



## **Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr.**

September 22, 1956 - June 9, 2018

LTC(R) Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith, Jr., U.S. Army, 61, of Plant City, Florida, born in Shreveport, Louisiana on September 22, 1956, entered into eternal rest on June 9, 2018. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University, and his Master of Science Degree in Administration from Central Michigan University.

His numerous command and staff positions included Rifle Platoon Leader, Weapons Platoon Leader, and Company Executive Officer in the 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division; Detachment Commander (SFODA 112 and SFODA 114) and Assistant S-3, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa, Japan; Commander, Company A, 1st Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, and Infantry/Special Forces Observer/Controller, Joint Readiness Training Center; Commander, Company A, and Battalion Executive Officer, 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group in Fort Lewis, Washington; Senior Special Operations Forces Observer/Controller, Joint Readiness Training Center Chief, Counterproliferation Branch and Deputy, Policy and Strategy Division at US Special Operations Command. His military awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal (2OLC), the Army Commendation Medal (2OLC), the Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the Ranger and Special Forces Tabs, the Master Parachutist Badge, the Military Freefall Parachutist Badge, and numerous Foreign Jump Wings.

He loved his family, and enjoyed golfing, fishing, and hunting. He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Patricia Smith; daughters, Lisa Smith of Plant City, and Stephanie "Nick" Smith of Plant City; siblings, Ron Smith (Joan) of Brenham, Texas, Jill Tatum (Bill) of Ruston, Louisiana, and Dan Smith (Edna) of Ruston; sisters-in-law, Ginny Williams (Larry) of Cumming, Georgia, Donna Hines (Colin) of Plant City, and Maria Cira (Mike) of Alpharetta, Georgia; and nieces and nephews, Kathlena, Jonathan, Karen, Marcy, Scott, Elyse, Brian, Greg, Patrick, Kristina, Matthew, and Taylor. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ernest and Mary Calvin Smith. A funeral service will be held Saturday, June 16 at 3:00 P.M. at Hopewell Funeral Home, 6005 S County Road 39, Plant City, where the family will receive friends beginning at 2:00 P.M. Military Honors to be held Monday, June 18 at 10:30 A.M. at Florida National Cemetery, 6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, [specialops.org/ways-to-give/](http://specialops.org/ways-to-give/), and/or the Gary Sinise Foundation, [garysinisefoundation.org/donate](http://garysinisefoundation.org/donate). Expressions of condolence at [HopewellFuneral.com](http://HopewellFuneral.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Florida National Cemetery

Bushnell, FL

# Previous Events

## Visitation

**JUN 16.** 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

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

## Service

**JUN 16.** 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

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

## Graveside Service

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JUN 18. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Florida National Cemetery  
Bushnell, FL

# Tribute Wall



“ Hopewell Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr.



Hopewell Funeral Home - June 15, 2018 at 05:59 PM



*This is a beautiful tribute.*

Adrian Tid - June 17, 2018 at 07:48 AM

AR

*Lee was my roommate at A&M our Senior year. I don't remember meeting anyone who had more desire to be an Infantryman than Lee. He lived it, loved, and that's all he wanted to do. And he did it quite well. It's been about 40 years since we last met, and I regret that I did not seek him out to find out how he was doing in life and in his service to the Nation. I offer prayers for his wife and family as they grieve his loss, and begin to heal. I will say a hearty "Here!" for him at our Muster next year.*

*Alan Robinson  
A&M Class of 1978*

Alan Robinson - June 18, 2018 at 12:21 PM



“ I was friends with his youngest child from middle school through sometime in high school, when time and distance (I'd moved away) led to us losing contact. He and Patty always made me feel like I belonged at their home, made it a refuge I didn't understand how badly I needed until it was too late to say thank you. So, I'm saying it here and now: thank you. For putting up with me and my shenanigans and everything us "twins" got up to, for caring about me, even if I was the kid who let myself in without knocking, when I probably should have knocked. For the Thanksgiving I got to celebrate with your family like I was part of it, even if you didn't have to do that. And for all the little things I can't remember but have left an honest, warm spot in my heart when I look back on those times in your house.

*I remember one Halloween, we were probably a little too old to be trick or treating, but he still took us around to the neighborhoods that were a little too far for us to walk to in the back of his truck. He was a strict father and a kind man and I like to think I'm better for having known him and his family.*

*I'm truly sorry to hear of his passing, especially so late. To Patty and the family, I pray time has healed the hurt of his passing but cemented the best memories to hold guard, steadfast and true, to the man he was and how he loved.*

*All my love,*

*Charlie (formerly Kalyn aka Katt) Burkman*

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**Charlie Burkman** - January 13 at 11:24 PM

RJ

“ To Patty and Family, Lee was a very dear friend of mine. I was one of his Navy buddies from Virginia Beach. I can't believe we're coming up on 6 years since his passing. I think of him every day. I was glad to hear they are dedicating a room to his memory at SOCOM. I wish I could be there but the Navy has me on travel. Please know I and so many others loved him like a brother, which, in many ways, he was. Most sincerely and with deep respect,  
Rich Mahone

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**Richard Daley Mahone Jr** - April 20, 2024 at 02:16 PM

PS

Rich,  
Sorry you were unable to attend the room dedication to Lee. It was such an overwhelming honor for us and his family. He is missed dearly everyday. He truly loved his job and his fellow soldiers. Thank you for being part of Lee's life.  
Patty

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**patty Smith** - June 18, 2024 at 01:14 AM

CA

“ Lee, you were one of the best friends that I ever had, starting in our freshman year in 1974. We were brothers in arms in the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets as well as later on in the U.S. Army. You inspired me to go through Ranger Training. By some stroke of fate, you and I were rifle platoon leaders together in the same company in the 1st Cavalry Division as we began our respective military careers. You excelled tremendously--as I knew you would--setting a sterling example for us all to follow. In reading your bio the other day, I was duly impressed with your colorful and varied career. There's no telling just how many others you inspired as well as the lives you saved with your leadership, training, and mentoring. By the way, that was a perfectly beautiful and heartfelt video tribute to you and Patty on the website.

*And don't worry--we will all answer with a hearty "Here" for you at the next Aggie Muster 2019.*

*One of my biggest regrets in life was that I didn't stay in contact with you and Patty. That was my bad.*

*Patty, I pray that the Power of the Holy Spirit remains with you and your girls and comforts you in this time of loss. You were everything to Lee.*

*Lee, I'm looking forward to the day that we will meet again and serve the Lord together--shoulder to shoulder.*

*I just wanted to share a couple of other things with you before I close:*

*I volunteered for duty in Iraq back in 2003. My wife was in a department store looking at some cosmetics and mentioned this to the sales clerk. Another woman standing nearby--a woman whose identity I will never know--heard this, stepped forward, spoke up, and said, "Thank God for men like that!" That comment has resonated with me throughout the years.*

*So I wanted to pass her comment along to one who is most deserving:*

*Thank God for Soldiers like You!*

*Finally, I wanted to leave you with this, something that I found on the web many years ago:*

*A Soldier's Grave  
by Pearl Rivers*

*Tread lightly, 'tis a Soldier's grave,  
A lonely, mossy mound;  
And yet to hearts like mine and thine, it should be Holy Ground.  
Speak softly, let no careless laugh, no idle thoughtless jest;  
Escape your lips where sweetly sleeps, this Hero in his rest.  
For him no Reveille will beat when morning beams shall come;  
For him, at night, no Tattoo rolls it's thunders from the drum.  
Tread lightly! For a man bequeathed, ere laid beneath this sod,  
His ashes to his native land, His Gallant Soul to God.*

*Rest well, Lee, and thank you for your service, your friendship, and everything that you've ever done for us all.*

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**COL (R) William (Bill) Porter, U.S. Army** - June 24, 2018 at 02:25 PM

CA

“ COL (R) William (Bill) Porter, U.S. Army lit a candle in memory of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr.



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**COL (R) William (Bill) Porter, U.S. Army** - June 21, 2018 at 12:44 PM

CA

*For you Lee, a light blue candle (Light Blue--the branch color of the U.S. Army Infantry) in your remembrance. My eulogy for you will follow shortly.*

COL (R) William (Bill) Porter, U.S. Army - June 21, 2018 at 12:49 PM

CA

*Hi Lee,  
I just answered up for you at Aggie Muster with heartfelt "Here."  
Rangers Lead the Way. I'll see you in Heaven.*

COL (R) William (Bill) Porter, U.S. Army - April 22, 2019 at 09:36 PM



Lawrence  
OBrien

“ *I salute you Sir! ALL soldiers go to heaven.*

Lawrence OBrien - June 18, 2018 at 12:15 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



June 17, 2018 at 11:49 AM

DL

“ *Lee was my roommate, aka "Ole Lady" our sophomore year in the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. His dedication to the Army, the Corps, and his classmates was exemplary. He taught me volumes through his zest for life, unique appreciation for all of God's creations. We had many deep, funny, exhilarating conversations. I was so blest to be with him. I owe him more than he realized and I love him dearly. Smythe i look forward to joining you in eternity serving our Lord.*

Dale Lazo - June 16, 2018 at 10:28 AM

PS

“ I have waited to add my two cents to this remembrance page to see what others had to say. I had the VERY great privilege to know Lee (we called him Smithe) since he joined the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets in 1974. No one will be surprised to hear that he was already practicing his "dynamic and fluid " PLFs at the age of 17. At that age he was laser focused on his goal of earning his Ranger tab and green beanie. The only thing I ever saw him pursue with more passion was the beautiful Patty Travisano.

*Lee embodied the Aggie credo of "Soldier Statesman Knightly Gentleman "*

*I remember the cadet he was and admire the man he became as a warrior, leader of men and most importantly a husband and father. I remember shining shoes and polishing brass. Bonfire. Double dates with he and Patty at the Lakeview Club. The canoe trip down the Colorado River with him and Wally. The wonderful wedding and the reception at the Polo Club.*

*I remember Murph!!*

*Final thoughts of the things Smithe taught me and that we learned together as we transitioned from boys to men.*

*Greater love hath no man than this....*

*It's just another Corps trip boys ...we'll match in behind the band.*

*RANGERS LEAD THE WAY*

*I pray for God's peace and understanding for Patty and the girls.*

*Hope to see you soon (but not too soon), Smithe.*

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**Phil "The Glut" Sutton** - June 16, 2018 at 12:05 AM

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**RANGERS LEAD THE WAY**

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**Phil "The Glut" Sutton** - June 16, 2018 at 12:05 AM

RO

“ Patti ,so sorry for your loss. Praying the peace and comfort of our Lord to be with you and your family. Rolf and Beverly Ericksen



Rolf - June 15, 2018 at 02:05 PM

RE

“ Rolf & Beverly Ericksen lit a candle in memory of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr.



Rolf & Beverly Ericksen - June 15, 2018 at 01:57 PM

GS

“ Patty, It seems just yesterday, that we were preparing to leave Fort Bragg, NC for Okinawa, Japan to stand up the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group in Torii Station. I truly enjoyed my five years on and off the island, but it was the teammates that made the memories so vivid and special. I was blessed and very grateful that you and Lee were there as part of the CABIN BEACH family. Lee is sorely missed.

Gary Shimizu - June 15, 2018 at 08:06 AM



“ Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..



June 14, 2018 at 10:46 PM

TW

“ I knew Mr. Smith when he was the Director of SOOP-PG back in the day at SOCOM, and when he retired from the Military, I started calling him Mr. Col Smith. He would say call me Lee now, and I told him no way! You will forever be call Mr. Col Smith! He was always kind to me, he will certainly be missed!



*Tina Williams*

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**Tina Williams** - June 14, 2018 at 07:21 PM

JK

“ 3 files added to the album New Album Name



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**John C. Knie** - June 14, 2018 at 06:24 PM

JK

*Our hearts were broken when we received the word that Lee had passed. So many fond memories of our early times as young Special Forces Officers and friends at Fort Bragg. Patty, know that our thoughts and prayers are with you and the girls. May the peace of God be with you-*

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**John C. Knie** - June 14, 2018 at 07:32 PM

SK

“ Heartfelt condolences to the Family in their hour of need.  
- Shaun Keenan and Family

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**Shaun M. Keenan** - June 14, 2018 at 03:28 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



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June 14, 2018 at 01:17 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



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June 14, 2018 at 11:40 AM



“ *So many memories come to mind- camping, fishing, and beach trips, Disney World, reunions and holidays, a trip to Hawaii, tubing on the Tickfaw! All filled with fun and laughter! I will miss the little things about him most: his hand "anteater" Murph that he entertained all the children in our family with at the dinner table, the nicknames he made up for all of us, the expressions and quotes that were such a big part of our conversations. How he loved to egg on my kids to tease their dad about being cheap! I'll never open another can of English peas, see a lemon pie or make nachos without thinking of him! He was the glue that held our family together, the one that called to check in and check up. He was a dear friend (how many people can say that about their brother-in-law?) and I will miss our deep conversations about world issues, politics and spiritual matters. Our worlds won't ever be the same without him. His was a life well lived and we are proud to have been a part of it. We love and miss you, Breb!*

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**Edna Smith** - June 14, 2018 at 10:42 AM

BW

“ *My deepest condolence's to Lee's Family. Lee was a truly great man to work with and call friend. During the years I worked with him at SOCOM, he was always spot-on with his guidance and always pulled together everyone in the shop into a strong team. An awesome leader! I will certainly miss him and am eternally grateful to have known such a man! Oomgaawa!!*

*Bill and Jerilyn White*

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**Bill White** - June 14, 2018 at 07:56 AM



“ *Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



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June 13, 2018 at 09:41 PM

CA

“ *Sincere condolences to the Smith Family.*

*Charles R Armstrong, Captain, USN (Ret), SOCOM SOCJIC and SOCOM CSO J2*

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**Charles R Armstrong** - June 12, 2018 at 07:54 PM

FJ

“ *From John and Sandy Fraser (J53, J8-R, J56) purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



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**From John and Sandy Fraser (J53, J8-R, J56) - June 12, 2018  
at 07:28 PM**

ES

“ *My deepest sympathies to Lee's family. I had the pleasure to work with Lee for many years at SOCOM. He was greatly respected for his knowledge and work ethic, but his personality and positive attitude always filled the room with smiles and laughter. This is a tremendous loss. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends.*

*Ed Sauer*

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**Edward Sauer - June 12, 2018 at 07:22 PM**

JF

“ Dear Patty: A great light have gone out in the world with the passing of Lee. He was a loving husband, caring father, SOF warrior, true leader, consummate professional, and trusted mentor. But to me, above all, he was my friend. He will be deeply missed, but I find comfort in knowing that he is in a better place, without pain, without worry, and with loved ones lost long ago.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., the Supreme Court justice, once said, “The one and only success which it is his to command is to bring to his work a mighty heart.” I know everyone will judge Lee, as I do, as having brought to the Army and our country’s service a mighty heart.

The greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love, and be loved in return. I can say with certainty, Lee did and was.

Sincerely, John and Sandy Fraser

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**John Fraser** - June 12, 2018 at 07:15 PM

CS

“ My heart goes out to you and the girls Patty. Such fond memories of Lynn and Lee’s lunch dates at work and their mutual love of anything golf. Lee was a rock to lean on at Lynn’s funeral and I will forever be thankful to him for that. What a wonderful Husband, father and officer he was. He will be missed by many Patty. May God wrap his arms around you and your family at this sad time. Sincerely, Carol Stull

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**carol stull** - June 12, 2018 at 06:57 PM

PS

Carol, I believe our guys are probably playing golf together. Lee really missed his lunch dates with Lynn. He was lost. We were blessed to have these men in our lives.

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**patty smith** - June 13, 2018 at 02:44 AM



“ Dear Patty, Lisa and Stephanie: We are so sorry for your loss and hope that you all find comfort in knowing he's at rest and not hurting anymore. May God's love sustain you and your family and friends' love nurture you. (I'm very impressed by the comments made by your "military" family and friends. Lee was quite respected and revered. That's an amazing legacy to leave behind!) Sincerely,  
Michael and Nancy Heckerman

Nancy Heckerman - June 12, 2018 at 06:20 PM



“ Shari and Ed Sauer, USSOCOM J3 and J8 purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..



Shari and Ed Sauer, USSOCOM J3 and J8 - June 12, 2018 at 06:20 PM



“ My deepest sympathies to Lee's family. Lee was one of the first people I worked with at SOCOM when I joined in 2003 and I was fortunate to continued to work with him up until his last day. He was always warm, friendly, welcoming and extremely level-headed and reasonable. He had a wicked laugh and sense of humor. I was honored to call him my colleague and friend. I am deeply saddened to hear of his passing. He was a truly wonderful man and great American hero. Please know that he touched many lives at SOCOM and he left all of us the better for having known him. I wish you all comfort in during this very difficult time.

Shari Sauer

Shari Sauer - June 12, 2018 at 06:07 PM



“ *Garden of Serenity Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



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June 12, 2018 at 03:28 PM



“ *Patty. So sorry to write this condolence as we remember the great team we all had in the 509th. Lee was a great Company Commander who truly loved his soldiers and you were a rock for the A Company families. We all know Lee has done his PLFs, stood in the door and made a perfect exit. He is waiting for his troopers on the DZ.*

*Geronimo!!*

*Don and Donna Loftis*

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**Don Loftis** - June 12, 2018 at 11:00 AM



“ *With love.. Valmet, Charlotte NC purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..*



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**With love.. Valmet, Charlotte NC** - June 12, 2018 at 10:35 AM

KJ

“ Kevin and Nanci Fairfax (USSOCOM J5) purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Mr. Ernest Leon "Lee" Smith Jr..



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**Kevin and Nanci Fairfax (USSOCOM J5)** - June 12, 2018 at 08:29 AM



“ I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. I was "Property of Lee Smith" in the J53 from 2014-2016. He was a phenomenal boss, amazing soldier and a loyal friend. Loved our afternoon coffee. His memory will live on through so many. Love and prayers.

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**Gerard Cos Wwia** - June 11, 2018 at 08:40 PM

RM

“ Patty, Lisa and Stephanie,  
You will hear this many times from others but your husband and father was my hero and friend. I a world of tough men and women in the special operations community, Lee stood out for his toughness, kindness, leadership and intelligence. He inspired many and always helped those that needed it, especially those junior to him. I shall miss him terribly as will his teammates. Not many in this world can say they made a difference. Lee made a difference in spades.

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**Rich Mahone** - June 11, 2018 at 06:22 PM