



Ketcham Richard S. "Rick" Ketcham, 67, of

Upper Arlington, died Monday, December 21, at home surrounded by family and close friends after a long and courageous battle with ALS/Lou Gehrig's Disease, through which he never surrendered his will to contribute to the well-being of others nor his zest for

life. Born January 8, 1948, in Columbus, he was a 1966

graduate of Upper Arlington High School. A well-respected criminal defense attorney, he earned a Bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University in 1970 and a law degree from Capital University in 1974. Ketcham started his law career as an assistant Franklin County prosecutor in 1975, where he became well known for his successful prosecutions of child abuse cases, among others. He became a criminal defense lawyer in 1984, the beginning of nearly 30 years of high profile cases. Rick handled 40 death penalty cases, possibly the most for any defense attorney in Central Ohio, with unparalleled success. His proudest professional achievement was his work proving the innocence and securing the release of two wrongfully convicted men after 25 years in prison. He has been the recipient of several awards, including the Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' (OACDL) "Lawyer of the Year" award and the Schumacher Lifesaver award for his work on capital cases. Rick served on the Board of Directors of the OACDL and was a past president of the Central Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. His community service included delivering Meals on Wheels for LifeCare Alliance and providing free legal advice for persons at homeless shelters. Ketcham was an avid Ohio State fan and also followed the

Bowling Green Falcons. He loved to fish, play golf and basketball. Rick enjoyed visiting the family farm in Perry County, liked white water rafting and was also a train and model railroad enthusiast. He enjoyed life and had a great sense of humor. Rick was the type of person who could get along with everyone. He welcomed all with a smile and handshake, fist bump or hug without judgment regardless of one's condition or station in life. He is survived by his wife, Rebecca, who was also his best caregiver; and daughter, Kate of Columbus. Ketcham is also survived by his devoted brother, Randy of Columbus; nephew, Robbie (Kelley) Ketcham, and his great niece, Abby of Defiance, OH. He was preceded in death by his parents Victor A., who practiced law for 65 years, and Dottie Ketcham. The family would like to give special thanks to his dedicated home care nurses, Joni, Gary, Tammy and his neighbor, Jack. Also thanks for special friends, David, Dennis, John, Kirk, Scott and Tom, among others. Calling hours will be from 4-7 p.m. Monday, December 28, at the SCHOEDINGER NORTHWEST CHAPEL, 1740 Zollinger Rd. in Upper Arlington. All friends are invited to a celebration of his life on his birthday, Friday, January 8, from 4-7 p.m. at the LifeCare Alliance Event Center, 670 Harmon Avenue. Donations in Rick's memory may be made to the ALS Association, Central and Southern Ohio Chapter, 1170 Old Henderson Rd. #221, Columbus, OH 43220. Visit www.schoedinger.com to share a favorite memory of Rick.

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<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dispatch/obituary.aspx?pid=177018447#sthash.HwvODpYY.dpuf>

The Columbus Dispatch

**Attorney with ALS still willing to fight
Longtime defense lawyer helping on case even as disease
limits his physical capabilities**



KYLE ROBERTSON | DISPATCH

Criminal defense lawyer Richard S. Ketcham was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, about two years ago. He can no longer use his right arm, and his left arm is severely limited.

By Jeb Phillips

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Richard S. Ketcham, whose 40 death-penalty cases might be the most for a defense attorney in central Ohio, can no longer carry his own files. He can't drive or take notes in court. He can't shake hands, for that matter. His greetings are fist bumps.

Ketcham is 66, and before the diagnosis, he figured he had at least 10 more years of work in him.

His father, the late Victor Ketcham, practiced until his knees gave out at 85 years old.

“I was going to work until I dropped,” Richard Ketcham said in his S. High Street office. “I am kind of dropping.”

He has ALS. That’s amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a degenerative disease that attacks motor neurons. Some people call it Lou Gehrig’s disease, which is what Ketcham would have called it when he started losing strength in his right arm in early 2012. He didn’t know much about it then.

He knows a lot now, including that life expectancy is usually two to five years from onset, according to the ALS Association of Central and Southern Ohio. Ketcham is nearly in that window now.

“I’m going to fight to beat those odds,” he said.

Beyond that, he has another concern. He has four decades of criminal-trial experience. He is a winner of the Ohio Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers’ “Lawyer of the Year” award. He was one of the lawyers who helped prove in 2003 that Timothy Howard and Gary James — sentenced to death for robbery and murder in the 1970s — had been falsely accused.

By all accounts, Ketcham is one of the best at what he does. But if he can’t pick up his office phone, how can he practice law?

“My brain is fine,” he said, “as good as it ever was, anyway.”

His self-deprecating sense of humor is certainly intact.

Ketcham grew up in Upper Arlington, graduated from Bowling Green State University and earned his law degree from Capital University. He started his career as an assistant Franklin County prosecutor in 1975. Among those he mentored in that office was current Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Daniel T. Hogan.

“You have to be able to communicate (as a lawyer) in a way that is clear to someone with a sixth-grade education and someone with a Ph.D.,” Hogan said. “His ability to communicate, it’s uncanny.”

Ketcham said he became a defense lawyer in 1984 for two reasons: First, he had a chance to work with his father. Second, he prosecuted and helped convict a man in one of the most notorious strings of serial rape in central Ohio history, the Grandview Heights-area rapes of the 1970s and early ’80s.

Then he learned that Dr. Edward F. Jackson, not the man he had prosecuted, was the actual rapist. The other man was released; and Jackson, convicted. After that, Ketcham said, he appreciated the importance of defense work.

Nearly 30 years of high-profile cases followed. Ketcham could be counsel on as many as 20 felony cases at one time. Now, he has one case left, a misdemeanor.

His fiancée, Rebecca Hall, 56, a social worker, was first attracted to him because “we share the same values about justice.” She now helps care for him at home.

The weakness started in Ketcham’s right arm, which he can no longer use. He can’t do much with his left arm, either. The disease is often random, both in the people it strikes and in the way it spreads. About 90 percent of cases “arise spontaneously and mysteriously,” and the other 10 percent have some family link, according to the ALS Association.

Ketcham's doctors don't know which part of his body will be affected next. He's not interested in waiting to find out.

So, he has reached out to his friends in the legal community, and they have responded. Kirk McVay, an assistant Ohio public defender, has asked Ketcham to advise in a murder case in Belmont County. They've tried plenty of cases together, McVay said. It's just that this time, Ketcham might not be able to travel to court.

"He's as good as any I've ever worked with," McVay said. "I'd work with him anytime, anywhere."

Ketcham has told McVay's boss, Ohio Public Defender Timothy Young, that he would like to help mentor young lawyers in the defender's office. Young said that he hasn't made the formal arrangements yet, but he's not about to let the offer go to waste.

"He's an amazing lawyer," Young said.

Ketcham has been that, for 40 years now, and he knows he can continue to be.

"I don't want to sit around and watch daytime TV," he said.

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