



Mr. Donald Kevin Popke

October 13, 1959 - September 18, 2016

Donald “Kevin” Popke, 1SG, United States Army (retired), 56, of Valrico, Florida, passed away on September 18, 2016. Kevin was born in Sandusky, Ohio but as a Soldier, home was where he hung his hat. He retired after 22 years as a 1SG – an airborne Ranger in the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He took with him many memories of pre-dawn ruck marches and combat equipment jumps with his men. As a Jump Master, he was responsible for their lives – a duty he took seriously and continued well beyond his retirement - Kevin remained a friend and mentor to many of his Soldiers until his last day. He was the kind of man that made new friends continually, but always nurtured his closest relationships. After his passing, more than just a few men came forward as his Best Friend. In truth, Kevin leaves behind his best friend of 27 years, his wife Michelle. They loved each other, “warts and all” for nearly three decades. Kevin is survived by his four children, Katie, Emily, Brynn, and Alex , as well as four grandchildren, Macklin, Keegan, Harper, and Barrett - he loved all of them with his whole heart and would be devastated to think of everything he will miss. He was close with his family, including his Mother Sunnie, Sister Jeanice, and brother Brett. He loved his mother in law Sandy like another mother. He loved playing pranks on his Dad Don, and he and his brothers took great delight in weekly calls to mess with their Dad. His relationship with his brother Todd was more than just a brother - theirs was a deep friendship and love that will endure beyond his passing. Kevin shared his love of food and wine with many, but some of the

best times of his life were with Todd and his wife Phyllis in Sonoma, CA. Over the last few years, many bottles were emptied and many contraband cigars were shared between Kevin and the group of friends that came together over motorcycles but grew into his family. That group knows who they are. He created yet another tribe over the last three years, supporting the Brandon High School wrestling team. In lieu of flowers, friends are asked to donate to the Kevin Popke Brandon Wrestling Fund at Wells Fargo. The funds will support wrestlers that need financial assistance for tournament entry fees, transportation, etc. He would like a legacy that continues his desire to serve as a leader and mentor to young men. Kevin will be missed by many but leaves them better for having known him. #looktwicesavealife. His Celebration of Life will be held on Friday, September 23rd at 11:00am Hopewell Funeral Home, 6005 CR 39 S, Plant City. The family will begin receiving friends at 9:00am. Committal with military honors to follow at Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell. Expressions of condolence at www.HopewellFuneral.com.

Cemetery Details

Florida National Cemetery

Bushnell, FL

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 23. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Hopewell Funeral Home
6005 County Road 39 South
Plant City, FL 33567
(813) 737-3128
office@hopewellfuneral.com
<http://www.hopewellfuneral.com>

Celebration of Life

SEP 23. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Hopewell Funeral Home
6005 County Road 39 South
Plant City, FL 33567
(813) 737-3128
office@hopewellfuneral.com
<http://www.hopewellfuneral.com>

Tribute Wall

DS

“ *It is with heavy heart that this news comes of Kevin. Our deepest sympathy to his wife Michelle and his children for which he glowed when speaking of. You and your family are in our thoughts and prayers.*

Sincerely Dr Jeffrey Stuckert and Team.

Dr. Jeffrey Stuckert - October 03, 2016 at 02:56 PM

DD

“ *My heart goes out to Michelle and the family - much love, thoughts and prayers in this difficult time. Got to know them through wrestling at Disney Duals this summer - wonderful people!!*

Donna Driggers/Rowdy Driggers



Donna Driggers - September 24, 2016 at 06:43 PM

MB

“ *I worked with Kevin at the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate at Ft. Bragg, NC. He was a dedicated professional and always fun to be around. As a former soldier and civilian technician I could trust Kevin when it came to airborne operations or any other mission we were assigned to conduct. Although I only met Michelle a few times, my memory is that he did not hesitate to express his love for her to others. He was a very rare man, and will be missed.*



Mark Basil - September 23, 2016 at 05:47 PM

RD

“ Our condolences to Michelle, the Popke Family, and all of Kevin's many friends. May the light of healing and peace guide you through this devastating time.

Rita and Dennis Desmond - September 23, 2016 at 09:04 AM

CF

“ I was driving back to Ohio from PA when I heard the news of Kevin passing and I just could not believe it. Kevin always greeted everyone with a smile, he was the first one to ever help someone in need. Everyone in my family is heart broken over the loss of such a wonderful person. I am so sorry and wish I and my family could be there to support Michelle, Alex and the girls in their time of need however our thoughts and prayers will be with you.
Christina ,Bunji, Tommy , Chloe & Christian Fretwell

Christina Fretwell - September 23, 2016 at 01:08 AM



“ Our thoughts and prayers to Kevin's family and friends. He loved life and had a contagious smile and laugh. May God give strength and support. Love from Judy & Lou Merkle, Missy & Jeff Stroup

Missy Stroup - September 22, 2016 at 10:08 PM

RB

“ RIP brother you made your last jump we have it from here STRIKE HOLD AIRBORNE ALL THE WAY

Rodney Bode - September 22, 2016 at 07:55 PM

PH

“ May God bless the Popke family during this difficult time! I served with Kevin in Hawaii and he was a great mentor and a friend. We lost touch over the years however, I'm sure he continued to touch many lives in a positive way.

Pearl Houck - September 22, 2016 at 07:52 PM

RM

“ Kevin was a great husband, father, grandfather, teammate, soldier, patriot, mentor and friend. He was the kind of guy that everyone could always count on. He was full of life and love and was constantly smiling, laughing and joking. I will miss Kevin's stories about the Popke family's adventures and the latest modifications to his Tacoma and Harley. Kevin was truly one of a kind and I am blessed to have known him. Michelle and family, you are and will remain in my thoughts and prayers. God Bless, Ron & Eva Mann

Ron Mann - September 22, 2016 at 07:45 PM



God Bless.

Tim Dotson - September 22, 2016 at 08:16 PM

HF

My husband and I only met Kevin and his wife a couple of times so we did not know him well. But, what we did know was how much he was loved by Todd, Phyllis and Zack. We are so sad for all of youmay all the people that he loved and who loved him back peace. -Heather & PJ Hallenbeck

Hallenbeck Family - September 23, 2016 at 02:10 PM



“ *Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 22, 2016 at 04:30 PM



“ *To the Popke family, friends and to everyone who had the honor of knowing Kevin. Our thoughts & and heartfelt sympathy is with you at this difficult time. There are no words.....his memory will live on and be cherished by all and he will be dearly missed.*

Curly & Donna - September 22, 2016 at 03:32 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 22, 2016 at 02:27 PM



“ *Michelle & Family, there is a hole in our family tree with Kevin's passing, but a new bright star shines above us. Hugs to all of you from CA. Our prayers for strength to face the days ahead are with all of you. I smile when I think of the times we shared in Aunt Addie's den talking and laughing together sharing family stories. God's peace.*

David & Denise Bowman - September 22, 2016 at 11:55 AM

TO

“ All of our thoughts and prayers with Michelle and the kids. So sorry for you loss. Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; Love leaves a memory no one can steal.

Tim, Claudia, and Theresa O'Gorman - September 22, 2016 at 10:35 AM

MG

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name

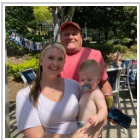


Marty Goff - September 22, 2016 at 09:09 AM

MG

I took this picture of my childhood buddy when he returned home in 2010 for some high school festivities. we grew up together in the same neighborhood and I was always over at his house doing stuff with Kevin and Brett, and Todd. RIP Kevin. Gone to soon. God speed to you and prayers to your family and all those that knew you and loved you.

Marty Goff - September 22, 2016 at 09:15 AM



“ Popke was an awesome NCO, Ranger and great man we roomed together for a couple months, he always kept me laughing we will be missed

Gene Estep - September 22, 2016 at 08:52 AM



“ While I did not know Kevin personally, I do know his life partner, Michelle. As a young Staff Sergeant, she worked for me in the 319th MI Bn at Ft Bragg, back in 1993-94. I recall her pregnancy with one of their children at the time. She bore it well and never complained about having to work late or do field work.

Michelle - I grieve with you at Kevin's passing. You have remained a staunch friend through the years and I am very proud of your accomplishments. Please accept my deepest condolences during this time of grief.

*Mike Kaminski
CW3 (ret), USA*

Mike Kaminski - September 22, 2016 at 08:30 AM

KK

“ *Kensicki Family, Vermilion, c/o Bonnie Kiska-Fish purchased the America the Beautiful for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



Kensicki Family, Vermilion, c/o Bonnie Kiska-Fish -
September 22, 2016 at 08:24 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 22, 2016 at 03:00 AM

GR

“ I served with Kevin at Fort Drum. R.I.P. Brother.

Gene Roberts - September 21, 2016 at 10:34 PM



I remember Ranger Popke as one of those senior leaders you wanted to listen to because they KNEW what they were talking about, not just because they out ranked you. A consummate professional and warrior he was. I thank the Popke family for their sacrifices to this great nation and for sharing this fine example of an NCO and paratrooper with us all.

Troy Hilderbrand - September 22, 2016 at 09:46 AM



Condolences, Mark & Linda Ryan

Mark Ryan - September 23, 2016 at 04:02 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



September 21, 2016 at 10:31 PM



“ So sorry to hear about your loss may God be with you all love your step sister Peggy and family



Peggy Ferguson Wilford - September 21, 2016 at 10:03 PM

SC

I am so sorry to hear about Mr. Popke. Though I only met him just this year he was a wonderful and deeply caring man. Please give my condolences to his family and especially Alex.

Steve Contarino - September 21, 2016 at 11:28 PM

GV

I have known Kevin from the neighborhood, as we both built homes about the same time - I run/walk past his place daily and he would always encourage me when I passed. Nicest guy ever - my thoughts to his family.

Gina Voccola - Diamond Hill

Gina Voccola - September 22, 2016 at 07:10 AM

 Beth Christian

I offer my deepest sympathy to Michelle and her family. As a Brandon Eagle myself, I will definitely donate to the wrestling team fund on Kevin's behalf.

Beth Christian - September 22, 2016 at 08:44 AM

JR

“ Thinking of all of you at this time. He's gone way to soon .
Debbie, Teri, Diane and Jane (cousins)



jane roccosalva - September 21, 2016 at 09:05 PM

BR

“ You are in my thoughts and prayers.
Aunt Barb



barbara roccosalva - September 21, 2016 at 09:03 PM

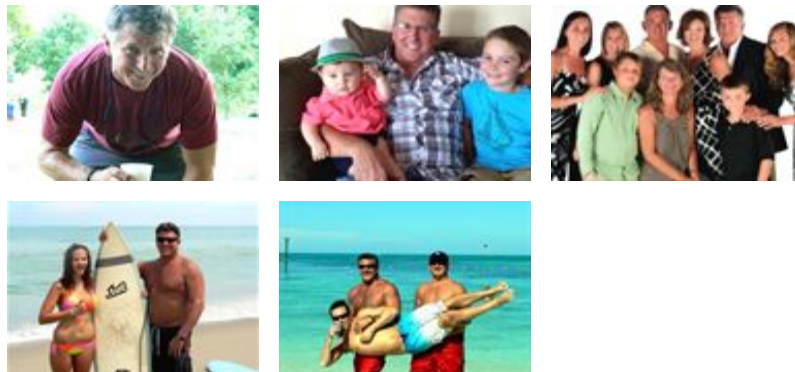
KW

“ Our family all love Kevin and Michelle, kids and Todd. Kevin reached out to me when we moved to florida and invited me and Joe P to cycle with him. He just found us on a triathlon finishers list in the area and reached out to us. Who knew we'd been befriended by the most naturally dynamic good guy I've ever met ? And I wish we knew what an animal endurance athlete he was. Hard to keep up, but he'd always circled back to pull us to the end. We quickly learned through others about his mil background. I was impressed with him from that point on and it didn't take long for us to become good friends. It felt very very good to be liked by him-I ain't gonna lie. His glow and aura are bright but, very natural. I am not alone as everyone I know who came in contact with him couldn't help but love the guy. Then you meet his family and it was just the best being around him. Honestly, I admire Kevin in all aspects. Army Ranger, kind, giving, tough, friendly, his circle of friends,supportive, sense of humor, humility, charasmatic, looks, style-a man's man and family man to the hilt. Since I met him he was always involved in his kids lives. All that a father can do. He talked up Brandon wrestling and was proud of Alex's accomplishments. He always spoke about Miche, Bryn, Emily, Katie and his grandkids. Kevin is a one in ten million person. All of the time spent with him is memorable. How many people have that kind of effect and lasting impression? I'm sure that I am not the only person who is grateful for his friendship. Everlasting he is. Love, Keith and the Whitt family

Keith Whitt - September 21, 2016 at 08:04 PM



“ 46 files added to the album LifeTributes



Hopewell Funeral Home - September 21, 2016 at 07:33 PM

RM

“ Had numerous conversations with Kevin early in the morning at LA Fitness. Kevin always looked out for my cadets and made sure we had passes for The SOF show downtown. Will miss talking to him about his kids especially former cadet Alex. Truly a special man, "Blue Skies" to his family.

Robert Maestas - September 21, 2016 at 06:00 PM

MY

“ I served with SFC Pope in Aco 2/504 PIR in 1995-96. Was an honor to have trained under you alls Father,,, Rest in Peace BLACKHEART

Mark Yeager - September 21, 2016 at 05:48 PM



I remember running with SFC Popke, we were doing sprints and his ACL snapped and he went down. Tuff as they came, also the only man I knew that shaved his entire body. RIP Brother and may the Holy Spirit comfort your family!!

Samuel Berg - September 22, 2016 at 12:38 AM



James Belcher

I served with SFC Popke at Fort Bragg also...a great leader for the Blackhearts. Aco @/504th. RIP you have earned it !!

James Belcher - September 22, 2016 at 07:36 AM



Royd Nuckols

SFC Popke was my PSG in A CO 2/504. He was a great leader who truly cared for his Soldiers, and affected the lives of many of us, in and out of uniform.

Royd Nuckols - September 22, 2016 at 07:57 AM



JA

“ Jason, Alisa & Lilly Apt purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



Jason, Alisa & Lilly Apt - September 21, 2016 at 05:42 PM



Florist Choice Bouquet

“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



September 21, 2016 at 03:37 PM



RS

“ Richard and Lori Scragg purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



Richard and Lori Scragg - September 21, 2016 at 02:37 PM

FF

“ *Fran Falino & Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



Fran Falino & Family - September 21, 2016 at 01:59 PM

BH

“ Condolences to Kevin’s family (extended family) and his many friends. I first met Kevin in 1986 as a young strapping Staff Sergeant full of piss & vinegar when we were both assigned to the 2-22 INF shortly after the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) was reactivated at Fort Drum NY. We had some great times and made many memories that have lasted me a lifetime, from our trips North into Canada for fun, or conducting a 100 mile road march through the Adirondack mountains with a full combat load, or going south to Fort Benning, Georgia for more training we always had an adventure to reflect on and I cherish every one of them.

Kevin was the kind of guy to always lend a helping hand, he’d give you the shirt off his back if he thought it would help you and I most enjoyed watching him develop through the senior ranks as a Noncommissioned Officer. His willingness to coach, teach, train and mentor others goes beyond description and he was always quick to spot the strength in others and build a team from there.

Ranger Buddy we’re gonna miss you... but we’ll never ever forget you.

RLTW

*Burnie Haney
2-22 Infantry Scouts
Sergeant Major (retired)*

Burnie Haney - September 21, 2016 at 01:41 PM



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 21, 2016 at 12:48 PM



“ *My condolences to the family and friends of Kevin. Although I hadn't known him very long he was always upbeat and positive. May he rest in peace.*

Sam Taylor - September 21, 2016 at 12:33 PM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 21, 2016 at 12:05 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 21, 2016 at 11:45 AM

DM

“ My thoughts and prayers are with you all. I met Kevin 8 years ago, very sweet caring guy. Sending love and hugs to you all.

Debbie McAllister - September 21, 2016 at 11:32 AM

BV

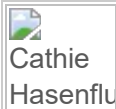
“ What a great looking guy and what I just read said he was just as great inside.....from a friend of his sister Jeanice.
Love in Christ, Betty Vaughan

Betty Vaughan - September 21, 2016 at 11:10 AM

GF

“ Kevin touched our life through his son Alex and my son Hunter's friendship. He watched the football games all freshman year with us. When my Kevin was out of work Kevin got his resume and tries to help find him a job. He took time to get to know Hunter and was very good to him. We were blessed to see a father so dedicated to his son and the love between he and Michelle was so evident. He will be greatly missed by so many. Our prayers are with you all.
The Ferguson Family

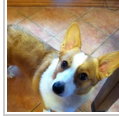
Glenda Ferguson - September 21, 2016 at 08:34 AM



Cathie Hasenflue

Our thoughts love
And prayers are with
all of you. Kevin was a great cousin he will be forever in our hearts.
When we were in Fla. With mom and dad in 2010 Kevin Tod and there families came
Over to visit with Us all my mom was so impressed that they would drive that far to visit with all of us. That left an impression on my parents My mom died shortly after we returned home, thanks so much for kevin and family and Todd and your family for doing that. BUT that was how they were going out of there way. I WILL Miss you Kevin alot of fond memories cuz. Love John Cathie (Popke) Hasenflue family

Cathie Hasenflue - September 21, 2016 at 10:35 AM



Prayers of peace and comfort to all the family and friends of Kevin.

Cathy Popke - September 21, 2016 at 11:52 AM

LD

Although I never met Kevin I feel like I knew him through Nana's many funny and loving stories. Michelle and Brennie I have met a few times when you came to see Nana when she worked at Doctors Medical Center. Your family are in my thoughts and prayers that God will hold you in his loving arms and give you comfort. Lin Diehl

lin diehl - September 21, 2016 at 02:24 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



September 21, 2016 at 08:06 AM

CM

“ *Caitlin Flanagan and Bruce Miyazaki purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.*



Caitlin Flanagan and Bruce Miyazaki - September 20, 2016 at 10:36 PM

VS

“ Valerie & Don Shuey purchased the Sapphire Skies Bouquet for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



Valerie & Don Shuey - September 20, 2016 at 09:10 PM

TI

“ The Team at IEA purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



The Team at IEA - September 20, 2016 at 06:37 PM

TT

“ The IEA Team purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



The IEA Team - September 20, 2016 at 06:24 PM

TF

“ The Blackbird Family purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



The Blackbird Family - September 20, 2016 at 05:07 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of Mr. Donald Kevin Popke.



September 20, 2016 at 04:29 PM

KW

“ Kevin was a fixer. He spent his time at work identifying things that were wrong – or could just work better – and fixing them. He was always taking care of things. Cables looked messy, Kevin would fix it. Three monitors are not enough, you really, really need a fourth? No problem, Kevin would take care of it. Video teleconference having trouble? Kevin took care of that too. Kevin even took care of things that were not in his job description. Once prior to an important visit he took it upon himself to schedule a cleaning just so the facility would look its best. Kevin never stood still, he was forever taking care of things. Unless, that is, he was stopping to tell a funny story, describe his latest family vacation, or just to ask how you were doing. He talked with everyone from the director to the cleaning crew; always cheerful, with a goofy grin, especially when he was about to play a practical joke on someone.

Kevin just took care of things, it's what he did. He took care of his family. He took care of his soldiers. And he took care of us, his colleagues. Our lives will be a little emptier and a little poorer because we'll miss him, but much fuller and richer for having known him and counted him a friend.

Kevin: We will vainly try to fill your shoes and try to take care of things the way you'd want us to. I know you were Army, but your Navy friends wish you Fair Winds and Following Seas. May you Rest in Peace, my friend – we have the watch.

From your colleagues at Blackbird and ISSO

Kent Weaver - September 20, 2016 at 03:53 PM