



Keith Eugene Relyea

December 8, 1941 - November 4, 2024

Keith Eugene Relyea, 82, of Minneapolis, MN died unexpectedly on November 4, 2024 from respiratory failure at M Health University of MN Medical Center, surrounded by his family. He always said, "Life's a Long Story," and, thankfully, it was for him-although not enough for us.

Born December 8, 1941, in the wee hours of the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered World War II, he was the fourth of six children born to Alvin and Rosemary (Roberts) Relyea of Taylor, Wisconsin, near Black River Falls. He went to twelve grades of school in Taylor, attended UW-LaCrosse and graduated from the Minnesota School of Business in Minneapolis with a certificate in machine accounting. In 1961, he married Marsha Hoff and they, too, had six children: Bryan, Jason, Jennifer, Polly, Joshua and Daniel.

They moved to Minneapolis and several years later he landed a job at 3M Company, beginning a rewarding 33-year career on its St. Paul campus. His children and their cousins knew him as "the scratch-and-sniff guy" because he handed out scented stickers. He helped develop 3M's technology for encapsulating fragrance on stickers, direct mail and magazine inserts. He enjoyed his work, yet was happy to retire early at age 58.

In 1970 the family settled into a farmhouse built in 1885 on a wooded property

outside Houlton, WI. Fixing up the house and eight acres of woods and yards was a labor of love. In 1985, he and Marsha divorced and he began a new chapter as a single parent.

In 1992 he met Jeannie (Thomas) Kant, the love of his life, on a sailing trip on Lake Superior. They married in 1995 at an outdoor ceremony and reception at his home. They spent nineteen years together there, caring for the house, gardens and woods. He loved spending a fall day tidying up the woods. He always enjoyed the outdoors and volunteered many hours helping The Prairie Enthusiasts restore remnant prairies, the Ice Age National Scenic Trail build and maintain hiking trails in Wisconsin, and being caretaker of the Thelen Family Cemetery and the Houlton Cemetery. In 2014 he and Jeannie sold the property and moved to a carefree life in a high-rise condo in downtown Minneapolis, ready for a new lifestyle.

Keith and Jeannie loved to travel and explore other cultures, which took them to Africa, Central America, Europe, Southeast Asia, islands in the Caribbean and above the Arctic Circle, the Amazon River and a final trip to Croatia as well as many winters in coastal Florida. He summited Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania as part of a Books for Africa-sponsored trip and trekked with his son, Dan, to Annapurna base camp in the Himalayas.

Keith loved to read, being curious about the world, and all manner of people and ideas. He was always interested in history. His wish to pass on family history led to several projects: a book, *Life's a Long Story*, about his great and great-great grandfathers; sharing his parents' "love letters" prior to their marriage, found in their attic after his mother died; scanning about 2,500 family photos going back to the Civil War for a photo DVD distributed to the extended family; writing about his father's teaching days and his mother's school days, his cousins' WWII service, his parents' farming partnership with his uncles and aunts, and his grandfather's 1925 road trip to the Pacific

Northwest; making a DVD of family voice recordings; and archiving much of his mother's extensive family document collection.

He was preceded in death by his parents; two siblings, Richard Relyea and Aimee (Relyea) Hegge; two children, Jason Peter and Joshua Daniel Relyea; and his former wife, Marsha. Also brother-in-law Don Evenson and sister-in-law Jeanne Relyea.

He is survived by his wife, Jeanne Kant; children Bryan Relyea, Jennifer (David) Glassman, Polly (Rock) Relyea and Daniel Relyea; grandsons Andrew and Colin Glassman and Jasper Relyea and granddaughters Danelle Relyea and Ava (Relyea) Wendt; sister Mildred Evenson; brothers James and Timothy (Connie) Relyea; brothers- and sisters-in-law Steve (Karen) and Randy (Barb) Thomas; cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

In his own words:

I hope people will recall that I did the best I could. Loved Jeannie. Hoped and worked for the best for my children and their children. Was a reader, interested in the world and ideas. Was a positive atheist, a humanist, who was awed by it all. Thought about life and pondered what it all means. I believe we are better off when we support community rather than that the individual is paramount.

I always loved a solitary walk, to think and to see what's around the corner. I've been rambling since I was 10 or so. I must have put hundreds of thousands of miles on my feet. Was comfortable with myself. Loved my parents. Collected little things to stir my memory. Kept journals. Loved my woods, Jeannie's gardens and our wonderful old home in Houlton; AND was happy to move to downtown Minneapolis and start a new chapter in the vibrancy and diversity of a city. I felt fortunate that I could make that kind of

adventurous change. I liked/needed to be busy, to be doing something. At the end of the day, sitting in the woods, by a fire, with a cigar and a glass of wine- these were some of the happiest days of my life.

We will remember him as warm, emotional and fun loving, always curious and ready to have a good time. He was loved for his ready smile and great laugh, accompanied by a twinkle in his brown eyes.

Washburn-McReavy is handling arrangements. A celebration of his life will be arranged in the coming weeks. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to Jeannie or directly to Books for Africa, The Prairie Enthusiasts or The Ice Age Trail Alliance. His cremains will be interred at French Creek Cemetery near Taylor, WI, in the spring, 2025 beside six generations of Relyeas.

Tribute Wall

DM

“ I worked with Keith at 3M. He was my boss in the group that made scented magazine inserts. Keith was a great guy and boss. He had a great sense of humor and was always there to support us when things got stressful. Keith was the best boss I have ever had. Rest in peace buddy and enjoy paradise until we meet again.
Daryl Mueller

Daryl Mueller - October 15, 2025 at 04:04 PM

DC

“ Keith - you greeted Jeannie and me at the door. The smile, the warmth and the caring will be deeply missed. Your spirit remains, but it is no comparison to your being here with us. Diana

Diana Cohen - November 12, 2024 at 05:18 PM