



On April 21, 2022, after a tragic accident, our beloved brother, son, father, cousin, and nephew Jon Michael Collis passed away in his sleep. He was just forty-six.

Born in Albuquerque on February 20, 1976, he was the son of David Collis, a research engineer at the Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center, and Jill Shortencarier (née Bish), an executive assistant at New Mexico Tech. The family lived in Socorro, New Mexico, where Jon, his younger brother Steven, and their friends passed immeasurable hours playing among the cottonwoods lining the Rio Grande. Jon, always enthusiastic, criss-crossed the town on his bike, ever seeking the next adventure: at the golf course, by the river, along the many ditch banks, in Water Canyon, in the “forest” near his home, at friends’ houses, and at school. He was part of the first generation who grew up with video games, computers, laser tag, VHS tapes, cable TV, and walkmans—and he embraced all of it. Living across the street from his grandparents, he spent many summer nights playing cards and games with his cousins.

While in junior high, he fell in love with science and research. He participated in state championship Science Olympiad teams, and by the time he graduated to Socorro High School, his love of learning was entrenched. A brilliant mind, he often found himself so bored that he would get into trouble, and he could turn bad grades into straight A’s the second he felt like it. He did just that, graduating in 1994 with high grades, membership in the National Honor Society, and a thirst to investigate the world. He received a scholarship to New Mexico Tech and enrolled immediately.

The next decade was one of education and exploration. Jon’s love of learning never wavered. He traveled the country, with stints in the Northeast and California. While working on his schooling, he fell in love with rock climbing. For years, he bouldered and top-roped every climbable surface he could find, including buildings on the various campuses where he studied. And they were many: he graduated from New Mexico Tech in 2001 with a bachelor’s, from Colorado School of Mines in 2003 with a master’s, and from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with a PhD—all in mathematics. He walked that final stage in the spring of 2006.

Along the way, he married Monique Deforge, and they welcomed their daughter Sage into the world.

After his formal education, Jon joined the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Falmouth, Massachusetts, where he used his mathematics expertise to begin research into underwater acoustics as part of his post-doctorate training. He and Monique then welcomed a baby boy into their family, Rohin. There, along the Northeast coast, the family played in the surf, climbed whatever mountains they could find, took many trips to travel the West, hiked and explored, enjoyed family vacations to Disney World, played card games at family reunions, and embarked on a future of research and discovery. Even after his divorce, Jon remained close to Monique, and the family enjoyed many adventures together.

In 2008, Jon rejoined Colorado School of Mines, this time as a professor. He continued his groundbreaking work, which none of his family could understand but which left us all in awe. He spent his free time exploring the Rocky Mountains, skiing, teaching his nephews how to climb, playing soccer, visiting his sister Michaelann and her husband John, strolling with his kids along Pearl Street in Boulder, camping with family, enforcing strict rules for family card games, and hanging out with his brother and his wife Jerusha. Jon treasured the close friendships he developed with countless colleagues throughout his years of schooling and research.

This continued until 2015, when Jon accepted a position as a researcher at Lincoln Laboratories, part of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Over the next seven years, living near Cambridge, MA, Jon worked on cutting-edge research that took him across the globe, including on multiple trips to the Arctic, where he collaborated with other scientists and the crews of nuclear submarines on complex research related to how sound travels underwater.

In April 2022, Jon suffered a head injury from an accidental fall. He died in his sleep a few days later from undetected internal bleeding. After his passing, his home, completely unstaged and exactly as he left it the last night he went to bed, revealed what he truly valued in this world, deep in the core of who he was: his love of climbing, camping, science fiction and fantasy, New Mexico, all things eighties, his mom and dad and siblings and cousins and nieces and nephews and stepmom Carolyn and stepdad Mickey, friends, his research, and—above all else—his children . . . their pictures hung on every wall, and the gifts and cards they gave him over the years were on nearly every shelf and in every drawer.

Jon will be missed greatly.

But part of him still stands, in so many ways: in his children, whom he loved more than he was able to express; in his research, which anonymously benefited the lives of so many people who will never even know their benefactor; in his family, who will preserve his memory in the form of a scholarship to benefit future generations; in the research articles he had just finished, which will be published posthumously; and in the lives of so many coworkers and friends who, through tears, noted that Jon “was always so supportive of everyone and made it a priority to be sure everyone felt included and seen.”

Memorials for Jon were held May 8, 2022 at the MIT Chapel in Cambridge, MA for friends and coworkers from MIT Lincoln Labs. His ashes were spread the next day in the ocean in York,

Maine, where he made so many happy memories with Monique and the children. A second remembrance was held July 29, 2022 at New Mexico Tech in Socorro, NM, where Jon was born and raised. His ashes were later spread at Box Canyon where he spent endless hours climbing.

For those who would like to honor Jon's memory, the family has established the "Dr. Jon M. Collis Memorial Scholarship" at New Mexico Tech and would welcome donations so that it can have as great an impact as possible for future mathematics students. Jon would have liked that. Those can be made by following this link: <https://advancement.nmt.edu/Collis-Memorial>.

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