



## 1SGT (Ret) Saipan Taulago Te'o

April 23, 1955 - March 7, 2026

Saipan Taulago Te'o, son of the late Taulago Te'o and Sauso'o (Ta'a) Te'o, was born on April 23, 1955, in Utulei, American Samoa. He spent his childhood in Utulei until the age of 14, when he relocated to Carson, California. After moving, Saipan attended Carson High School and graduated from there.

At the age of 17, Saipan joined the United States Army, where he served a total of 24 years faithfully until his retirement. Throughout his military career, he was stationed at various posts, eventually arriving at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in 1994. After retiring in 1998, Saipan chose to stay in the area. He achieved the rank of First Sergeant and was honored with multiple awards and commendations. These included the Meritorious Service Medal (3rd Award), Army Commendation Medal (4th Award), Army Achievement Medal (6th Award), Army Superior Unit Award (2nd Award), Army Good Conduct Medal (7th Award), Army of Occupation Medal, National Defense Service Medal (2nd Award), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Noncommissioned Officer's Professional Development Ribbon with Numeral 3, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (4th Award), Expert Marksmanship Qualification Badge with Rifle Bar, Senior Parachutist Badge, Drill Sergeant Identification Badge, and French Forces Commando Badge. After his retirement, Saipan became a member of the Disabled American Veterans.

On September 23, 1982, Saipan married Dareen Lee Rush in Berlin, Germany. Together, they enjoyed more than 43 years of marriage and were blessed with three children: Jason, Andrea and Manu.

Following his retirement from the military, Saipan was able to pursue his hobbies and enjoy the activities he loved. He appreciated spending time outdoors, whether hunting, fishing, or golfing. Above all, his family—especially his grandchildren—were his pride and joy, and he cherished family gatherings and large BBQs, treasuring every moment spent together.

Saipan passed away on Saturday, March 7, 2026, at the University of Missouri Hospital in Columbia, Missouri, at the age of 70. He will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by all who knew and loved him.

Saipan is survived by his wife, Dareen Lee Te'o; his children, Andrea Te'o-Gillen (Christopher Gillen) of Waynesville, MO, and Manu Te'o (Lexie) of New Bloomfield, MO; and five grandchildren: Savannah Te'o, Lualani Carter, Fuaau To'a Te'o-Gillen, Leilee Te'o, Manu Te'o Jr. He also leaves behind many brothers, sisters, other relatives, and friends.

In addition to his parents, Saipan was preceded in death by his son Jason, as well as several brothers and sisters.

Even though he is gone from our sight, Saipan's commitment to his country and his family will live on in our hearts forever.

Funeral services were held at 10:00 a.m. Friday, March 20, 2026 in the Memorial Chapels and Crematory of Waynesville / St. Robert with Chaplain (MAJ) Benjamin Reed officiating. Serving as escorts were the United States Army. Burial with military honors followed in the Missouri Veterans Cemetery

of Waynesville, Missouri with military honors being provided by the United States Army of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Services were under the care and direction of Memorial Chapels and Crematory of Waynesville / St. Robert.

Memorial contributions may be made in memory of Saipan Te'o and may be left at Memorial Chapels and Crematory of Waynesville / St. Robert.

# Cemetery Details

## Missouri Veterans Cemetery - Fort Leonard Wood

25350 Hwy H  
Waynesville, MO 65583

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR 20. 9:00 AM.

Memorial Chapels And Crematory Of Waynesville / St. Robert

## Funeral Service

MAR 20. 10:00 AM.

Memorial Chapels And Crematory Of Waynesville / St. Robert

# Tribute Wall



“ 4 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



---

**Memorial Chapels and Crematory** - March 19 at 10:23 AM



“ 105 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



---

**Memorial Chapels and Crematory** - March 18 at 04:53 PM

“ Pops/Unc Saipan Te’o,

*Where do I even begin?*

*I was just a student at Wentworth Military Academy with no immediate family close by. During those Spring Breaks, when many of us had nowhere to go, you and the entire Te’o family opened your home to me and several other students. You welcomed us in without hesitation and made us feel like we were your own kids.*

*Pops, you never failed to make us feel like we belonged. Your smile could warm any room, and your heart was one of the kindest I’ve ever known. The way you cared for us, looked after us, and treated us as your own will never be forgotten.*

*Those lake trips with you are memories I will forever hold close. The love you poured into us every single time we were around you meant more than you probably ever realized.*

*I still remember the first time I ever got on a motorcycle. I was terrified. You saw the fear all over my face, but you calmly told me it would be okay. I got on the back of Dre’s bike and we rode out. We ended up wrecking the bike because I kept panicking, and I was sure you were about to tear me a new one. But instead, not a single harsh word came from you. All you asked was, “Are you girls okay?”*

*That moment has stayed with me all these years.*

*Pops, thank you for everything. Thank you for your patience, your love, and for never giving up on us. You planted a seed in me that I carry to this day—to look out for others the same way you looked out for us.*

*Now, as I serve and mentor young Samoan soldiers coming up behind me, I try to pour into them the same way you poured into us.*

*Your impact will live on through all of us.*

*With love and gratitude, always.*

*Your favorite lol*

*Dee Selesitino-Clark*

---

**Desara Selesitino** - March 15 at 01:48 AM



“ *May the love of God surround you and your family during this difficult time,*

*May you come to know that the love of God is with you always,*

*May your memories of Saipan Taulago Te'o, give you peace, comfort and strength...*

*Rest now in the arms of our Lord your mission on earth is complete.*

*I thank you for your service to our Country and my Freedom.*

*You will not be forgotten...*

*My thoughts*

*and prayers to the family of ....*

*US Army Veteran, Saipan Taulago Te'o, is “A True American Hero”  
God Bless†*

*† Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life  
for his friends. John 15:13 †*

---

**Cheryl Skinner, Tri-state Military Museum** - March 13 at 08:44 AM

AP

“ *I remember how he loved to help and he was so reasonable, he was a very understanding man, and a encouragement to others, wherever he went to, he always had a smile on his face*

---

**Aiden Proctor** - March 12 at 07:22 PM