



William Cohn

June 19, 1952 - July 8, 2022

William "Bill" Cohn passed away at home on July 8, 2022, after a short, fierce battle with pancreatic cancer. Beloved husband of Jan. Loving father of Andy and Matt. Dear brother of Ken. Also survived by many nieces, nephews, friends and countless Wayne State University students. During his long and illustrious career as a Professor of Mathematics, he won a University Teaching Award, published many papers in Complex Analysis, and served as Department Chair.

He also taught in WSU's honors-level Emerging Scholars Program. By offering students a high level of support, the program encourages participation by women and minority students who might not have otherwise considered careers in mathematics and other technical fields. All his students appreciated his beautifully thought out and reasoned lectures.

The son of Richard and Mildred (nee Elias) Cohn, Bill grew up in New Rochelle, New York. His first job was at a chicken farm, which might account for his life-long aversion to eggs. Many summers were spent at Camp Powhatan, Maine, where his nick-name was 'Big Fish'. He did his undergraduate work at Oberlin College, and earned a PhD in Mathematics from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1978. After teaching for a year each at the University of Oklahoma and Syracuse University, he joined the faculty of Wayne State University, from which he had not yet retired.

Bill's life was centered around his family and his many interests. Bill talked about the Detroit Tigers with son, Andy, philosophy with son, Matt, and food and music with wife, Jan. It is not known what he and the dog talked about. A voracious reader, he liked everything from DC Comics to Euripides (and while it was rumored that some of the Euripides was of the 'Classics Comics' version, there was never even a whisper that the Henry James was). Bill was as at-home on land, running, as he was in the water, swimming. His wry and dry sense of humor was as carefully timed as his ability to know just when to flip the burgers on the grill. The only thing that he did not time well was his passing.

Bill touched many people with his kindness and his calm spirit. It is with sadness, but also love and gratitude, that we bid him farewell.

Memorial service Saturday, July 30th at 11:30am at Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church, 23925 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield. Memorial donations to the church or WSU Department of Mathematics Scholarship Fund. Please share a memory at SullivanFuneralDirectors.com

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 30. 11:30 AM (ET)

Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church
23925 Northwestern Highway
Southfield, MI 48075

Tribute Wall

DS

“ I swam with Bill at the Royal Oak YMCA for longer than I can remember. I always looked forward to his wry and very dry sense of humor. Bill is missed.

Dean Smith - July 30, 2022 at 10:46 AM

WD

“ WSU Mathematics Department purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of William Cohn.



WSU Mathematics Department - July 28, 2022 at 10:11 AM

MI

“ Dr. Cohn was such an amazing teacher, I was blessed to have him as a professor in the Emerging Scholars program. He pushed me to my potential and encouraged me that I could pass my final and I did. Thank you so much. One memory that stands out is I would see him walking across campus talking to himself and I would say I'm sure he's figuring out some mathematical problem to challenge us. May you rest in peace Dr. Cohn.



Mildred - July 19, 2022 at 05:49 PM

RP

“ I had the privilege of having Dr. Cohn as an instructor for 3 classes. He was amazing and had a way of making the math appear so easy. After joining the faculty myself, he became a great colleague. I'll miss his quiet, subtle humor. You never knew what sort of joke or funny thing he would do. We will miss him for sure. I am fortunate to have had him as an instructor and colleague. My sincerest condolences to his family.

-Richard Pineau

Richard Pineau - July 19, 2022 at 01:23 PM