



Michael Stanley Tooke

MAR 31, 1942 - NOV 16, 2025



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If you want to know what the best of us looks like, I wish you had a chance to meet our Dad.

Michael Stanley Tooke, 83, born in Billings, Montana and last residing in Trinity, Florida, passed away peacefully on November 16, 2025, with his daughter sleeping by his side and with his sons and wife kissing him goodnight. And in the way only he could, he left this world the same way he lived in it — with courage, grace, humility, and love.

Born on March 31, 1942, to Stanley James Tooke and Harriet Lynn Stallwood Tooke, Michael was the oldest of six brothers and spent his life stepping forward for others. He was the most incredible leader, father, Papa, and devoted husband. He was kind and giving and loving, and dedicated to every person he cared about. He was, in the words of his children and brothers, “the strongest man I have ever met.”

It will always strike his family how often people described him the same way throughout his life: strong and direct and brave, and at the very same time gentle and kind and loving. A true “gentle man” and a true gentleman.

He was the steady mountain of his family, the quiet blueprint of integrity, character, and strength. Every part of his children they are most proud of was instilled from him.

Husband, Partner, and Steady Anchor

Michael loved his wife, Francine “Frankie,” deeply and with his whole heart. He called her “his girl,” “his gal,” and he was endlessly proud of her and of the life they built together. His humor, quick wit, and steady presence were often the only things that could calm her worries — a look, a quip, a perfectly timed gentle tease that grounded her instantly.



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For all his military grit, he was hilariously stubborn about food. To Mom's ongoing exasperation, he would have put ketchup on almost anything, and she often told her kids, "Don't tell your father what's in it," just to make sure he'd try something new.

When it came to clothes, though, he was the opposite of stubborn. From the time they met, he more or less let her dress him. Over the years she gently adapted his style to match hers — the strong cowboy, soldier, no-nonsense man dressed in a way that showed off his girl. He thought she was the most beautiful woman in any room, and he wore whatever she picked with pride.

More than anything, he was dedicated to her happiness — not just loving her, but ensuring she had the life, family, and appreciation she deserved. Together they lived a life shaped by service, resilience, and adventure — moving from Washington to Georgia to North Dakota to Germany to New York and finally back to Florida to be closer to her family. For nearly 56 years, they built a partnership of deep devotion and unwavering presence.

He loved her family as his own, and they loved him as theirs. His sister-in-law became his sister, and his in-laws another set of parents. His family can still hear Memere saying, "He's a good one, that Michael Stan."

The Dad Who Showed Up — Every Time

At home, Michael was the dad who stayed up late when homework struggled or procrastination hit, making it all feel like the most important work ever done. He carved pumpkins and decorated for holidays because it delighted his daughter, and he evolved his music tastes just to relate to his kids, moving from Willie Nelson, George Thorogood, and Johnny Cash to R.E.M., Pearl Jam, and Smashing Pumpkins on his daily rides like it was the most natural shift in the world.

And when both of his sons grew into guitarists and musicians, Travis discovered that he had secretly picked up a guitar years earlier — and already knew more than a few chords. In typical Michael fashion, he hadn't said a word about it.

He drove the car with his knees, reached back to squeeze our kneecaps behind the seats just to remind us — and himself — that we were there, and even let Trent drive for the first time at ten. And still, you never felt unsafe with Dad. If he said it would be okay, you knew it would be okay.



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He loved his cars, his sports, his books — especially history — and he checked in often, always telling his children how proud he was, whether the achievement was big or small. He believed in putting in the work, in doing things the right way, and in showing up for the people he loved. He led by example — persistent, humble, and present.

Brother, Friend, and Family Rock

Michael always had a pipe or cigar — a “stogie” — in his mouth, even when his wife finally insisted he chew on them instead of lighting them.

He had a sharp, dry, witty sense of humor — quiet but unforgettable. He could stop a whole room with a single raised eyebrow. He would moo in a crowded line just to break tension, tease any new friend into feeling instantly like family, and jokingly call out “like a turd of hurtles” or “bally bally suck suck” to make his children move just a bit faster.

He was a man of few words, but the words he used always landed. He could deliver a life lesson, a joke, or a correction in five syllables or less. He never needed to raise his voice, but he always commanded the room. He could teach or lead from the front or the back and never needed anyone to see him as the leader — his humility came first.

A single look or quick flick of his finger could straighten a teenager or a soldier faster than any lecture. He was strong enough to break a man if he ever needed to, and gentle enough to wipe away a tear.

He was an incredible skier and a pretty good golfer, and there was hardly a sport he wasn't at least decent at. He was not a dancer, but he never let his wife walk onto a dance floor alone; even if she had to dance around him, he showed up.

Michael was an incredible and deeply loved big brother. It showed in how many times he showed up for his brothers and in how they are showing up for him now. He was always a coach like his dad, even before he ever held an official coaching title. When he finally stepped into that formal role in baseball, it amazed his family because it was probably the one sport he did not really play himself, but he still learned how to coach it and poured it into his youngest son.

He was wicked smart; in his prime he could have won on Jeopardy! and never lost a game of Trivial Pursuit. He loved learning, holding a Bachelor of Arts, an MBA, and a Master of Science



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degree in counseling. But at heart, he was a teacher like his beloved mother. He respected and looked up to his father, even in the moments when he felt he had let him down. He also had a younger stepsister he did not truly connect with until later in life, and he was grateful when he finally did.

Soldier, Hero, and Humble Warrior

Michael lived a life of profound service and deep courage.

He served as a company commander in the 25th Infantry Division in Cu Chi, Vietnam, during Tet 1967–1968, in the center of the Iron Triangle. He was the most decorated Captain in the 6th Army, earning a Silver Star, Purple Heart, Legion of Merit, multiple Bronze Stars, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medals and more medals and stories of bravery than he ever would tell. His family knows many of those stories only because others shared how he saved their lives, both in war and outside of it. Humility defined him.

Teacher, Mentor, Counselor, Coach

After more than 20 years of military service, culminating in leading and teaching cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, Michael built an entire second career. He continued pouring into students as he led the Student Union and Career Center at the University of South Florida, supporting and guiding them there until his retirement at age 70.

He was a soldier, a leader, a counselor, a mentor, a coach, an artist, a writer, a painter — and “jack of all trades” does not even come close.

To his family, “he was our mountain, our hero who always came through and would never fall.”

His Beliefs and How He Carried Them

Michael saw the world both through and over his glasses, always finding beauty in it and believing every one of us had a responsibility to make it better. He believed in people. He believed in doing what was right over what was easy. He believed in using your voice, thinking for yourself, and voting with conscience rather than allegiance.

He did not stand for sides — he stood for values. He taught his children to think deeply, choose wisely, and lead with integrity.



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Family

Michael is preceded in death by his parents, Stanley Tooke and Harriet Stallwood Tooke; and by his brothers Thomas Tooke and Jeffrey Tooke; as well as his parents-in-law, Elaine Ray and Richard Ray.

He is survived by his beloved wife of nearly 56 years, Francine Tooke; his children Travis Tooke, Tara Blythe, and Trent Tooke; his grandchildren Morgan Tooke, Kindred Tooke-Lopez, Knox Blythe, Reese Blythe, and Gray Blythe; his brothers James Tooke, Jonathan Tooke, and Robert Tooke; his stepsister Daphne Tooke; his sister-in-law Denise Cynthia Ray; and a wide circle of family and friends who loved him deeply.

Memorial & Military Honors

A Celebration of Life Memorial with Full Military Honors will be held at: Florida National Cemetery (Bushnell National Cemetery), 6502 SW 102nd Avenue, Bushnell, Florida 33513 on Friday, March 27, 2026 (just days before what would have been his 84th Birthday) at 2:00pm.

In Lieu of Flowers

Please consider donating in Michael's honor to:

- Lewy Body Dementia Association (LBDA) — funds research, supports education, and partners with 26 Research Centers of Excellence. <https://www.lbda.org/donate/>
- Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) — a nonprofit supporting injured veterans. <https://support.woundedwarriorproject.org/>

A Daughter's Final Words

"I was not ready to say goodbye... but the truth is, I never would have been. I am the most blessed person in this world to have been yours. And while I will be okay, I will never be fully whole again — a piece of my heart and soul left with you."

"Old man, take a look at my life, I'm a lot like you were."





Events


Michael Stanley Tooke

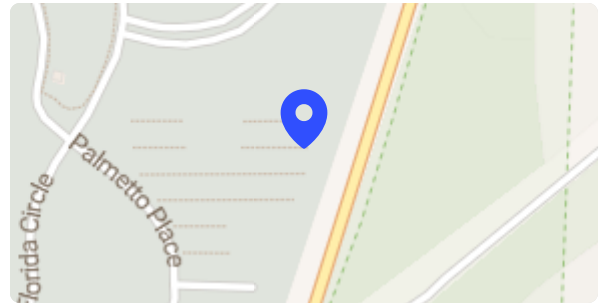
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Committal Service

 **Friday**, March 27, 2026

 2:00 PM ET

 **Florida National Cemetery**
6502 SW 102nd Avenue, Bushnell FL 33513





Tribute Wall

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A

Allyson Cravero lit a candle in honor of Michael.



The other day I was driving and thinking about the past when a memory popped in my head of when I worked at the USF Career Center. I was a USF student from 2006-2010 and from my sophomore year until my senior year, I worked as a receptionist through the work study program at the Career Center. So as I'm driving, I'm thinking about this and immediately think about Mr. Tooke and the lasting impact he had on my life. This was not the first time I have thought of him in the past 20 years, but for some reason this time I felt the need to look him up, hoping to find some information about him and his life since then. With great sadness I came across his obituary and immediately felt devastated that such an amazing man was no longer here. As a young twenty-something year old working as a part-time receptionist while also attending USF as a full-time criminology student, there were so many times I felt lost in what I was doing with my life and my future career. Mr. Tooke must have sensed this because there were so many times he would walk by the front desk and tell me to come chat with him in his office. I recall sitting across from him and he would ask me simple questions about how school was going, or if I had decided what I wanted to do with my degree or how my family was doing (knowing they lived 4 hours away). I can still picture him sitting at his desk, listening intently to me express my fears and anxieties about what I should do or how to accomplish my goals for my future. Mr. Tooke was always so insightful and would give me the best advice and encouragement. On multiple occasions, he would set up meetings for me with some of his colleagues to help me decide how to move forward with my career choice. He even helped get me a full time job after I graduated by reaching out to one of the employers he regularly dealt with so I wouldn't be out of a job once the work study program ended. From there I worked full time while obtaining my masters degree in criminal justice, which then led me to attending the police academy and eventually a career in law enforcement. After 12 years of working in this career, I am now a Special Victims Unit Detective at a sheriffs office. I love what the work I do and can honestly say that if it was not for Mr. Tooke, I never would have ended up in this position. He was truly an amazing man, mentor, supervisor, and human being. He was so kind, patient, caring, helpful, and always pushed me to dream big and to not give up on myself or my goals when at times I almost did. I don't remember the last time I spoke to Mr. Tooke, but I will never forget the words of encouragement he provided or the kindness he showed me. I am so sorry for your loss, but I believe he will always be with all of you and will continue to listen and encourage you through this life... and thank you Mr. Tooke for not giving up on me and encouraging me to follow my dreams.

March 1 at 11:48 PM



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Clarence Harris lit a candle in honor of Michael.

Many thought Michael Tooke was a "go along to get along" kind of guy who always aimed to please anyone and everyone. Not true, Frankie Tooke - he let you think you controlled him, but Michael really was a very sneaky, most humble, very deliberate master control freak! He always made a person feel very important, while skillfully getting you to do what he wanted you to do - to be what he wanted you to be - to always choose the harder right rather than the easier wrong - to become a better, happier person. Well done, Michael Tooke! I was always amazed watching The Master working His Magic. Few men care enough for family, friends, and people in general to work as hard and long as you did just to try and make everyone's life better, and without any fanfare or personal aggrandizement or public boasting - I think my friend, Michael, was very Christ-Like; however, with a pipe or a cigar always at hand. God Bless. Auby Harris, B-1, West Point, Class of 1974



November 25 at 1:52 PM



Trinity Memorial Gardens Funeral Home And Cemetery shared an album called **Memories Album.**



November 24 at 9:42 PM



Media

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Trinity Memorial Gardens Funeral Home And Cemetery shared 9 photos November 24 at 9:42 PM to the **Memories Album** album.

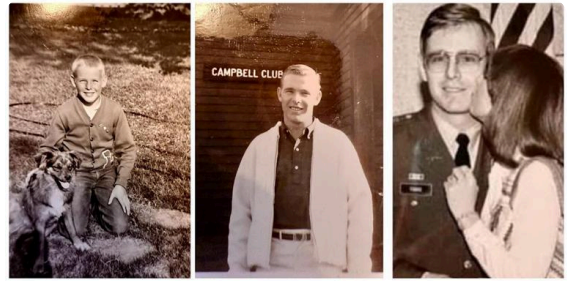




Media

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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Michael by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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