



John Eugene Popovich Jr.

April 20, 1932 - July 24, 2025

John Eugene Popovich, Jr., 93, Cary, North Carolina, passed away peacefully on July 24, 2025, with his family by his side. Born on April 20, 1932, to John Eugene Popovich and Agnes Genieve (Markovich) Popovich, John lived a life marked by extensive travel throughout the world, hard work, a tremendous sense of humor and devotion to his family.

John was married to his beloved wife, Mafalda “Mafi” Haydee Popovich for 57 years. Their enduring partnership was a testament to his devotion and love. He is survived by his wife, son, Mark Conrad Popovich (LuAnn), daughter, Nicole Marie Popovich (Daniel), grandson, Alexander Conrad Popovich, granddaughters’, Caitlyn Brianna Bunch (Tyler), Camryn Jaye Delosreyes (Alexia), great grandsons, Ryder and Bryer Bunch, sister, Jane Ortiz, nephew, Jason Ortiz.

John’s long career began when he enlisted in the United States Army in 1952, at the height of the Korean War and attended the Army Language School in Monterey, California, where he studied the Russian language for 46 weeks. He subsequently spent the next two years in Japan. Upon his return to the U.S., John attained a Bachelor of Science in History from the University of San Francisco in 1958.

Following his military service, John began his work for the U.S. Agency for

International Development (USAID) until his retirement in 1993. He worked in various administrative positions, including as a General Services Officer, a Field Support Officer, and an Executive Officer. He concluded his career as an Assistant Inspector General for Resource Management in the Office of the Inspector General and retired with the rank of Minister Counselor in Senior Foreign Service. During his time with USAID, John had foreign assignments that took him and his family to the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Yemen, Egypt and Panama.

A funeral service will be held on Friday, August 1, 2025, at 10:30 AM at Wake Funeral and Cremation Services, 7002 Green Hope School Rd, Cary, North Carolina 27519 and is open to all wish to pay their respects. A private burial will follow. A celebration of life event will be held at Waltonwood Senior Living at a later time.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations in John's name be sent to Saint Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church in Apex, North Carolina.

Cemetery Details

Salisbury National Cemetery

501 Statesville Blvd
Salisbury, NC 28144

Previous Events

Funeral Service

AUG 1. 10:30 AM (ET)

Wake Memorial Park Mausoleum
7002 Green Hope School Road
Cary, NC 27519

Tribute Wall

“ *Memory for John Popovich*

Elizabeth and I were saddened to receive the phone call from Mafi and Nicole letting us know of John’s passing, but together with the sadness there comes a myriad of positive thoughts about the unique warmth and friendship that John always seemed to share.

I remember the first time I met John. It was some 30 years ago when Mafi and I were working together to help steer the construction of the new World Bank Headquarters in Washington DC. Due to the problems that we had inherited and the need to straighten and strengthen the organization there was a need to work somewhat longer hours. One day Mafi simply advised me that her husband wanted to see me when he came to collect her.

My brain immediately flew to thoughts that John was going to give me a hard time for some of the long hours – or maybe he thought I wasn’t treating Mafi fairly, so it was with some trepidation that I waited for the arrival of this unknown complainant.

As it happened there was nothing to worry about. John came in with that cheeky smile, that we have all learned to love, and simply said “Thank you” - apparently John had been bombarded every night by Mafi complaining and moaning about unfairness or selfishness while working in other sections and departments of the Bank but, as he explained, since working in this new position she had returned each night with a smile and only positive comments. That’s when I was welcomed into the Popovich world and the warmth of John’s personality.

Then my wife, Elizabeth, joined the foursome and it was John and Mafi who introduced us to the wonderfully challenging game of Mexican Train while visiting us on Hilton Head Island. Now we have single handedly swamped all our UK friends and relatives with the delight of the game - thanks John.

John always had that quiet chuckle and smile as he recounted some story or experience, but this may not have been exercised at all times particularly if someone messed with his Martini. One day we were at a restaurant, overlooking the water, and in those days, South Carolina made their cocktails using miniature bottles of liquor. The waiter arrived with a pathetic offering of a 3-ounce Martini. John took one look and didn't hesitate in saying "You call that an "expletive" drink" - a man of strong values but immense sense of humor.

While on a boat we chartered for the afternoon, I was conscious of both Mafi and John's, shall we say, more advance years and possible fragility so I was driving the boat gently and slowly to avoid too much buffeting from the waves until both of these intrepid explorers questioned tactfully "Can't this boat go any faster?" So, I opened her up to be greeted with big smiles from them both.

John you will be sadly missed but both Elizabeth and I feel honored to have had the opportunity to share and enjoy special time with the incredible humorous, highly principled, and fascinating man that you, John, always were.

John has created lasting memories for many people and has led a life of excitement and challenges. Although he will be missed the memories of his stories and experiences will go on forever. We just hope that your heavenly Martinis are up to your exacting standards.

Peter - July 30, 2025 at 10:11 PM

NP

“ To my silly, funny, wonderful Daddy,
I will never be able to express how much you will be missed. I can't
imagine the world without you in it.

Love,
Nikki



Nicole Popovich - July 29, 2025 at 04:20 PM



“ Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the
family of John Eugene Popovich Jr..



July 29, 2025 at 03:09 PM



“ A [Memorial
Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of John Eugene Popovich Jr..

July 29, 2025 at 02:57 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family
of John Eugene Popovich Jr..



July 29, 2025 at 02:57 PM