



## Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III

August 12, 1956 - December 15, 2023

We are devastated to announce the passing of Jacob Nathaniel Shepherd III, a beloved husband, father, brother, son and community leader. Jake left us unexpectedly on December 15, 2023 after a brief illness, joining his cherished wife Phyllis who departed this world on September 6, 2023.

While it's no surprise that Jake and Phyllis refused to spend much time apart, his family and friends are shattered by their loss. Jake was born the much-celebrated firstborn of the late Jacob Nathaniel Shepherd, Jr. and Joann Learu Yates Shepherd on August 12, 1956 in Luray, VA. He attended school in Greensboro and then Mount Airy, NC, where he enjoyed many happy days in the Knollwood Drive neighborhood and playing golf at Mount Airy Country Club. In 1972, the Shepherd family moved to the island nation of Malta where Jake finished high school at the Royal University of Malta, played league basketball, and trained alongside the Maltese Olympic team. In 1974 he made his way to North Carolina State University where he neglected his studies while playing golf for the Wolfpack. During his college years, he studied under Ireland's current President and played golf at the University College Galway while the family lived in Ireland, later pointedly refusing to learn any French when the family moved to Brussels, Belgium. In 1979, he proved his theory that "they don't print your grades on your diploma" when he graduated from NCSU with a political science degree. He used his degree immediately, working after college for the Congressional Club and Senator Jesse Helms.

Following his short political career, Jake qualified for a PGA card after successful amateur play in the US Amateur, Eastern Amateur and the North & South Championship tournaments. When private flying lessons inspired him to follow in the footsteps of his WW2 pilot father, he joined the US Air Force. He helped win the Cold War with his service, including long stretches on "Victor Alert," the highest peacetime ready-status for nuclear-armed combatants while piloting his F-111 supersonic fighter bomber in the 522nd Tactical Fighter Squadron. With that plane, he had the honor of participating in the elite US Air Force "Red Flag" combat exercise. He was later selected to fly the most celebrated and secretive aircraft in the Air Force, the F-117 Stealth Fighter, with the 49th Fighter Wing. In addition, he became fluent(ish) in German as an exchange officer flying the Tornado with the German Luftwaffe. During his Air Force career, he oversaw gruesome crash investigations and flew his own Stealth Fighter low and slow back to base when his canopy came off over Iraq's no-fly zone. After leaving the Air Force, he became a successful Delta pilot, where he volunteered to be a Federal Flight Deck Officer after 9/11. He enjoyed almost 25 years carrying passengers across the country and using the opportunity to visit family and research his many interests and obsessions.

While stationed at Royal Air Force Lakenheath in England, Jake met his beautiful wife Phyllis. They were married in Las Vegas, NV in 1987 and enjoyed 36 years of joyful life together. Their beloved son, Jacob Nathaniel Shepherd IV ("James") was born in Monterey, CA in 1989. Life took their little family to Clovis, NM, Bonn, Germany, and Alamogordo, NM before moving them to Newnan, GA in 1998. Jake, Phyllis and James built a busy and happy life in Newnan through involvement in their church, neighborhood, and the Newnan community. When Phyllis was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2018, Jake became her champion and caregiver.

Jake made the best of his rare free time with too many research projects and

interests to count. He authored the book King Kong, Tara and Mayberry - The History of the 40 Acres Backlot about the RKO studio lot and shared his research with many other Hollywood enthusiasts. He was an expert on barbecue, the Bay of Pigs, the assassination of JFK, Jesus Christ's apocryphal visits to England, and Stoicism. He enjoyed gardening, masonry and woodworking projects of dubious structural integrity, and making Neapolitan-style pizza. He loved God, his family, history, Andy Griffith, California surf music, ultimate frisbee, and Newnan First United Methodist Church.

Jake was preceded in death by his parents, loving aunts and uncles, and his wife Phyllis. He is survived by his adoring son James of Newnan, GA, and his heartbroken siblings Susan Shepherd Sharp of Durham, NC; Andrew Lewis Shepherd, of Washington, DC; Joann Shepherd Bristol of Durham, NC; Rebecca Shepherd Opitz of Charlottesville, VA; John Hilary Shepherd of Los Angeles, CA; and Mary Mildred Christine Shepherd of Durham, NC, as well as their spouses, children, and grandchildren. He leaves behind countless loving cousins, neighbors, and friends across the globe, including best friends Jane and Adrian Oliver and their family.

The memorial service will be at Newnan First United Methodist Church in Newnan, GA on Saturday, January 6 at 2 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Newnan First United Methodist Church in Jake's memory.

Condolences may be expressed to the family online at [www.mckoon.com](http://www.mckoon.com).

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory 770-253-4580

# Cemetery Details

## McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory

38 Jackson Street  
Newnan, GA 30263  
care@mckoon.com  
<http://www.mckoon.com>

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

JAN 6. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Newnan First United Methodist Church  
33 Greenville Street  
Newnan, GA 30263

# Tribute Wall

IP

“ Hi I have signed picture of Jake’s plane he flew sorry to hear of his passing  
Kind regards  
Ian pas Sheffield england

ian pass - May 13, 2024 at 12:47 PM

AS

“ Andrew S. planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III.

Andrew S. - January 09, 2024 at 03:53 PM

AJ

“ My family and I are such huge fans of Jake and are devastated for the loss to James and the greater Shepherd family. He was a great man that lived a life of true adventure and service ❤️

Archie J - January 06, 2024 at 01:47 PM



“ Sacred Duty Spray was purchased for the family of Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III.



January 05, 2024 at 09:49 AM

SL

“ Susan's teammates at LINQ. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III.

Susan's teammates at LINQ. - January 05, 2024 at 09:49 AM

RB

“ Praying for family.



Rev BettyJean Bowers - January 05, 2024 at 09:31 AM

GP

“ Gerrie Petty lit a candle in memory of Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III



Gerrie Petty - January 04, 2024 at 06:50 PM

TF

“ The Japaridze Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III.

The Japaridze Family - January 04, 2024 at 05:52 PM



“ *Fairest of All* was purchased for the family of  
Jacob "Jake" Shepherd, III.



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January 04, 2024 at 05:52 PM