



Kenneth "Kent" Stephen Dowling Jr.

September 29, 1968 - May 13, 2026

Kenneth Stephen "Kent" Dowling Jr., 57, of Sumner, Georgia, passed away unexpectedly at his home on the morning of May 13, 2026, from a sudden heart attack.

Kent was born on September 29, 1968, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Kenneth Stephen Dowling, Sr. and Marsha Betts Dowling.

He was known for his huge heart, devotion to family, and the many friendships formed throughout his life.

Kent grew up in McRae, Georgia and graduated from Telfair County High School. He attended Georgia Southern University, where he studied and excelled in history. While attending GSU, Kent started a career in music. He worked at DeLoach's Music in Statesboro for six years, while also playing in several bands before forming Ella Speed with college friends. Ella Speed excelled in the music circuit, touring for over three years, averaging over 200 dates per year. Ella Speed self-produced album recordings, for which Kent played a major role as songwriter, singer, and guitarist.

After the Ella Speed years, Kent moved to Tifton, Georgia, where he founded and operated Kent's Music Store from 1999 til 2013. Kent's Music was a true musician's store, a congregational place offering quality instruments of all

kinds, from all eras. Kent's was a place where musicians met, jammed, hung out, shared stories, traded riffs, networked, and nourished lifelong friendships.

In 2000, Kent joined the Bo Henry Band, of which he was still a member at the time of his passing. Kent was a huge contributor to original albums and songs the band produced over the years, highlighting his stellar slide guitar work and amazing vocals. Most recently, Kent had partnered with Music Artist Pipeline / MAP Studios in McRae, a recording and artist development studio. This was a huge love of Kent's.

Kent was passionate and excelled at every aspect of the music business. Kent's knowledge of vintage and modern equipment and instruments was unsurpassed. He was a promoter and supporter of innumerable musicians and projects. Kent helped so many musicians get started, always making the time to teach and offer advice regarding the music industry. He was a true songwriter and could sit-in and fit-in with any group of musicians at all levels. Most importantly, he had the "tone", which so many of us will understand what that means.

Kent was vice chairman for the board of directors of Security State Bank in McRae, GA, Farmers State Bank in Dublin, GA, and Farmers Banc Sharers, Inc. Kent was a substantial contributing member of these entities, and along with other board members, was very instrumental in establishing the new Security State Bank building and development in McRae.

Most importantly, Kent was a giver and not a taker. His wife was the love of his life, and that was no secret. He cherished their time together at home. Kent loved his family and he loved his friends. He was a true servant. He always ran to a problem instead of running away, and always chose to do what was right. The stories of his charity are numerous. To some, he was a counselor, and to all who knew him he was a great listener. His memory and influence

will live on through all who knew and loved him, and resonate through the music he left behind.

Kent was preceded in death by his grandparents, W.E. & Primrose Dowling, and Eber & Myrtice Betts, and his mother in-law, Runell K. Thigpen.

Kent is survived by his loving wife, Michelle Thigpen Dowling; parents, Kenneth Stephen Dowling Sr. and Marsha Betts Dowling; his sibling, James Troy Dowling and wife Laura Lee Dowling; his father-in-law, Andrew David Thigpen; as well as his extended family and his extended musical family members who will cherish his memory.

A graveside service for Kent will be held Saturday, May 16, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the Kirkland Family Cemetery on Old Blundale Road in Midville, Georgia, with visitation to follow.

Previous Events

Graveside Service

MAY 16. 10:00 AM (ET)

Kirkland Family Cemetery
709 Old Blundale Rd
Midville, GA 30441

Tribute Wall

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“ I meant kent in the early 90s. We played in several bands together. The CD that he and his band came out with I gave him the name for his band Ella speed. I will always remember me and Kent and 95 going to see Eric Clapton in Atlanta and before we went to the concert he and I stop by the hard Rock Cafe and the manager at the hard Rock Cafe in Atlanta let me and Kent play Stevie Ray Vaughan's Stratocaster that he had donated to hard Rock Cafe. I also have a 1995 strat that I bought from Kent when he worked at the lotus music. I still have that guitar I will treasure it even more and I love the guitar so much and I still own it today and can't is probably only one of five people that have ever played that guitar. I loved it so much that I have a tattoo of it on my arm. Kent came and played from my band last July for the 50th anniversary of Whitewater Creek band at cedar Lane. I will treasure that memory for the rest of my life Kent was a wonderful person a wonderful friend and a true brother. I will miss him but I will always remember sharing laughter with him always enjoyed watching kent laugh. I would see Kenneth his father is Southern Star in McRae at different occasions and I would always ask him about Kent his father was proud of him and loves him very much God bless.

Nathan Rowe - May 14 at 04:24 PM