



Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.)

July 1, 1941 - March 6, 2025

With a heavy heart we announce the passing of Captain Joel Escamilla age 83, a proud Texan and Navy Veteran who passed away in San Antonio, TX on Thursday, March 6, 2025.

Joel Escamilla was born in Mission, Texas on July 1, 1941. He was the son of a hard-working carpenter and mother who dedicated her professional life as a Nurse. At an early age with his mother Aurora's guidance, an affinity for science, and helping others was instilled upon him. His aspirations to better himself were the primary catalyst to enlist in the US Navy. He often dreamed of leaving South Texas to see the world. With the aid of the Navy, he was able to receive an education and obtain his PhD in Microbiology, eventually using his intellectual proficiencies to rise to become commissioned as an Officer in the US Navy. For close to 30 years, he experienced a meteoric ascension in his career, as a world expert on infectious diseases. Focusing on microbiology, he traveled the world assisting countless people with his expertise. Included in his incredible endeavors, he helped open 2 research laboratories in Manila, Philippines, and Lima, Peru. These laboratories pioneered groundbreaking work that was crucial in the assistance of countless citizens across the globe.

His travels were extensive, bordering on legendary. His field work took him to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, Chile, Italy, and Argentina to name just a few. Once he circumnavigated the continent of South America aboard a naval vessel and crossed the equator, where he reached the proximity off the continent of Antarctica.

His brightest moment of his illustrious career was his participation in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. He commanded a Navy Forward Lab and arrived with the US coalition on the front line and was able to witness the very day of Kuwait's liberation.

Aside from his career, he was a fervent family man. He demanded that family members push themselves in search of truth and intelligence. One of his favorite quotes came from Socrates that stated, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

For over 8 decades, he brought joy and inspiration to countless family members, friends, brothers and sisters of the Methodist church, and other social and civic organizations. Though disease ravaged his later years, he still managed to inspire all of us to better ourselves through years of encouragement. His life was a mosaic portrait of a man who cherished honor and truth.

He is preceded in death by his beloved sister, Rebecca Vela; his brothers, Patricio Escamilla and Israel Escamilla.

He is survived by his wife, Maria Sylvia Escamilla; his children, Belinda Mercado and husband, Steven, Joel Escamilla, Jr. and wife, Christine and

Samuel Escamilla; grandchildren, Adriana and Steven Andreas Mercado, Joel “Tre” Escamilla, III and Andre Phillip Escamilla; his brothers, Noe Escamilla, José Escamilla; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Visitation will begin at 6:00 P.M. followed by the Service at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, March 18, 2025 at Mission Park Funeral Chapels North, 3401 Cherry Ridge Drive. The Graveside Service with Military Honors will begin at 10:45 A.M. on Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, 1520 Harry Wurzbach Road.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 18. 6:00 PM (CT)

Mission Park Funeral Chapels Cherry Ridge
3401 Cherry Ridge Dr
San Antonio, TX 78230
(210) 349-1414
<https://www.missionparks.com/>

Service

MAR 18. 7:00 PM (CT)

Mission Park Funeral Chapels Cherry Ridge
3401 Cherry Ridge Dr
San Antonio, TX 78230
(210) 349-1414
<https://www.missionparks.com/>

Graveside Service with Full Military Honors

MAR 19. 10:45 AM (CT)

Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery
1520 Harry Wurzbach
San Antonio, TX 78209

Tribute Wall



“ *Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemeteries created a Tribute Video in memory of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.)*



Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemetery - March 17, 2025 at 02:43 PM

JE

Wow! What a legacy, to a veteran from a veteran I salute you tio, I am honored to have shared your name Joel Escamilla.

Joel Escamilla - March 17, 2025 at 05:38 PM

GR

God give you eternal rest my Brother

Greg Rometo - March 17, 2025 at 06:49 PM

LO

An amazing man! Rest in peace.

Leanne Owen - March 19, 2025 at 01:24 PM

MB

Dr. Escamilla former NAMRID OIC, rest in peace

Monica Barrera - April 09, 2025 at 02:31 PM

TP

“ Joel taught me how to write short, concise, declarative sentences. His mentorship during my stay at NEPMU-5 led me to a terrific academic career. He is the one who got me started as a scientific writer. He helped me author my earliest papers and his encouragement was instrumental to my academic development. Thank you, Joel.
Thomas J. Papadimos, CAPT, MC, USNR, retired.

Thomas J. Papadimos - June 07 at 02:31 PM

SR

“ Shawn & Anjali Ragbir purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Shawn & Anjali Ragbir - March 18, 2025 at 08:53 AM

RE

“ Rolando & Marie Escamilla purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Rolando & Marie Escamilla - March 17, 2025 at 06:19 PM

GL

“ Gary & Mary Long purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Gary & Mary Long - March 17, 2025 at 01:33 PM

FM

“ From Humberto, Elizabeth, Cynthia & Mom purchased the Care and Compassion Spray for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



From Humberto, Elizabeth, Cynthia & Mom - March 16, 2025 at 09:13 PM

SJ

“ Saleh and Laura Jaafar purchased the Divine Light for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Saleh and Laura Jaafar - March 15, 2025 at 04:22 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



March 13, 2025 at 04:37 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



March 13, 2025 at 02:00 PM

SF

“ Steve and Lester Tullos and families purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Steve and Lester Tullos and families - March 13, 2025 at 11:27 AM

FE

“ From Joaquin and Anabel Escamilla purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



From Joaquin and Anabel Escamilla - March 12, 2025 at 10:23 PM

JM

“ Joe, Joel, Linda, & Marylou purchased the Serenity Wreath for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Joe, Joel, Linda, & Marylou - March 12, 2025 at 04:31 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



March 12, 2025 at 01:08 PM

JA

“ Julie , Greg & Julie Ann purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Julie , Greg & Julie Ann - March 12, 2025 at 11:58 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



March 12, 2025 at 11:55 AM

MC

“ Mygrant Glass Company purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Captain Joel Escamilla, US Navy (Ret.).



Mygrant Glass Company - March 10, 2025 at 11:14 AM