "Country Roads" and "House of the

Rising Sun." He sang beautifully and kept us all laughing with his sense of humor.

Ralph was a graduate of Iaeger High School in Iaeger, WV. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1978. Following his first four years on active duty, he remained in the Air Force Reserve until his retirement in 2009 as a highly decorated Master Sergeant. Ralph was a combat veteran of Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield, and Iraqi Freedom.

Ralph was always driven to reach his full potential in all of his passions. He won many chess tournaments -- even defeating a Chess Master recently. He was a competitive runner and competed in many marathons. In 1994, he ran the 100th Boston Marathon; qualifying with a time of 2 hours 44 minutes at the age of 39 -- a remarkable feat. In his earlier years, Ralph was a member of the Air Force Boxing Team and lost a split decision to a boxer who later won a World Boxing Title. In his professional life, Ralph was chosen as the Miami-Dade Governmental Employee of the Year for his work as an Avionics Technician on Air Force Fighter Jets. In retirement, Ralph was an avid golfer and carp fisherman.

A memorial mass will be held for Ralph at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Homestead, Florida on Saturday, February 13th at noon. We will live stream on Zoom and upload the service on YouTube for those who cannot attend due to distance or COVID concerns. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to your favorite charity or local Humane Society.

During the Cole Family Reunion this coming summer, his brothers and sisters will have a Celebration of Life Ceremony on July 4th in Paynesville, WV at the Cole Family Cemetery. The American Legion Post will perform military honors, including a 21-gun salute.

"We little knew the day that God was going to call your name. In life we loved you dearly; in death we do the same. It broke our hearts to lose you, but you didn't go alone for part of us went with you the day God called your home. You left us peaceful memories, your love is still our guide, and though we cannot see you, you are always at our side. Our family chain is broken and nothing seems the same, but as God calls us one by one, the chain will link again." Our hearts are shattered in a million tiny pieces, but by the grace of God, the precious memories of Ralph etched in our hearts, will bring us solace.

Until we meet again dear husband, brother, grandfather and friend, thank you for all the joy and love you brought to our lives. We will cherish the countless wonderful memories of you. See you again in Heaven.

Events

FEB **Memorial Service** 12:00PM - 01:00PM

13

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

106 SE 1st Drive, Homestead, FL, US, 33030

Comments



“ Please accept my deepest condolences for your loss. Ralph was a very special person who left us with fond memories of a life well lived. As a member of the Everglades Striders Running Club, he made us proud with his running feats. Ralph encouraged others to improve their running through hard work. He coached me to run my first Orange Bowl Marathon. He stayed with me through the finish line in spite of his painful calves due to running much slower than he was used to do. I will never forget this act of kindness. He loved Wendy, family and friends. We will miss his strength of character, his engaging smile and positive manner. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7
Juanita de la Cruz



San Juanita de la Cruz - February 14 at 06:20 PM



“ Ecclesiasties 9:11 says unforeseen events happen. We never know from one moment to the next what will take place but we do know according to the Bible that "death will be no more." Rev 21:4 We have the promise of seeing our loved ones again, such as Ralph. What a glorious day it will be to see his infectious smile & kind eyes & to hear his voice again. I look forward to sitting on the fishing bank, next to Ralph, waiting for that next big catch, talking about the next big adventure, then he picks up his guitar and plays a familiar song.... My heart goes out to Wendy & all of my family. Death is our enemy but we have hope through the Ransom to have victory over death. May we provide support to one another & show love through these difficult times. With tender love & affection, Andrea (Cole) Pike & Bobby Pike Thomas ville, NC

Andrea Pike - February 13 at 01:01 PM



“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Andrea Pike - February 12 at 01:51 PM



“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Andrea Pike - February 12 at 10:42 AM



“ Wendy,
I was very honored to have served with Ralph. He was an exceptional person, always there when you needed him and always willing to help. His expertise in the Avionics Section was unsurpassed. I'm grateful for all the memories. God bless.
Jim Hill

Jim Hill - February 11 at 07:59 PM