Sheriff Gary Lee Lay (1946-2026)

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Gary was born on September 30, 1946 in Covington to Fred and Laura May (Tupman) Lay. He attended Holmes High School, played basketball, and graduated in 1964After High School, Gary joined the United States Naval Reserve in 1966, during the Vietnam War.



He completed basic training at the Naval Training Center in Great Lakes, Illinois, and served as an Aviation Ordinance Airman on the Essex Class aircraft carrier U.S.S. Ticonderoga (CVA-14). Aviation Ordinance Airman 1st Class was honorably discharged in 1971.

Gary then went to work as a salesman for Pepsi Cola, and later for Dennert Distributing.

Gary joined the Kenton County Sheriff’s Office as a Deputy Sheriff about 1985. By 1998, he was appointed Sheriff and ran for election in November. He barely lost, garnering over 48% of the vote. Sheriff Gary served his country and county at least 18 years.

Sheriff Lay was an active member of VFW Post 8483, American Legion Post 348, and the Fraternal Order of Police.

Sheriff Lay died peacefully, surrounded by family, in DeForest, Wisconsin on May 17, 2026 at the age of 79.

Sheriff Lay is survived by his wife of 44 years, Patricia “Pat” (Dorning) Lay; children, Steven Michael Lay, Christina Ann (George) Eten, and Kelly Lynn (John) Burley; grandchildren, Brooke (Dustin), Bryan (Phoebe), Nicholas, Tyler, Lauren, Maxwell, and Alexander; and six great-grandchildren.

A visitation will be held on Saturday, July 18, 2026, from 10 to 11 a.m. at Ryan Funeral Home at 2418 N. Sherman Avenue in Madison, Wisconsin. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m.

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