



Leland C. Komich

July 30, 1940 - March 22, 2026

Lee passed away quietly Sunday morning, March 22, after having been surrounded all week by friends and family in the nursing unit of Garden Ridge at Greenspring, finally succumbing to his combination of heart failure and diabetes which had become increasingly disabling in recent years. Born in Rockland, Maine; Lee joined the United States Army in June of 1960 in hopes of attending flight school. After a couple of stops along the way (including some helicopter crew chief time in Germany), he entered flight school at Ft. Walters, Texas in 1963. Upon graduation his first assignment was the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) at Ft. Benning, GA where new tactics were evaluated to determine the future of Army Aviation. When the tests were complete the division became the 1st Cavalry Division which deployed to the Central Highlands in the Republic of South Viet Nam. During the next 13 months Lee participated in a number of battles including those in the Ia Drang Valley for which he received the Silver Star.

That citation reads in part "...for gallantry in action while participating in aerial flight. CW2 Komich, assigned to Company B, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), United States Army, Vietnam, distinguished himself as a UH-1D Helicopter Pilot with heroism, engaged with the enemy at risk of life. On 14 November 1965, CW2 Komich flew 8 sorties supporting the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment engaging three enemy battalions, for service far beyond the limits of duty and

mission. Enemy troops were penetrating the Landing Zone. After he had flown in critical ammunition, his wingman was hit and forced to land. Lee chose to land next to the smoking aircraft, to wait under enemy fire to board the crew, a passenger and six wounded soldiers, and then to depart heavily loaded with fifteen soldiers on board. Again, he chose to return with more ammunition, approached, missed the nearly obscured landing site, returned over the battlefield, landed, offloaded, and departed with seven wounded soldiers. He returned a third time, with ammunition.

On 17 November at Landing Zone Albany, he supported the 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, and freely chose two times to join other aircraft, landing by flashlight at night to extract fourteen more wounded soldiers. During these three days, CW2 Komich had placed himself at risk to extract 39 wounded soldiers. His extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.”

Lee is mentioned by name in publications about those battles in *We Were Soldiers Once* (also a movie) by Gen. Hal Moore and Joe Galloway; *Chickenhawk* by his tent-mate/copilot/friend Robert Mason; *Chopper* by Robert Dorr; and a high-school produced movie *A Walk in the Sun*.

Following a short tour as an instructor at Ft. Rucker, the Army Aviation Center, Lee returned to Viet Nam and the 1st Cavalry Division where he finished logging over 2,000 combat helicopter hours. During that tour he was shot down in a CH-47 Chinook helicopter which burned to the ground. For his outstanding service during both tours he received (in addition to the Silver Star) 2 Bronze Stars, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with 46 Oak Leaf Clusters.

The rest of his 23 years in the Army included training to become an FAA-

certified Air Traffic Controller; a year in Korea (during which he earned his Master Aviator rating); a term of service on the Army Aviation Association of America Board; 4 years as an assignments officer for US Army Aviators; Aviation Flight Instructor; Flight Examiner: graduation with a BS degree from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University; and a final tour in Alaska, ending in 1983.

After his retirement from the Army, Lee immediately joined the US Department of Energy Nuclear Emergency Search Team and became their chief pilot. During his illustrious career he logged over 13,500 flight hours and was awarded the FAA Orville Wright Plaque for more than 50 years of accident/incident/violation free flying. After retirement he volunteered briefly for the FAASTeam (Federal Aviation Safety Team). He was a T-ball coach, a church usher, a maker of prize-winning Pinewood Derby cars, President of the Shenandoah River Civic Association, and graduate of the Fairfax County Civilian Police Academy. His most recent honor was a Fairfax County Board of Supervisors proclamation recognizing his decades of extraordinary dedication and service to his community as President of the North Franconia Civic Association.

Lee is married, to his wife of 55 years, Gray. He is a proud father of two daughters, Carolyn (Jason Hare) and Carla (Steve Moody) and even prouder grandfather of Michael and James Hare and Owen and Connor Moody. Preceded in death by his younger brother Norm, Lee remains connected with Norm's wife Joy Komich, his nephew Johnathan Komich (Tegan Barson) and great niece and nephew Kyla and Jackson Komich. He also shared a strong bond with his devoted cousin Michael (Debi, Kelsey, Ryan). Their favorite spot to enjoy friends and family is Komich Kottage by the Shenandoah River.

To make a memorial donation one may write a check to the la Drang Scholarship Fund, noting in the “for” line in memory of Lee Komich and mail to First Cavalry Division Association, 302 N Main St, Copperas Cove, TX 76522.

Instead of flowers the family would appreciate live plants that will live on as will their fond memories of Lee.

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

1 Memorial Drive
Arlington, VA 22211

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 28. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Jefferson Funeral Chapel
5755 Castlewellan Drive
Alexandria, VA 22315
(703) 971-7400
info@jeffersonfuneralchapel.com
<https://www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com>

Funeral Service

MAR 28. 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Jefferson Funeral Chapel
5755 Castlewellan Drive
Alexandria, VA 22315
(703) 971-7400
info@jeffersonfuneralchapel.com
<https://www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com>

Tribute Wall

AS

“ *Condolences from the Salamy family. I have such vivid memories of coming over to play as a child - from sleepovers to birthday parties to after-school fun. We will make a contribution in Mr. Komich's memory.*

Ann Salamy - March 31 at 08:50 AM

CW

“ *Farewell dear and faithful friend of more than fifty years, brother at arms, coworker, fellow pilot/copilot, confidant, confuser of air traffic controllers, confounder of flight simulator instructors, and cowlalker/cotalker of five miles every day at lunch. We did solve most of the world's problems. You will be missed.*

Clark Ward - March 30 at 01:55 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Leland C. Komich.*



March 28 at 08:40 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Leland C. Komich.*

March 27 at 10:50 PM

CM

“ Lee was a pillar in our community, always leading the association with respect, determination, and devotion. His smile under that signature mustache was as genuine as his caring heart. My sincere sympathies to Gray and his family. May his legacy live on.

Cindy Marisch - March 27 at 10:41 PM

LN

“ Lee was a treasured friend, neighbor, community leader, humble War Hero, and the most patriotic person I have ever met. He was greatly loved by so many people during a life full of accomplishments and selflessness. I will miss him a lot, but will keep his memory strong. May peace come to Gray and the family.

Lauren Nasson - March 27 at 04:34 PM

RK

“ Ross and Jenny Komich purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Leland C. Komich.



Ross and Jenny Komich - March 27 at 12:56 PM

RK

“ Ross and Jenny Komich planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Leland C. Komich.

Ross and Jenny Komich - March 27 at 12:56 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Leland C. Komich.

March 27 at 11:15 AM

MP

“ Will miss Lee's leadership in the community, his service to our country, his patience dealing with local idiots, which was admirable to say the least, and most of all, his friendship. M.P.

Mark Perko - March 26 at 02:20 PM



“ America the Beautiful was purchased for the family of Leland C. Komich.



March 26 at 12:51 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Leland C. Komich.

March 26 at 12:51 PM

DJ

“ Dawn and Bruce Jones planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Leland C. Komich.

Dawn and Bruce Jones - March 26 at 07:30 AM

DJ

“ Dawn and Bruce Jones purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Leland C. Komich.



Dawn and Bruce Jones - March 26 at 07:30 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Leland C. Komich.*



March 25 at 05:35 PM



“ *Joseph Mattera, VFW 609 purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Leland C. Komich.*



Joseph Mattera, VFW 609 - March 25 at 04:11 PM



“ *Joseph Mattera, VFW 609 planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Leland C. Komich.*

Joseph Mattera, VFW 609 - March 25 at 04:11 PM



“ *Ken J. planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Leland C. Komich.*

Ken J. - March 25 at 02:56 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Leland C. Komich.*



March 25 at 02:49 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Leland C. Komich.*



March 25 at 02:45 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Leland C. Komich.*

March 25 at 02:45 PM



“ *We are very sorry to hear of Lee's passing. Our heartfelt condolences to Gray, and Lee and Gray's families and friends. Lee was an amazing and very accomplished, yet humble and unassuming, man - traits rarely found in combination these days. He was a wonderful man, neighbor, and community leader. He will be greatly missed. Randy and Sandy Gross.*

Randy and Sandy Gross - March 25 at 02:33 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Leland C. Komich.*



March 25 at 10:52 AM



“ *I am so saddened to learn of Lee's passing. I have always considered him and Gray my close friends. I will remember him fondly for his words of wisdom and for his patience with our crazy neighborhood issues and his laughter. Fly high General!!*

Sally Long

Sally Long - March 24 at 10:48 PM