

James Anthony Kelly was born July 4, 1940, to Ralph and Minnie Kelly in Rock Rapids, Iowa. He attended country school through eighth grade and graduated from Alvord High School. He joined the South Dakota Army National Guard, 147th Field Artillery, in 1958, attending six months of boot camp in the U.S. Army at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He then started college at the University of South Dakota, but in August 1961, he was called to 12 months of active duty at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in response to East Germany building the Berlin Wall. Upon his unit's return from active duty in 1962, he continued as an active Guard member until he was honorably discharged. He also returned to USD and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, graduating in 1965.

Jim taught science one year at Oelwein, Iowa, and two years at Central Lyon School, Rock Rapids, before concentrating on his passion for farming. He also did purebred cattle auctioneering, including at the Sioux City Livestock Yards. He served on boards of the Iowa Simmental and Charolais Cattle Associations.

He married Verdone Hoek on June 9, 1972, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Alvord, Iowa, and they settled on the Kelly family Century Farm, where they raised crops, hogs and cattle. He served as president of the Lyon County Cattlemen's Association for one year and volunteered his auctioneering skills at fundraisers for Alvord Christ Lutheran Church, West Lyon FFA and Fellowship Village. Jim also served on the Farmers Elevator board of directors. During the 1980's farm crisis, he worked as a farm manager at what is now US Bank in Rock Rapids. Jim was a member of Sacred Heart Church, Alvord, where he served as a lector, distributor and parish council member, until the church closed in 2010 and he became a member of St. Mary's Church, Rock Valley. Following a diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease, Jim retired from farming in 2016 and enjoyed retirement years of "hobby farming," and spending time with family and friends. He also took up boxing at Rock Steady Boxing, an exercise program for those with Parkinson's Disease, at the Inn on Westport in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In June of 2019 he moved into Whispering Heights in Rock Valley.

Jim loved the gifts God provided him, from caring for the farm animals and land to sharing his knowledge and quick wit. He loved his caretakers, had interesting nicknames for several of them, and liked to joke with them. He enjoyed spending time and laughing with friends and family. He was so proud of his children and grandchildren and felt blessed to be called Dad and Grandpa. Most of all he loved Verdone and was glad when she said yes to marrying him. Her steady faith and love enriched his life as his has also enriched hers. Their love lives forever. Jim passed away Monday, November 21, 2022, at Whispering Heights at the age of 82.

Jim is survived by his wife, Verdone; son, David (Frances) Kelly of Shueyville, Iowa, and their children Walker and Madden Halapua; daughter, Susan (Mark) Keegan of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and their sons Trevan and Brycen; and son, Stephen (Katie) Kelly of Tega Cay, South Carolina, and their children, Oliver and Quinn; sister, Mary Therese Smith of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; brother, Dan Kelly of Denville, New Jersey; brothers-in-law, Neil (Jan) Hoek, Marvin (Pat) Hoek, and Jerry (Linda) Hoek; sister-in-law, Barb (Dan) Wildermuth; and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Ralph and Minnie Kelly; parents-in-law, Marvin and Marie Hoek; and brother-in-law, Bill Smith.

## *Celebrating the Life of* **James Anthony Kelly** 1940 † 2022

**MASS OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL**  
10:30 AM, Saturday, November 26, 2022  
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Rock Valley, Iowa

**CELEBRANTS**  
Father Mauro Sanchez  
Father Douglas Klein

**LECTOR**  
Nathan Wildermuth

**MUSICIANS**  
Lin Gacke, organist  
Marj Wagner, cantor  
St. Mary's Choir

**MUSICAL SELECTIONS**  
*"The Old Rugged Cross"*  
*"The Last Mile of the Way"*  
*"Song of Farewell (OLD HUNDREDETH)"*  
*"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"*

**GIFT BEARERS**  
Marvin & Pat Hoek

**CASKET BEARERS**  
David Kelly ~ Stephen Kelly ~ Trevan Keegan  
Brycen Keegan ~ Mark Keegan ~ Troy Thiessen

**HONORARY CASKET BEARERS**  
Oliver Kelly ~ Quinn Kelly ~ Walker Halapua  
Madden Halapua ~ Jeff Van Veldhuizen ~ Reid Kooiker

**INTERMENT**  
St. Mary's Cemetery  
Alvord, Iowa

*Jim's family invites everyone for a time of food and fellowship in the church fellowship hall, downstairs, immediately following the funeral service.*



## *In Loving Memory*

*Jim always thought of his children and grandchildren whenever he heard "I Hope You Dance," sung by LeeAnn Womack. The lyrics have been edited.*

*I hope you never lose your sense of wonder,  
You get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger,  
May you never take one single breath for granted,  
God forbid love ever leave you empty handed,  
I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,  
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,  
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.  
I hope you dance.*

*I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance,  
Never settle for the path of least resistance,  
Livin' might mean takin' chances, but they're worth takin',  
Lovin' might be a mistake, but it's worth makin',  
Don't let some Hell bent heart leave you bitter,  
When you come close to sellin' out reconsider,  
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.  
I hope you dance...*

*I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,  
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,  
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.  
I hope you dance.*

*Hope You Dance lyrics © Sony/atv Melody,  
Choice is Tragic Music, Soda Creek Songs,  
Mca Music Publishing, A.d.o. Universal S*



## *James Anthony Kelly*

*July 4, 1940 ~ November 21, 2022*

### **Out In The Fields With God**

Near singing birds, through  
new-mown hay and silken grass I trod;  
nearby cattle lowing peacefully when  
I'm out in the fields with God.

A rainbow points across the sky,  
God's promise in pastel rod;  
A gift from the Great Artist when  
I'm out in the fields with God.

Spring rains, freshen ground and air,  
the plow turns sweet-smelling sod,  
my soul feels close to heaven above when  
I'm out in the fields with God.

A breeze caresses sweated face while  
whispering corn leaves nod;  
My mind rests, problems fade away when  
I'm out in the field with God.



*Photo of Jim's field and cows courtesy of Kelly Stock Farms*

