

## Michael Joseph O'Donnell

October 16, 1950 - June 16, 2022

Michael Joseph O'Donnell, 71, passed away on Thursday, June 16, 2022, with family around him, in Alexandria, Virginia.

Mike was born on October 16, 1950. He was in the first graduating class of Saint Louis Catholic School. He attended Gonzaga College High School and Washington and Lee University where he played linebacker on the football team and graduated in 1972 with a degree in history. His life-long passion for Civil War soldiers and their artifacts began when he kicked up a Minie ball bullet on the Saint Louis playground. After college, he purchased an early, home-made metal detector and began "hunting" on the Wilderness, Chancellorsville and Bull Run battlefields, and vast Civil War campsites in Stafford, Orange and Franconia, as the land was being cleared for suburban development. A lifelong Virginian, Mike said he could still see the trenches and felt the presence of those who fought and died there. He became an authority on Civil War buttons, buckles, artillery shells and insignia, and published many books describing and cataloging them, doing the writing, photography, layout and design himself. Mike, a natural raconteur, said "just make it interesting." He captivated nieces, nephews, brothers, sisters and others with his colorful historical stories. For at least the last two decades of her life, Mike took over the personal care of his mother, Dorothy Krafft O'Donnell, who predeceased him by 6 months in December 2021 at age 103.

He is survived by 9 siblings, Mary Beth, Dorothy (Steve), Jack (Lynn), Denny (Shirley), Chris (Debbie), Patty (Richard), Mark (Susan), Regina (John), and Ellen (David), and numerous nieces, nephews and friends. His brother, Timothy, predeceased him by 3 months.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be offered at Saint Louis Catholic Church in Alexandria, Virginia, on Wednesday, June 29, at 11:00 a.m. Burial will take place at Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Herndon, VA on Thursday, June 30, at 9:45am. In lieu of flowers, a memorial gift may be sent to Saint Louis Catholic Church at <https://saintlouisparish.org/>.

# Previous Events

## Mass of Christian Burial

JUN **29**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Louis Catholic Church  
2907 Popkins Ln  
Alexandria, VA 22306  
(703) 765-4421

## Graveside Service

JUN **30**. 9:45 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Chestnut Grove Cemetery  
831 Dranesville Road  
Herndon, VA 20170

# Tribute Wall

SS

“ I met Mike in 1971 and we hit it off immediately. He, my first wife Becky, and I hunted together for the next few years all over Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. We became writers and publishers and were brothers. Success both inspired us and divided us, but we remained friends. I shall always hold Mike's memory and our years of adventures dear to my heart.

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**steve sylvia** - November 28, 2022 at 07:30 PM



“ *Michael Joseph O'Donnell*

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October 27, 2022 at 09:45 PM

DT

“ *I knew Mike O'Donnell because of my husband Chuck Thompson. Attended many a Civil War Relic Show where you would find Mike taking photos of people's relics. He was a soft spoken man, and always a gentleman. I shall miss him.*

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**Debra Thompson** - September 07, 2022 at 04:15 AM

FT

“ *RIP Mike.*



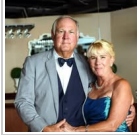
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**Frank Titus** - July 02, 2022 at 10:36 AM

KK

“ Mike was my friend! I've known Mike for 42 years, going back to 1980 maybe 81 back when I met him & Steve Sylvia the same night. Mike & I had been friends, well until the other day. We dug relics together, we traveled together, went from Massachusetts to Florida & I think we stopped to meet collectors in every state, while Mike took photo of artillery for my book. Mike once talked me into being the Publisher for a book, Confederate Coal Torpedo. We worked tirelessly on & were about finished with, Artillery of The Army of Northern Virginia 1861-1865 also called Lee's Thunderbolts. I would not have even known about this without Mike & I thanked him often. I mostly enjoyed our crazy & even deep talks, over the years & we talked about any & everything! I'll truly miss those talks. We had disagreements from time to time, but Mike was always the better man, as he never seemed to let me get under his skin & if I did, I never heard him say a word about it. He always told me to forgive other when I was mad & he never talks about holding grudges. Mike was always Mike, I never once saw him change who he was when around others, he was always Mike, no matter who he met. Only while in Nashville, I introduced him to a few of Country Music's biggest stars, & Mike, well Mike did Mike & even when being asked all types of Civil War questions, by people who I've seen intimidate others, well my friend, Michael J. O'Donnall was the Star.. Mike loved his siblings & their family's & I believe his mother he loved the most, well that's the way I saw it. Ok, enough said, other than to say, that I'll miss Michael who was my friend . May all who loved him find peace & May God Bless & be with us all.

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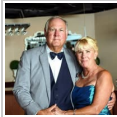
Keith B. Kenerly - June 26, 2022 at 11:32 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Jeffrey Southmayd - June 23, 2022 at 06:29 PM

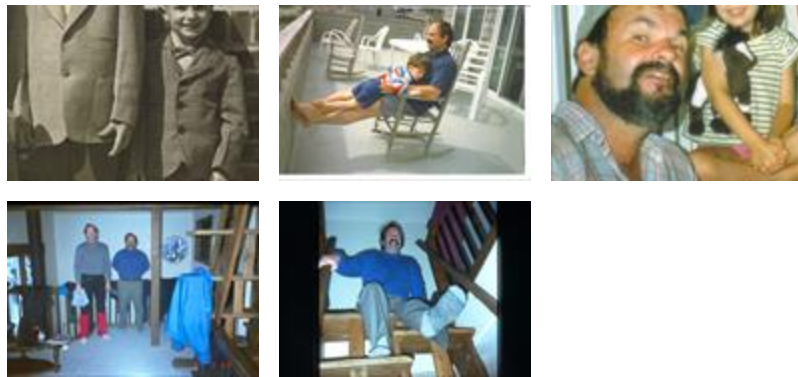


#38 on W&L football squad.

Jeffrey Southmayd - June 23, 2022 at 06:29 PM



“ 71 files added to the album Memories Album



John ODonnell - June 23, 2022 at 12:16 PM

DC

“ Mike was a remarkable man. We were fraternity brothers and football teammates at Washington and Lee University. He was affectionately known as “Willie Woodenhead,” as he hurled his head around the gridiron with seemingly no concern for his ... or your ... body. When others were busy with mostly nothing, he would pack up his heel-used metal detector and head for some battlefield. He was a man of distinction. When I recently asked him what he considered his greatest accomplishment. He replied quickly, “ I was blessed to be able to help with taking care of my Mom.” I love Willie W. and always will.

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**Douglas Chase** - June 23, 2022 at 08:38 AM



“ He was my mentor in Civil War publishing. I will miss him dearly.

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**Butch Holcombe** - June 21, 2022 at 03:12 PM