



Dr. Richard Cornelius

May 18, 1934 - August 21, 2014

Dr. Richard Meredith Cornelius, age 80, of Dayton went to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Thursday morning, August 21, 2014. He was born in Philadelphia, PA, on May 18, 1934, the son of the late Frederick Meredith and Elizabeth Marie (Yahraes) Cornelius, and was also preceded in death by his beloved wife Donna Jean (Black) Cornelius.

He received his B.A. in English at Bryan College, earning his M.A. in English and his Ph.D. at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville. He was Professor of English at Bryan College from 1961 until retiring in 1999. He served his country with the US Army in Orleans, France. Dr. Cornelius was the liaison and archivist for William Jennings Bryan College and the Scopes trial from 1978 - 2009.

He was a member of the Rhea County Historical and Genealogical Society, Modern Language Association, National Council of Teachers of English and the Tennessee Association of Museums. He was a long-time member of Grace Bible Church, where he had served as Elder.

He is survived by his son, Rev. Craig (Michele) Cornelius of St. Paul, MN; his daughter, Crista Cornelius of Columbus, OH; and grandchildren Nathan Cornelius and Heather Cornelius of St. Paul, MN.

Funeral services with military honors will be held Sunday afternoon at 5:00pm at Grace Bible Church with his pastor, Dr. Doug Russell, officiating. He will be laid to rest next to his wife in Rhea Memory Gardens in Dayton.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Bryan College, 721

Bryan Dr., Dayton, TN 37321.

Please share your memories of Dr. Cornelius on his online guest register at www.vanderwallfh.com.

The family will receive friends at the church after 4pm.

The family is being served by the Vanderwall Funeral Home in Dayton, TN.

Cemetery Details

Rhea Memory Gardens	
Hwy 27	
Dayton, TN	

Tribute Wall

RM

“ I was saddened to hear of Dick's death. I worked with him for several years; although we disagreed on some things, I was always impressed by how open-minded he was, how kind he was, and how helpful he was. He was remarkably knowledgeable about Dayton, William Jennings Bryan, and the Scopes Trial, and even more generous with his help to others. He was a humble, fine man; his death leaves the world a little dimmer.
Randy M.

Randy Moore - November 25, 2014 at 04:34 PM

BA

“ Lil and I were both students of Dr. Cornelius, and I had the privilege of serving with him as a colleague in the 1970's. I never met a more consistent, honest, and industrious man than Dick Cornelius. I always sought his counsel, and I always received thoughtful advice from him. We will miss him. He was one of my top heroes on this side--right up there with Dr. Jensen and the Bentleys.

His passing is a loss for his immediate family to whom we send our condolences. His passing is a loss for the Bryan College community far greater than many people know.

Bob and Lil Andrews

Bob Andrews - August 25, 2014 at 03:42 PM

DD

“*Dr. Cornelius was a Scopes Trial historian and servant of Bryan College. I enjoyed getting to know him, and learning from him about William Jennings Bryan and the rich history of the college and its namesake.*

He will surely be missed in Rhea County.

Our prayers are extended to his family and the Bryan College community.

Doug and Pam Davis

Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Doug Davis - August 24, 2014 at 03:21 PM

LB

“*Dr. Cornelius was my all-time favorite colleague of any place I have taught over 40 years. Not only was he a man of integrity and true professionalism but he was also a wit, a prankster, and a personal friend to my dear husband Blair and to me. He and his dear wife Donna were close to our entire family, so we mourn the loss of an extra-ordinary person who blessed our lives in innumerable ways. For that I give thanks to have been privileged to have worked with him at Bryan College--and for every time we were able to visit each of our homes throughout many years. Believe it or not, we never discussed the HARBRACE HANDBOOK--which I am sure will surprise many former students! May God be praised for a servant so "faithful to the end" who announced on Thursday that he was going to live forever! Crista and Craig-- bless God for your "goodly heritage!"*

Dr. Louise Bentley, Emeritus Professor of English, Union University, Jackson, TN

Louise D. Bentley - August 24, 2014 at 03:03 PM

DH

“*Dick Cornelius was the first fellow believer in Christ my age that I met in my hometown of Jacksonville, FL, right after I became a believer in my freshman year in college (1952-53). We shared Bible study and prayer together as well as double dates to miniature golf courses. In many ways he disciplined me in my very first years as a believer, and remained ever after a cherished friend, whom I deeply admired. I was his best-man when he married Donna. Divergent career paths and location kept us from seeing each other much since those years, until he took up residence in the care facility. I had the joy of writing some to him then and hearing his brief responses via Karin Traylor and his daughter Crista. what a wonderful man and servant of Christ! I look forward to seeing him again in the New Jerusalem. (Dr. Harry Hoffner, emeritus professor, The University of Chicago)*

Dr. Harry Hoffner - August 23, 2014 at 10:38 AM

LM

“*My sympathies and prayers are with the Cornelius family.*

Lisa Garrison McClellan - August 22, 2014 at 08:10 AM

KC

“*For the man who helped me find the words...I have no words. Dr. Cornelius was one of my all-time favorite teachers. I've never worked so hard or laughed so much while learning about English, language, Christ, the world, and myself. He extended the highest honor to me when he asked me to adjunct at Bryan the year I received my MA. Thank you, God, for placing true teachers in our paths. Crista, my heart and prayers are with you.*

KB Ballentine Canestrari - August 21, 2014 at 09:36 PM

LE

“ I was blessed to not only have Dr. Cornelius as my academic advisor, but also to have had Dr. and Mrs. Cornelius as my international student foster parents. He was a wonderful professor who cared about his students. His dry, sharp wit was legendary in the halls of Bryan College. I'm saddened to think that I will not be able to sit and talk with him at Homecoming again, but I rejoice that someday we will meet again in the homecoming at the throne of God. I will lift his precious family in prayer during this difficult time.
~Lenore (Pinder) Priest, Class of '92.

Lenore - August 21, 2014 at 06:35 PM

JF

“ I was so sorry to hear about the loss of Dr. Cornelius....He was a wonderful professor and a great man. While I attended Bryan, he was one of my favorite professors. I know that he will be missed. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends. God Bless....Jonathan Fain, Bryan College Class of 93.....

Jonathan Fain - August 21, 2014 at 05:14 PM



“ Callie Belk lit a candle in memory of Dr. Richard Cornelius



Callie Belk - August 21, 2014 at 03:51 PM

DN

I did not lite a candle for Dick, but did send up a prayer for Donna & family....Dick was a solid christian, a friendly brother and a so-kind soul to all. God bles the family richly. Darwin & JuneNeddo Bryan class of 54 of

Darwin Neddo - August 21, 2014 at 06:31 PM

SF

Dr. Cornelius had a wonderfully dry sense of humor! As my academic advisor, he encouraged me to have a balanced life between studies and leisure! I always enjoyed his sonnets from "Shakespeare's brother" every year.

Susan Farner - October 01, 2024 at 01:14 PM