



# Michael Paul Varble

JUL 14, 1942 - AUG 14, 2023



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# Michael Paul Varble

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## M ichael Varble Obituary

Michael Paul Varble was born July 14, 1942 and left us at age 81 on August 14, 2023. He was known by all as a kind and gentle soul, a steadfast, warm, loyal, and caring person, a true mensch. He will be forever missed by his wife Bobbie (née Roberta Freeman) his two sons Ben (Michelle) of Elmhurst, IL, and Jon of Solon, OH his grandchildren Kyla, Camryn, Audriana, and Paxton, and his sister Mary Wahlmark (Curt) of Rockford, IL. Mike grew up in East Cleveland, OH, where his father (Roscoe) was a Presbyterian minister, and his mother (Carolyn) was a teacher, and he graduated from Shaw High School in 1960. He enrolled at Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, to participate in its renowned vocal music program, but unsure of his vocational goals, he left school, joined the Teamsters, and drove a Pepsi delivery truck. He returned to Allegheny in 1964 (the year Bobbie started) to become a Social Studies educator. By this time, Mike knew his heart well— he knew he couldn't fight in the Vietnam War, he knew he wanted to work with children, and he knew he wanted to spend his life with Bobbie. They were married in 1968, thirteen days after her graduation, and marked their 55th anniversary this year. As quiet and unassuming as Mike presented himself, he was a progressive rebel in many ways. He chose to marry outside his original faith, and, as was thought necessary in those days, became a Jew by choice before his marriage to Bobbie. Their wedding ceremony was co-officiated by a rabbi and Mike's liberal father, so unusual for its time that it was the subject of newspaper articles. And while others in the late sixties and seventies were being pushed into business careers with monetary rewards, Mike took his Master's Degree in Education and Counseling, and until retirement, worked at Westlake's Lee Burneson Middle School as a teacher, Association President, counselor, and assistant principal. He finished his career there in a position created just for him, Dean of Students. Along the way, he was awarded a one-year sabbatical



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to help develop the PACE Association, a community-based education support group. Also, in 1984, Mike was honored by the State of Ohio with a district Teacher of the Year award, another proud professional accomplishment. After his retirement from Westlake, he counseled at Trinity High School and Hillside Middle School in Parma. He loved counseling, he loved kids, and he believed in public education. Among his other loves was Mike's passion for singing. He studied under Morten Luvaas while in college, and over the following years sang in a number of choral groups, including the West Shore Chorale, the Cleveland Choral Union, the Chagrin Valley Choral Union, the Choral Arts Society, the Western Reserve Chorale, the Cleveland Orchestra Summer Chorus, and Good Company. When his advancing cognitive impairment made it impossible to read or learn new music, he was welcomed into the Solon Act II Singers where he made up his own harmonies. Always driven by his considerate and helpful nature, Mike took on the role of primary parent when Bobbie opened her own business, and gave her thousands of hours of technical and emotional support in her duties as an officer of the local Jewish Secular Community and the national and international organizations with which it affiliated. He stayed home with the kids as she traveled all over the world for meetings, he helped take care of her sick and failing relatives, willingly made any sacrifices necessary to be of service, and never complained. A devoted father, Mike personally embraced his children's hobbies and athletic pursuits. When they took up baseball, Mike successfully coached their little league teams. He learned how to ski and even sponsored Lee Burneson's ski club so that he could take his family on multiple ski trips to Pennsylvania and New York. Along with Bobbie, Mike was a great provider affording his children the education and experiences, such as memorable family vacations and international travel opportunities, that they have grown to appreciate from a loving father. After retiring at 65, Mike was finally free to do as he had always wished. He and Bobbie traveled extensively throughout the U.S. as well as internationally, including Europe, South America, Australia and New Zealand, the Far East, and Israel. Mike also exercised his prodigious intelligence studying and playing bridge, for which he had demonstrated genuine skills (undoubtedly acquired during many hours spent at the Allegheny College Student Union instead of



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attending classes), so some of their trips were to tournaments where they almost achieved Life Master status before his condition made continuing unfeasible. Mike had a delightful sense of whimsy, and much enjoyed wordplay. He punned incessantly, deliberately looked for ways to use the word “peradventure” instead of perhaps, referred to dinner meat as “roast beast,” and expressed his disapproval of something by invoking the term “marginal.” He was witty, but never acerbic, insulting, or judgmental. Everyone who ever met him sensed the goodness in his heart, and he will be missed. In lieu of flowers, donations in Mike’s honor may be made to the Southern Poverty Law Center or Trees for Israel. The family will receive guests in their home at 5600 A Emerald Ridge Parkway, Solon, OH from 1:00pm to 8:00pm on Saturday August 26 and Sunday August 27. A brief Service of Remembrance will take place at 4:00pm on Saturday August 26, and will be available later on the JSC website. Anyone wishing to make remarks or contribute to the food for the event may contact Bobbie at (440) 498-4747. Gathering Residence Saturday, August 26, 2023 1:00 PM - 8:00 PM 5600 A Emerald Ridge Parkway Solon, Ohio 44139 Service Residence Saturday, August 26, 2023 4:00 PM 5600 A Emerald Ridge Parkway Solon, Ohio 44139 Gathering Residence Sunday, August 27, 2023 1:00 PM - 8:00 PM 5600 A Emerald Ridge Parkway Solon, Ohio 44139

To send flowers  
to the family or plant a tree  
in memory of Michael Paul Varble, please visit our floral store.

[Read More](#)



## Tribute Wall

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LM

**Lorene Mihalko** posted:

It would seem impossible to be able to capture in words the essence of the extraordinary and beautiful soul Mike was, but his family has managed to do this in the obituary they have written in honor of a man who touched so many lives with his gentle kindness. I was one of the people who was deeply touched in countless ways by knowing and working with Mike as a school psychologist at Burneson Middle School. We had many heart to heart conversations, not only about students, but about life. He was an exceptional assistant principal, but he was an even more exceptional school counselor. He made a difference in so many lives in so many ways, and he certainly made a difference in my life. Whenever I had one of my treasured conversations with Mike, I walked away a better person. I hope saying this conveys all that my heart would say about how highly I regard Mike and how grateful I am to have known him. My deepest condolences to the family Mike so dearly and fiercely loved. May his memory be a blessing, and may your lives continued to be blessed by lasting memories of such a gentle, kind and loving man . . . a true mensch if there ever was one. May his gentle kindness and his love fill your hearts now and always.

September 5 at 8:00 PM

BB

**Barbara Bradley** posted:

Air for singers (and Bridge players)in memory of Mike Varble.A Sympathy Gift of Single Tree has been Planted In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble courtesy of Barbara Bradley .

August 28 at 8:00 PM

DR

**Deb & North Central Region** posted:

In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble, Thoughts and prayers are with you in your time of grief. May your memories bring you comfort.A Sympathy Gift of Trees Planted has been Planted In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble courtesy of Deb & North Central Region.

August 28 at 8:00 PM



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RS

**Robert Stanley** posted:

I was deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Mike. He was a wonderful person who touched many people's lives with his kindness, generosity, and humor. He was a dedicated, talented teacher, loving husband and father, and loyal friend. I fondly remember Mike and I working together at Lee Burneson Middle School. He was always supportive, helpful, and encouraging to me and the students. He had a great sense of humor and a warm smile that brightened any room. Mike was a true mensch, a person of integrity and honor. He lived his life with compassion, courage, and grace. He was an inspiration to me and many others. I will miss him dearly and always cherish the time we spent together. My heartfelt condolences go out to Bobbie, Ben, Jon, and the rest of his family. You are in my thoughts and prayers. May you find comfort and strength in each other and in the love that Mike left behind. Rest in peace, Mike. Thank you for everything you have done for me and the school. You will never be forgotten.

August 25 at 8:00 PM

GH

**Georgianne Bayko Hribar** posted:

Many memories of Mike and his ability to interact with all whose lives he touched. He mentored me as a first year teacher shaping my future as a social studies educator. His commitment to social justice was a reflection of his spirit. I am so lucky to have had him as a friend and colleague. May his memory live on through all he met. Condolences to Bobbie and the family. May his memory be a blessing.

August 25 at 8:00 PM

YH

**Your Cousins, Evelyn, Marlene And Heather** posted:

In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble, As the days and weeks pass, and as you return to life's routine, may you continue to feel comforted by the love and support of family and friends. A Sympathy Gift of Group of 10 Trees has been Planted In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble courtesy of Your Cousins, Evelyn, Marlene and Heather.

August 24 at 8:00 PM



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GP

**Glenn E Ploegstra** posted:

Mike was an honored colleague who gained perspective quickly, was friendly, supportive and a blessed stabilizing force at Lee Burneson. I regarded him as a friend but rarely socialized beyond school. I actually knew little of his history but what I did know was his varied interests and a few family facts. He treated all with respect that was not always deserved, but welcomed. I have missed him since leaving to teach at the High School but was happy for how long and well he did serve. God Bless Mike, Glenn

August 24 at 8:00 PM

DB

**Dorothy Beyer** posted:

I remember Mike from working with him at Lee Burneson Middle School. His passion, caring and empathy for the students was never questioned. He had such insight for students he worked with. I learned so much working with him about students concerns. His life touched so many, including myself. A life well lived. May he rest in peace. Dorothy Chuffer Beyer, School Nurse

August 24 at 8:00 PM

DN

**Dave Newman** posted:

Mike had an intellectually curious, active and imaginative mind. He was instrumental in the creation of the Westlake middle school concept and an excellent guidance counselor. He was certainly a noteworthy educator and a loyal and dependable colleague. I am sure that he made the most of his retirement!!

August 23 at 8:00 PM

MF

**Michelle Kelly-Flanagan** posted:

In addition to all the wonderful things written in his beautiful obituary, Mike Varbel was a life saver. Many years ago as a single mom, Mike counseled me on ways to help my middle school daughter. He never judged, he never turned away, but he gathered us in and showed compassion, concern, and wonderful advice, that only a true and compassionate educator can give. Now so many years later, my daughter is a successful business woman, a wonderful wife, and a nurturing mother. When I think of how things mightve turned out, I always always think of Mike Varble. I will never forget him.

August 23 at 8:00 PM



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**Kevin Smith** posted:

Mike was a fun person to be around. Always a good, punny person to throw puns at each other as far as they would go. I have missed him for a long time. Kevin

August 22 at 8:00 PM



**The Roders** posted:

In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble, May the love of friends and family carry you through your grief. A Sympathy Gift of Single Tree has been Planted In Loving Memory of Michael Paul Varble courtesy of The Roders.

August 22 at 8:00 PM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Michael by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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