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Kelly, William Nelson **"Bill"**



Died peacefully at home in Minneapolis on Monday, July 31, 2023, at the age of 83 with his wife and son at his side. Born on December 2,

1939, in Grand Forks, N.D. to Howard and Cleo Nelson Kelly, Bill grew up in East Grand Forks, MN, where he graduated from Sacred Heart School. He attended Marquette University for one year before returning home to work his way through the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. He taught history and political science at East Grand Forks High School and joined the Peace Corps in the mid-1960s, serving in Ethiopia where he met his first wife, Janet Worth.

Upon returning home, Bill resumed teaching and soon made a run for public office. He lost on his first attempt, but in 1970 he won a seat in the Minnesota House of Representatives, where he served four terms representing Polk and Norman Counties until 1978.

It was a productive time in MN government then, as it is now. The passage of the "Minnesota Miracle" transferred much of the burden of supporting public schools from local property taxes to a more progressive and fair state income tax, which also provided equity for funding among the state's many school districts. As chair of the Tax Committee, Bill played a key role in that endeavor. He co-authored the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) with Tom Berg and cast the deciding vote for gun-control legislation. He made a point of supporting rural as well as urban issues, advocating a vision of Minnesota as a unified state with equal opportunity for all.

His career took him to work for the National Convention of State Legislatures in Denver, where he consulted with legislatures across the country, advising them on best practices for managing their operations as well as developing strategies and language for potential bills. After three years, he returned to Minnesota, settling in the Twin Cities for a position with Norwest Bank (now Wells Fargo Corp). His position leading Government Affairs lasted 23 years, during which time he helped usher in branch banking in many states, and ultimately at the federal level, making our lives much simpler. He and his team were recognized for their efforts and for working in the interests of customers and communities, not solely for the bank's bottom line.

Bill met his wife, Patricia (Pat) in 1987 at a fundraiser for his friend, Congressman Martin Sabo. Pat had just been hired to run the Sabo campaign of 1988. Pat and Bill married in Minneapolis in 1994 and shared many good years enjoying family, friends, travel, sporting events and bicycling. Bill bicycled a few thousand miles each season with his dear friends. After retiring in 2005, they traveled to many parts of the world and often to France where Pat's youngest daughter lived. Bill was of French and Irish ancestry and was always happy to accompany Pat there. The last big trip was to Egypt and Jordan in 2019. Bill was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2017 and underwent treatment at Mayo Clinic before opting for palliative care in 2022.

Bill is survived by his wife of 29 years, Pat; his son, Christopher; Pat's children; Natalie Salden (Todd), Alex Miller (Jennifer), and Vanessa Sarraute. Bill was especially fond of the grandchildren: Hailey and Max Salden; Benny and Cora Miller; and Naomi and Joachim Sarraute. Also surviving him are siblings Karen Corbid, Judy Kelly, Colleen Breker (Ken) Kip Kelly, and John Kelly and many nieces and nephews. His first wife (and Christopher's mother), Janet Moen (Mylan), and sister-in-law Phyllis Moen and her family, and many Kelly and Nelson cousins will also miss Bill deeply. He is preceded in death by his brother Tim, and his parents.

We thank St. Croix hospice, and Hallmark home care services whose caregiver, Nelie, provided excellent care.

Per his request, there will be no funeral, but a gathering in his name will be held on Tuesday, August 22 at Jax Café, 1928 University Ave. N.E., Minneapolis, from 4:30 - 7p.m. Stories will be shared at 5:30. Memorials may be sent to Hunger Solutions Minnesota or a charity of your choice.