



# Celestino "Cel" Rivera Jr.

DEC 4, 1949 - JUN 22, 2022



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## **Celestino "Cel" Rivera Jr.**

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**C**elestino "Cel" Rivera, born on December 4, 1949 in Lorain, Ohio to Celestino and Angelita Rivera Sr. passed away suddenly on Wednesday, June 22, 2022 at Fisher-Titus Medical Center at the age of 72.

Cel enlisted with the United States Army at the age of 17, serving his country in the Vietnam War at the rank of Sergeant. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, National Defense Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal. He was proud of his military service and proud to be a veteran. In 1971 he began his 49-year career with the Lorain Police Department as a Patrolman, in 1977 he was promoted to Sergeant, to Lieutenant in 1981, Captain, in 1983, and to Police Chief in 1994. During his career he was assigned to Patrol, Traffic, Detectives, Narcotics, SWAT, and Special Operations as both an officer and supervisor. From 1983 through 1989 he served as Commander of Patrol Operations, from 1990 until 1994, served as Commander of the Criminal Investigations Bureau, and in 1994 was appointed to Chief of Police. He retired from the Lorain Police Department in 2019. He was the former President of the Fraternal Order of Police and was the recipient of the Policeman of the Year Award. His rank made no difference to him, he was a Cop's-cop and he deeply cared for his fellow officers and the city of Lorain. He had a love of reading and learning and received his GED and High School Diploma from Lorain High School, an Associates Degree in Police Science from Lorain County Community College, Bachelor of Science Degree from Heidelberg College. He was also a graduate of Southern Police Institute, School of Justice Administration at the University of Kentucky.

He overcame so much in his life at an early age. As one of eight children, his mother passed away when he was only 5 years old. He spent six years at the Parmadale Orphanage. He accepted those challenges to become such an honorable, respectable, legendary man who devoted his life to the city of Lorain. He believed in the people



## Obituary

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of Lorain and the city's potential for greatness.

Cel's devotion to the city of Lorain far exceeded his service with the police department. He was a true community leader, an advocate for social justice issues. He was a graduate of Leadership Lorain County, Former Vice President & Advocacy Chairman for CHIP (Hispanic Coalition), Founder/Former Co-Chairman, Lorain County Domestic Violence Task Force, Board Vice-President, Genesis House, Shelter for Battered Women, member of International, Ohio and Lorain County Associations of Chiefs of Police, Former Board Member, Community Foundation of Greater Lorain County, Former Board Member for Center for Children and Youth Services, Former Board Member of El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Founding Member and Co-Chairman of the Hispanic Fund, Founder and President, of Do the Right Thing Program, LCCC Adjunct Instructor, several Advisory Boards and Levy Treasurer, Chairman of Lorain Community Forum on Violence, Co-Chairman of Summit-Lorain Project: Law Enforcement Response to those with limited English proficiency) National Distributed by DOJ), Founding Board Member of South Lorain Lincoln Community Center, initiated the Law Enforcement Narcan Program in Ohio, Immigration Reform Activist (volunteering in El Salvador and the El Paso/Juarez Border), and Founder and Executive Director of Courage & Dignity, LLC (Non-profit).

Cel was the recipient of many recognitions including, Hispanic of the Year in both Lorain and Cleveland, Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan, Martin Luther King Social Sensitivity Award from Lorain Community Action Agency, Lorain NAACP Community Peace Award, Ohio Civil Rights Commission Special Recognition Award, William French Smith Award from U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, Cleveland Jobs with Justice: Louis Stokes Award for Work with Undocumented Persons, Grand Marshall of the Cleveland Puerto Rican Day Parade, Ohio Distinguished Law Enforcement Training Award from Ohio General De Wine, Bishop A.J. Quinn Justice Award from Catholic Action Commission, Lorain Police SWAT Team: Founder's Award (35th. Anniversary), the Nord Mental Health Center Key to Hope Award, Lorain County AFL-CIO- Union Labor Support Award, Men of Lorain County Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Downtown Growth Association



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Community Service Award.

He took immense pride in his Puerto Rican heritage and history. He had a great sense of humor and big bright smile and he enjoyed music and song writing. His greatest love was for his family, who meant everything to him. He will always be remembered for his genuine kindness, compassion, and commitment to everyone he met.

Cel is survived by his wife, Elba Armstrong, of Wakeman; daughters, Angela (Bob) Brooks, of Lorain, Nicole (Wayne) Mitchell, of Cleveland, and Linda (Frank) Coad, of Lorain; grandchildren, Amanda (Dereck) Dowell, Haleigh Johnson, Joseph Brooks, Olivia Merriman, Bobby Brooks, and Abigail Coad; great-grandchildren, Stanley Robinson, Dereck Dowell Jr., and Oaklee Atkinson; step-son, Tim (Jeanette) Armstrong; siblings, Eddie Rivera, of Chicago, Gloria (Julio) Gomez, of Lorain, Carmen Homolya, Hector Rivera, Bill (Velda) Rivera, and Elba Rivera; brother-in-law, Mike Fernandez; and many nieces, nephews, and in-laws.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Cel and Angelita Rivera, and his sister, Nilda Fernandez.

The family will receive friends on Monday, June 27, 2022 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 – 8:00 p.m. at The John A. Spitzer Conference Center (Grand Room) at Lorain County Community College, 1005 Abbe Road N., Elyria, Ohio 44035. (PLEASE ENTER THROUGH THE SOUTH ENTRANCE LOT 4). Funeral service will be held on Tuesday, June 28, 2022 at 11:00 a.m. at the Grand Room at the Spitzer Conference Center. Rev. Father William Thaden, Pastor of Sacred Heart Chapel, will officiate. Interment will follow at Ridge Hill Memorial Park, Amherst Twp.

Arrangements are under the direction of the Dovin and Reber Jones Funeral & Cremation Center. Online condolences may be left for the family at

[www.dovinrberjones.com](http://www.dovinrberjones.com)



## Events

**Celestino "Cel" Rivera Jr.**

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### Visitation

 **Monday**, June 27, 2022

 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM ET

 **The John A. Spitzer Conference Center (Grand Room)**

1005 Abbe Road North, Elyria OH 44035



### Visitation

 **Monday**, June 27, 2022

 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM ET


 **The John A. Spitzer Conference Center (Grand Room)**

1005 Abbe Road North, Elyria OH 44035



### Funeral Service

 **Tuesday**, June 28, 2022

 11:00 AM ET

 **The John A. Spitzer Conference Center (Grand Room)**

1005 Abbe Road North, Elyria OH 44035





## Events

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### Cemetery Details

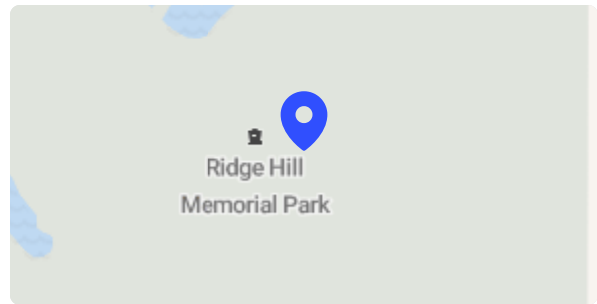


**Ridge Hill Memorial Park**

44805 N Ridge Rd, Amherst Township OH 44001



**440-233-5113**





## Tribute Wall

**Celestino "Cel" Rivera Jr.**

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WB

**Wayne Baird** posted:

he had a long career rose thru the ranks

November 27 at 10:20 PM

BB

**Bob Bernhardt** posted:

he had a long career in law enforcement

November 26 at 3:49 PM

RS

**Robert Shumyla** posted:

RIP My friend

July 3 at 10:37 AM

BB

**Bob Bern** posted:

HE HAD A LONG CAREER ALOT OF FOLKS KNEW HIM

June 29 at 9:01 AM

LC

**Lori Craycraft** posted:

My deepest sympathy to Chief Rivera's family. He was one of a kind, a great man that stood for integrity and truth. He was a fair man that no one can come close to. He will be greatly missed by everyone that knew him.

June 28 at 8:13 AM

PS

**Patricia Smith** June 28 at 9:45 AM

Rest in Peace Cel, Mr. Riviera, my Chief, we went way back, you tried so hard to get me off Drugs. I'm sad that he is gone, but Happy because he seen me finally turn my life around, he, my family, and true friends never gave up on me they all Prayed 🙏 for me, Prayers 🙏 work, but you have to want it, and do the foot work.. Today I have over 8 years Sober, and I Thank the Chief because he never gave up on me. Cel you will be missed. RIH The Best Chief of Police We Ever Had. 🙏🙏❤️❤️❤️❤️🙏



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**Diana Colley** posted:

Cel Rivera was an all around GREAT MAN, an Original. My condolences to his wife Elba, his family and close friends. Peace.Diana Colley

June 28 at 6:54 AM



**Frank And Ana Amador** posted:

We would like to send our condolences and love to the Rivera family for their great loss .May God bless and give you peace and comfort during these difficult times. May Cel Rest In Peace. Frank and Ana Amador

June 28 at 5:15 AM



**David Zachau** posted:

"This above all: to thine own self be true" ~William Shakespeare (Hamlet)Diana and I have been reflecting on the many good memories we have of Cel. We thought this quote by Shakespeare speaks to the sense of integrity that marked Cel's walk through life. Cel was a wonderful human being and we both feel privileged to have known him. We offer our deepest condolences to his family.Dave Zachau and Diana Santantonio Psych and Psych Services

June 27 at 9:19 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Beautiful Heart Bouquet to the Rivera Jr. family.



June 27 at 6:47 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Country Basket Blooms to the Rivera Jr. family.



June 27 at 4:16 AM



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**Anonymous** sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Rivera Jr. family.

June 26 at 8:44 AM



**Anonymous** sent a Fiery Lily and Rose to the Rivera Jr. family.

June 25 at 5:18 PM



**Denise Paller** lit a candle in honor of Celestino.

June 25 at 4:59 PM



**Denise Paller** posted:

My heart breaks for you Elba and the whole family. My favorite time of day was training you both! Cel loved to work out, when I entered the gym Cel was always surrounded by friends and they knew his workout session was about to begin and the chit-chat had to stop, they always laughed! I will always keep those special memories close to my heart. God Bless ❤️

June 25 at 4:55 PM



**Pam Waite** posted:

Our deepest sympathy and prayers for the family and friends of Cel... and May he rest in the loving arms of our Lord 🙏. Pam & Dennis Waite

June 25 at 3:22 PM



**The Lorain Palace Theatre** sent an Ocean Breeze Spray to the Rivera Jr. family.

June 25 at 1:05 PM





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**Anonymous** sent an A New Sunrise Spray to the Rivera Jr. family.

June 25 at 12:05 PM



**Anonymous** sent a Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant to the Rivera Jr. family.

June 25 at 9:50 AM



**Mary Loy Andújar-Hough** posted:

My heart breaks, for you Elba and the whole family.. Cel was one of a kind... and he made such a difference in all the lives of people he came in contact with.. may he now rejoice in Heaven, until we all see him again.. sending prayers for comfort, love and peace 🙏🙏❤️🌹

June 25 at 6:13 AM



**Linda Lapp** posted:

Linda and family please accept my deepest condolences....Linda Lapp

June 25 at 5:50 AM



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DC

**Dan Cairns** posted:

To Cel's entire family.....May care and love of those around you provide comfort and peace to get you through the days ahead. My most sincere condolences.Dan CairnsCape Coral, Florida

June 24 at 8:11 PM

RB

**Robert Bernhardt** September 11 at 6:52 PM

he had a long career alot of folks knew the cheif

MB

**M W Baird** September 9 at 12:55 PM

had a long career

JC

**Joan Caserta** June 25 at 1:54 PM

Elba, we were very sorry to hear about your husband. Please extend our sympathy to your family. With thoughts and prayers, Tim and Joan (Caserta),

NR

**Neysa E. Rosario** June 25 at 4:11 AM

Cel's passing is so heartbreaking and I will miss him terribly. He brought such humor and joy to my family. I pray and send my deepest condolences to Elba, his family and many friends that loved him too.Rest In Peace in the Kingdom of God Cel,Neysa R Rosario

JC

**Joe Conley** posted:

We extend our deepest sympathy to you Elba, Angela, Nicole, Linda and your families in this tremendous loss of a well lived life. Cel was a true "Difference Maker" but not by words but by his actions; what he represented and how he extended of himself to his family, friends and community.He was a very blessed man who in turn was a HUGE blessing to those he interacted with. Within his body was a "good heart" that spoke volumes of his integrity. His transition to heaven's shore leaves a void for those of us fortunate to have known him.May your memories be of comfort to you in the days ahead. My favorite scripture passage is 1 Peter 4:10 as it talks about our gifts and talents. This represents Cel nicely.Love and prayers,Joe, Barb and Maggie ConleySouth Lorain

June 24 at 6:46 PM

DK

**Don Killinger** posted:

I have always had deep respect and admiration for Chief Rivera. He is without question, a true American Hero indeed!!!Don Killinger, former LPD Auxiliary Captain.

June 24 at 4:48 PM



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**Rosie Vicens Bridges** posted:

So very sorry for the family of this wonderful man. Such a pillar of society. He raised beautiful young ladies that will forever shine his light.

June 24 at 2:29 PM



**Anonymous** sent a Divine Peace Bouquet to the Rivera Jr. family.



June 24 at 1:38 PM



**Juana Zayas** lit a candle in honor of Celestino.



June 24 at 1:37 PM



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

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



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