

Obituaries

Orus R. Coffield IV

Dec. 17, 1978 - Oct. 11, 2022



I'll get this out of the way early: Cancer killed me. I know we all skim through the obits curious to know each person's cause of death. In my case it goes back to a diagnosis of myxoid liposarcoma in the summer of 2016. After 6-plus years of treatments, anxiety, pain, and occasional moments of hope it came down to a brutal truth that my body could no longer carry on.

This isn't how I expected my final chapter would be written. I had dreams just like anyone else of raising my kids, being a partner to my spouse for years to come, and enjoying growing old surrounded by the people I love. Even though that ending will not come to pass, I can reflect back on over 40 years on this Earth that make me an incredibly fortunate guy.

On 17 December 1978, I arrived as the firstborn child of Reid and Mary (Brown) Coffield, currently residing in Portland, CT. I was blessed to have a brother, Robert (Amy) Coffield of Dover, NH and sister Audrey Ann (Victor) Soria of Columbia, MO who cared for me and each other so deeply.

My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins created an extended family that made family gatherings in Illinois and Michigan's Upper Peninsula some of the most special memories I cherish.

That upbringing prepared me to be the partner I needed to be - and challenged me to become the best version of myself - when I wed the most precious person in my life, my wife Jennifer (Wallace) in 2008. I could not have imagined a woman more generous and more giving.

Especially over the most recent 6 years, as my condition with cancer worsened and my need for assistance grew, she sacrificed so much. Words fail me when I try to express the strength and sacrifice she has brought to our marriage over the years.

A consequence of dying early has led me to think of regrets in my life. It would be easy to look back on my life and wish I had done any number of things differently. However, my regrets have little to do with what could have been done differently in the past and more to do with what I know I will miss in the future.

In addition to my spouse Jennifer, I am leaving behind four amazing kids, Evelyn, Orus Reid, Teddy, and

Claire. Each of them are talented in their own way with unique and expressive personalities. Thanks to their tremendous mother, their loving grandparents, and the strong community of friends and teachers in Marlborough, CT I have no doubt they will grow up to be strong, confident, and capable adults.

My 43 years have been brief, but full of experiences and roles that leave me with cherished memories. I have been a son, a husband, a father, an uncle, and a brother. My career has led me from being an electrical engineering student and graduate at the University of Illinois to a Captain in the United States Air Force to a professional in the insurance industry.

In various stops along the way I have flipped burgers, toiled on a hog farm, sharpened ice skates, and learned to play the guitar. In every stage of my life - from growing up in Montezuma, to serving in the military to working in corporate America - I have been blessed to meet amazing people along the way who have enriched my journey. Those friendships got me through tough days and helped me celebrate the joyous days. I am forever indebted to the countless people who have contributed something of themselves to make me the person I ultimately became.

My time on this Earth may have been shorter than I would like, but a life full of enriching experiences has resulted in some important lessons learned. Those lessons are simple too - be kind, be honest, and be helpful. If any words we say or actions we take can't meet those criteria then they are best left unsaid and undone. Additionally, when communicating with anyone, begin by assuming positive intent. At worst, you will be wrong and the other person just confirms they are a jerk. But more often than not we can all avoid some misunderstanding just by taking that first step of assuming the other person is coming into any interaction with positive intent. Finally, leave a place in better condition than how you found it. Be a steward for your community, your home, and your family. It can range from picking up a piece of trash at the park to volunteering to coach a kid's little league team to any number of activities in between. The bottom line is that while our time here is temporary, we control the potential to leave a positive legacy that long outlasts our time on this Earth.

A perk of writing my own obituary is that I get the last word and it is this: I never want my death due to cancer to be discussed in the style of "he lost his battle" or "after a long valiant fight" or any other similar language. Cancer isn't an invader like a foreign virus or bacterium. Cancer is my own body's DNA gone haywire. Who am I fighting against? My own body? Or maybe my body is a battlefield, in which case who is the enemy? And now that I have died due to cancer, does this mean I didn't fight hard enough or lacked the will to live? Of course not.

Many cancer patients and their loved ones may find comfort in being "cancer warriors" and if that helps them - by all means continue to use that language. I, on the other hand, chose a different path. My focus hasn't been on "fighting cancer" and running away from death these past few years. Instead, I have

focused on living in the present. My focus has been on my kids, my spouse, my home, my friends, my treatments, and my work. I have tried to tease out every possible moment of meaning and fulfilling experience as I sought to enjoy the life I have - and not fear the death that some day comes for us all. And so I hope that is what my family, my friends, this community, and this world ultimately remembers about Orus Reid Coffield IV - not how he died due to cancer, but how he bravely lived his life as fully and lovingly as he could in the face of a painful, scary, and terminal disease.

The Celebration of Life ceremony will be November 18th, at 2 p.m. int Chateau le Gari's, 303 S. Main St., Marlborough, CT.

In lieu of flowers, donations would be gratefully received to support the children's college and activities fund. If you would like to support this please Venmo your gift to @ian-Ayres or send a check to Ian Ayres at 15 Killams Pt. Rd., Branford, CT 06405.

Condolences can be sent to:

Reid and Mary Margaret Coffield
49 Copper Beech Lane
Portland, CT 06480

And: Jennifer Coffield and children
35 Ridgewood Drive
Marlborough, CT 06447