



## John Kelly Rowland

August 10, 1948 - April 9, 2020

John Kelly Rowland, 71, passed away peacefully in his home, surrounded by his loving family, on Holy Thursday, April 9, 2020.

John was born in Princeton West Virginia to Clifford Kelly and Margaret Boyce Rowland. He grew up in Dickinson County, VA, attending Clintwood High School before graduating from Marion High School in Marion, VA, in 1966. As a young man, John and was an accomplished athlete — excelling in football and baseball.

In 1966, John matriculated at the University of Virginia at Wise, where he soon met Phyllis Blankenship, his future wife of 50 years. They were engaged to be married, and not long after John withdrew from his studies, to the great consternation of his professors, so that he could volunteer to serve in the Vietnam Conflict.

John and Phyllis eloped, just the two of them. They would later renew their lifelong commitment by being bound in the Catholic sacrament of holy matrimony at Sacred Heart Church, their church home for 31 years, in 2005.

John enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served his country in Vietnam. He completed his tour of duty while serving with VMA(AW)-225, Marine All-Weather Attack Squadron, "Vikings," at Da Nang Air Base,

Vietnam.

On his return to the United States, John attended the Virginia State Police Academy in Richmond and was sworn in as a Trooper in the graduating class of 1972. John — J.K., or 968 — as he was known to his peers on the State Police, was assigned to Stafford County. His friends and colleagues recall John's mentorship, leadership, and gallantry as hallmarks of his service in uniform.

In 1985, John was promoted to investigator with the Virginia State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Division 7. John and Phyllis and their two young sons moved to mid-county Prince William. While working on some of the most high profile and challenging homicide cases in the greater Washington area, Special Agent Rowland earned a reputation for disciplined, highly effective police work, and his unwavering calm under pressure.

John retired from the State Police as a Senior Special Agent in 2005. In private life took great joy in his faith and was greatly loved by many in the Sacred Heart Church community. Through his long illness, many of us were inspired and moved by the trust and devoted faith he placed in Jesus. John was a great admirer of Sister Faustina's writings on the Divine Mercy of Jesus, and he loved nothing more than spending time in fraternal fellowship and prayer with his dear friends and ministers from Sacred Heart.

John is survived by his loving wife of 50 years, Phyllis B. Rowland — who loved and cared for him, remaining by his side until he went home to the Lord — by his two sons, Robert Michael Rowland and John David Rowland, Sgt. Washington Metropolitan Police Department, his beloved daughter in law Stella Rowland, and two grandchildren Colton John Rowland and Eli William Rowland. John has three sisters, Elizabeth Rowland, Ruth Able, and Mary. In addition to his own siblings, John loved Phyllis' sisters and his brothers-in-law

-- and all his many nieces and nephews -- tremendously. He often thanked God for the abiding faith and generosity, good humor, and loyalty of the extended Rowland and Blankenship families, counting those relations among his greatest blessings.

Due to the ongoing public health emergency, John will be remembered at a private family mass on Thursday April, 16, 2020. It is the hope of the family that circumstances will permit a larger memorial and gathering of John's many friends, relatives, and loved ones later in the year.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating, "In memory of Senior Special Agent John Rowland," to:

The Virginia State Police Emergency Relief Fund  
Virginia State Police Association  
6944 Forest Hill Ave., Richmond, VA 23225 — [www.vspa.org](http://www.vspa.org)

Robert Rowland

# Tribute Wall

BW

“ *First, we were so thankful to join the family today to celebrate JKs life at his beautiful church, Sacred Heart.  
Our heartfelt sympathies to all of you.*

*Now for a memory or two.....*

*My wife and I plus our two dogs were fishing near Bull Run. JK happened by and called over to us that he thought it was Noah's Ark. He reminded me of this quite often at the office.*

*On another occasion, he didn't want Phylis to know he ordered a new fishing rod, so he had UPS deliver it to Tom Mutton. However, Tom was on the same delivery route and the UPS man saw JKs name and delivered it to JKs house anyway.*

*My wife concocted a song to the tune of the old Rawhide series theme song, after I told her that JK lost several fish and was not happy.*

*Rowland, Rowland, Rowland  
JK keeps on Rollin, Rollin out  
Those fishing lines.*

*The fish they keep together  
In all kinds of weather,  
Showin JK their behinds.*

*A great guy and friend.*

*Bill Wagner*

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**bill wagner** - April 16, 2020 at 06:08 PM

PR

*John had the fishing rods and reels delivered to my brother in law, Tom Mutton. The UPS driver delivered them to another John Rowland who just happened to live a few doors up the street. This John Rowland called me and said he thought he had my husband's fishing gear. So funny, John was busted.*

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**Phyl Rowland** - April 18, 2020 at 08:09 PM

DR

“ I first met John after marrying his sister Elizabeth. My time with John was limited to family visits in Marion, Fredericksburg and .Manassas. I have good memories of times spent with John back when he was feeling well. Going to Hungary Mother Lake, fishing the Potomac and Lake Anna.. Funny thing is that I also have good memories of visiting John after he became ill. Even when he was bedridden his good nature and positive attitude came through. Even if he felt poorly he went out of his way to make you feel good. I know he took great comfort from his faith. RIP

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**david roth** - April 16, 2020 at 12:44 PM

RA

“ John never used me as a target or made me guess a tune. What he did do (as the story goes). When he found out I had been born, he left school. went home and got the silver dollar our grandpa had given him. He then went to the bank and opened a shavings account for me. That's the kind of big brother he was to me. Next to our dad he was and always will be a bigger than life true hero. I love you big brother!

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**Ruth Rowland Able** - April 16, 2020 at 11:17 AM

MM

“ My brother too. You never used me for target practice but I did have to sit and listen to your trombone practice. You played "a tune" and I had to identify the song. Most all sounded the same-- pomp, pomp, pomp...I "borrowed" your music book and memorized the titles to each song in the book so I could guess and finally escape.

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**Mary Mcglothlin** - April 16, 2020 at 10:15 AM

BW

“ I first met J. K. in February 1975 when I started to work as a secretary at Area 11 in Independent Hill. He was always very nice and polite to me. We lost contact in 1980 when VSP sent Stafford troopers to the office in Fredericksburg, but those five years of working with J. K. left a last impression and he always remained one of my favorite troopers. My sympathy to all of his family,  
*Barbara Wagner*

Barbara Wagner - April 16, 2020 at 10:09 AM

DA

“ It was truly and honor to have known JK as a fellow officer and most of all...friend. Our most heartfelt sympathy to the Rowland family and please know that we will keep all of you in our prayers and rosary intentions.

*Danny and Dory Argiro*

D Argiro - April 16, 2020 at 08:21 AM

LI

“ My brother. You asked me to sit on a garbage can to hold it steady while you shot your new BB gun at the target. Looking up to you and having full trust in your aim, I did that. And you didn't hit me. Just before you left college at wise, va you said to me ..” just don't do anything you don't want to “. I've followed that advice most of my life. I miss you.

libs - April 15, 2020 at 10:41 PM



Love you —

Rob Rowland - April 29, 2020 at 01:28 PM

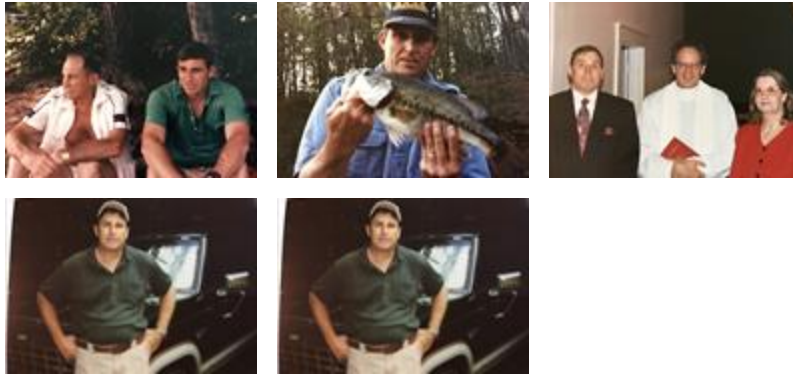
JM

“ I had the honor of meeting John briefly & sharing a few war stories ( we were both Vietnam Veterans serving in country @ the same time ) He was a true gentleman & I have had the honor of hearing many wonderful stories of his life.I heard these many stories from his sister Mary & feel privileged to have met him.I married Mary 2 years ago & we have a wonderful life together He will be missed by all.  
*James Mcglathlin*

james mcglathlin - April 15, 2020 at 05:50 PM

JR

“ 23 files added to the album Memories Album



John Rowland - April 15, 2020 at 05:07 PM

RC

*It has been 55 years since we shared being brother's in arms in the usmc, pretty much joined at the hipp for 4 years, I will dearly miss John, even though we reconnected once in the last 50 years, rest in peace John, Semper Fidelis my brother*

Robert D chambers - September 30, 2022 at 06:15 AM

PH

*I am happy and surprised to see your comment on John's tribute wall. Hope you are happy and doing well. Much love and good memories from our time in NC. Phyl*

Phyl - October 17, 2022 at 11:53 PM

TR

*“ I was blessed to have worked with JK as a Special Agent and learn from his years of experience. He was always happy to help me, share advice and teach me the best way to conduct an investigation. When he started a sentence with, "Now, young lady..." I knew he was about to share something important and I needed to pay attention. He was always a gentleman and a friend. My heartfelt condolences to Phyllis and the rest of the family. God has another great man in Heaven now!*

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**Trudy** - April 15, 2020 at 05:03 PM



*“ Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of John Kelly Rowland.*



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April 15, 2020 at 04:33 PM

SA

*“ Our deepest condolences to the entire Rowland family. John and Stella are family to us, and we feel your sadness. We wish you peace and love now and always. Love, the Arnolds*

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**Sarah & Jason Arnold** - April 15, 2020 at 01:31 PM