

Damien Annuschat

Sept 2, 2016 Courtesy of the *Cowley Courier Traveler*



Damien Michael Annuschat, 32, of Corona, Calif., passed away at his home surrounded by his family and friends on Aug. 31, 2016.

A Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Holy Name Catholic Church, 412 E. Eighth Ave., in Winfield. Burial with military honors will follow at St. Mary's Cemetery in Winfield.

The Rosary will be prayed at the church at 7 p.m. Monday.

In lieu of flowers, please make memorial contributions to the Winfield USD 465 Foundation in the name of Damien Annuschat, where a scholarship for Winfield High School graduates who want to be Jayhawks will be created. Memorials may be left in care of Shelley Family Funeral Home of Winfield.

Damien was born on Sept. 17, 1983, in Wichita, to James and Mary (Bergkamp) Annuschat. Damien spent most of his childhood with his younger brother Dominic in Winfield. While attending Winfield High School, he excelled academically and athletically in football, wrestling, baseball and track, placing at state in both wrestling and track.

After graduation, Damien attended Missouri Southern (now Missouri Southern State University) in Joplin on a football and track scholarship. After one year of playing football, Damien transferred to where his heart truly belonged: the University of Kansas. Damien graduated with a bachelor of general studies in psychology and (one credit short of) a minor in history in 2006.

Immediately following graduation from KU, Damien enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and went to boot camp in Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. Shortly thereafter he attended Officer Candidate School, The Basic School and Infantry Officer Course in Quantico, Va., earning his officer's commission in the spring of 2007 and becoming the only person in history to willingly complete two boot camps within a six-month period.

During this time, Damien finally married his best friend and high school sweetheart, Katherine “Katy” Humpert, on Dec. 29, 2007.

Damien’s first duty station as an infantry officer was with 1st Battalion, 4th Marines at Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he served as a platoon commander in Charlie Company. Before his first deployment to Fallujah, Iraq, Damien was diagnosed with testicular cancer and missed deploying with his Marines while receiving treatment. True to his stubborn and determined personality, less than five months later, Damien rejoined his Marines in Iraq and finished the deployment as their platoon commander.

Damien then became Weapons Platoon Commander in Charlie Company for his next deployment with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard the USS Peleliu, where he was able to travel extensively throughout the South Pacific and Indian oceans. Damien’s second duty station was in Twentynine Palms, Calif., where he worked tirelessly to train Marines on the verge of deployment as a “coyote” with the Tactical Training Exercise Control Group. Damien’s military career was cut short by a second cancer diagnosis in 2013. He was medically retired in December 2014 and finished his career with the rank of Captain and two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals.

Despite nearly three years of continuous cancer treatment, Damien remained determined to live his life to its fullest. He took up professional poker and participated in three straight World Series of Poker tournaments in Las Vegas. His biggest prize was taking home \$30,000 in a single poker tournament in Los Angeles. Damien was a fanatic of all things sports, with his most ardent devotion reserved for the Kansas Jayhawks and the Philadelphia Eagles.

When not playing poker or following his teams, Damien loved to travel, attend live sporting events, spend time with his wife and dogs, and over-analyze Game of Thrones. In his final years, Damien and his wife enjoyed going on spontaneous vacations, culminating with an incredible 11-day road trip to visit five national parks — a trip from which Damien returned home about a week before his passing. Everywhere Damien went, he made a lasting and positive impression on those around him, collecting countless lifelong friends along the way.

Damien will forever be remembered by his family and friends as a freakishly strong, brave, audacious, kind, honest, quick-witted, annoyingly smart and loving individual who took great pleasure in being a mentor to his fellow Marines and friends.

Damien is survived by his wife of eight years, Katy; his parents, Jim and Mary Annuschat, of Winfield; his brother, Dominic Annuschat, of Wichita; nephews, Brandon Wren and Nathan Wren, of Stone Ridge, Va., and his two dogs, Cyrus and Augustus.

“When you die, that does not mean that you lose to cancer. You beat cancer by how you live, why you live, and the manner in which you live.” – Stuart Scott

Rock Chalk Jayhawk, Semper Fi, and Go Eagles!