



## Kevin Glen Austin

September 4, 1961 - November 11, 2024

Kevin G. Austin, age 63, of Minneapolis, Minnesota passed away unexpectedly on November 11th, 2024. He took an afternoon nap-- one of his favorite activities-- and never woke up. Cause of death is unknown-- he was fine at a check up in August. He and his wife Laurel have been mostly in isolation since early in 2020 due to the pandemic. Kevin, out of concern for his own health and the health of others, was never around other people outside the house without a mask (and rarely around other people at all) so it's extremely unlikely that he'd had COVID (then or in the past).

On multiple occasions Kevin said that no matter what the cause of death was when he died, the underlying cause of his death was going to be his nearly lifelong struggle with severe clinical depression.

Kevin is survived by his best friend and loving wife Laurel Krahn (along with her brother Chris) and his brother Jeff Austin (and his husband Ronaldo Nova). He was preceded in death by his parents Robert and Gloria Austin and his parents-in-law Richard and Janice Krahn. He will be much missed by friends and fans the world over.

Kevin was born on September 4th, 1961 in Saint Paul, Minnesota which was Labor Day that year, something that literal-minded Kevin found amusing. He grew up in Lake Elmo, Minnesota with his parents Robert and Gloria Austin

and his younger brother Jeff.

One of Kevin's earliest memories was from when he was just over two years old-- he was given a Christmas present that was a stick with a round top wrapped in red cellophane. Young Kevin was super excited as he thought his parents were giving him an enormous lollipop! (Kevin had a lifelong love of candy.) Only once Kevin unwrapped the present, he discovered it was a rattle.

Kevin was a quiet & well-behaved child, but apparently he was downright grumpy & refused to play with the rattle, though he did play with the cellophane. Not only was he disappointed by not getting candy, he also felt that at age two he was too old for a rattle.

When a friend asked Kevin in 2004 if he had a "good childhood," Kevin responded:

"It's taken me quite a while to figure out any sort of an answer, and even now I'm not sure that what I'm going to write is 100% true or accurate, but I think that I'm at least ready to take a stab at answering.

The short answer is: Objectively yes; subjectively not really.

From an objective standpoint I can say that my parents were not abusive, I was never neglected and I had food, shelter and all of the regular creature comforts. Looking at that I can say that I really don't have anything that I can seriously complain about. Many children have had much, much worse lives than I did and survived.

The subjective viewpoint is a lot muddier. I'm fairly certain that I've been suffering from depression most of my life and I can remember often feeling like I wanted to die while riding the bus to school. Because I was shy, weird,

and much brighter than average I had a lot of troubles with other kids (teasing, taunting, bullying etc.) so I was pretty miserable a lot of the time."

Kevin was beat up a lot as a child and a teenager, simply for being quiet, weird, and smart. People he went to school with referred to him disparagingly as a "robot" and as "Spock" (which Kevin didn't really consider an insult).

Kevin later told his wife Laurel that depression hit him when he was 8 years old and in pictures of Kevin as a kid, you can almost see it happen. Kevin said on multiple occasions that before he started taking antidepressants (at Laurel's insistence, when in his forties), he estimated that he wanted to die 90% of the time-- once on medication, it was usually down to "only" 10% of the time. Even then, the other 90% was difficult due to depression.

Kevin graduated from Stillwater High School in 1979; he graduated from Mankato State University with a BS in Mathematics and a minor in Physics. He worked as a computer programmer for many years with titles like Senior Applications Developer, Senior Programmer Analyst, and Senior Software Engineer.

After his father-in-law had a heart attack, Kevin worked for him outside of his field (and for a cut in pay) to help with the family business. Kevin was always willing to lend a hand when family or friends could use one, even when depression made everything he did a struggle.

Kevin was a lifelong fan of science fiction and attended his first convention (Minicon 19) in 1983-- he attended Minicon each year after that through 2019, until the pandemic derailed things. Other conventions he attended over the years include: Demicon, Diversicon, Capricon, Congenial, CONvergence, Fourth Street Fantasy Con, Marscon, Reinconation, Supercon, Windycon, and

several Worldcons along with various other conventions.

Kevin worked on conventions in various capacities over the years-- often contributing even when he wasn't listed as a member of the convention committee. He chaired conventions big (Minicon) and small (Congenial, a relaxacon); he also ran or helped run various departments at cons (Registration, Gaming, Volunteering) as well as serving as webmaster and holding a wide range of positions at conventions. Kevin was on a number of panels at conventions over the years, including (appropriately) one on pedantry.

Kevin also enjoyed hosting room parties at conventions and working in consuites-- he enjoyed playing host to people and was good at making sure folks had a good selection of drinks and snacks to choose from. He always made sure there were a range of options of drinks (with and without alcohol, with and without sugar, with and without caffeine). He made a point of making gluten-free and vegan options available and just generally tried to make everyone feel welcome. Inclusive hospitality was important to him.

Kevin was a gamer-- he loved to play games. He enjoyed board games and card games, but also got very into both video games and role-playing games back when they were new things. (He was on MECC back in the day, among the first people to play Oregon Trail; he got very into Advanced Dungeons & Dragons starting in 1980.) He continued playing video games and role-playing games for the rest of his life.

Kevin surprised everyone in 2019 when he started streaming on Twitch and developed a following there, particularly among people who played the game Realm of the Mad God. People would show up shocked to see someone Kevin's age playing video games on the internet and then stick around because his streams were enjoyable; recordings of many of Kevin's streams

can still be found on his YouTube channel along with recordings of some of the role-playing game campaigns he ran.

Kevin met the woman who would become his wife, Laurel Krahn, at the science fiction convention Minicon probably in the early 1990s, but they didn't become friends until years later. They attended a lot of the same conventions, concerts, and parties for years before they became friends while working together on projects for Minicon and the Minnesota Science Fiction Society.

Kevin and Laurel were married on a Saturday morning inside the Metrodome on September 17th, 2005 on the field before a Twins game versus the White Sox; 82 other couples got married or renewed their vows that day (it was part of a WCCO 830 radio promotion). Laurel's father's favorite baseball player Tony Oliva signed their marriage certificate as a witness; Laurel's favorite player Joe Mauer played in the game and her favorite pitcher of all time (Johan Santana) started the game and struck out 13. (Kevin was a big fan of all three of those players, among others.) (One of Kevin's earliest childhood memories was crying when the Twins lost the 1965 World Series and he held a grudge against Sandy Koufax for the rest of his life.)

Kevin and Laurel went to as many as 30 or 40 Twins games each season with Laurel's parents (through the 2019 season); all four of them loved Target Field, but had fond memories of the Metrodome (Laurel would always say her favorite Metrodome memory was being at game 7 of the 1991 World Series and then Kevin would fake sobs over her not choosing their wedding and then she'd insist they were both favorites). They had countless inside jokes involving the Twins, the ballparks, and the many (so many!) hours spent watching or listening to games.

The annual mascot softball game was a favorite each year, as was how each year on their anniversary Laurel would post a picture of her on her wedding

day next to a very dressed up T.C. Bear (Laurel did not actually marry the bear). They spent a lot of birthdays and anniversaries at games, along with other special occasions. They were a family that would sarcastically complain about Joe Mauer and rant about the injustice of Kent Hrbek never winning a Gold Glove Award. They'd enthuse about Rod Carew and Tony Oliva with no prompting and joke about R.D. Kevin would rant about the Twins letting Harmon Killebrew play his last season in Kansas City and say "darn you Sandy Koufax!" any time the 1965 World Series was mentioned.

Kevin and Laurel had common interests in science fiction and the Minnesota Twins, among other things. They knew a lot of the same people, liked some of the same movies and shows and music, they also shared some other hobbies. And they each learned a lot about the hobbies and interests they didn't share, supporting each other as they each did their own thing.

One of the things they had in common was unfortunate-- they both struggled with severe depression; depression hit Kevin as a kid and Laurel as a teenager-- this meant that between the two of them Kevin had 55+ years of depression and Laurel 35 or so years of it. It was not fun. It was helpful that they each understood the horrific nature of this particular mental illness, but it also made their lives very difficult.

Kevin and Laurel would joke that between the two of them, they made up almost a single functional human as they each had tasks they could handle and between the two of them they did manage to stay alive though they didn't exactly thrive. Depression robbed them of time and money and made every day a struggle. Each day they survived was an accomplishment.

Though things were difficult, they made each other laugh every single day. They loved each other and told each other so in almost every conversation.

They each hated themselves, but loved each other tremendously. They lived for each other, when they didn't want to live. Not the healthiest thing, but it helped keep them alive. And while depression kept them from getting things done (both necessary chores and fun stuff), they did manage to attend some science fiction conventions. They did enjoy holiday gatherings. They did get to the occasional party or concert and they did go out to eat every so often when they could afford it.

It's rough now looking at all the things they wanted to do, but never managed to do. The many conventions and parties and concerts and movies and sporting events they missed. The trips they wanted to take, but couldn't afford. The times Laurel's anxiety and depression or Kevin's depression got in the way. The way depression and unemployment and disability and lack of money made things harder. The way their brains were constantly trying to kill them (that's how Kevin explained it). The toll this took on friendships and on their lives during the times when they were barely surviving and only really had time for each other.

They had pets, who were a bright spot, and losing their last cats suddenly in the past year was hard on both Kevin and Laurel as was losing both of Laurel's parents in the last couple of years as Laurel's parents were the people they saw and talked to the most.

Kevin was quiet and did not usually stick out in crowds-- until he started wearing Hawaiian shirts that Laurel collected for him, often accompanied by a bright orange Twins cap if he wanted to be easy to find. He was hilarious, if you got a chance to hear his deadpan remarks or silly comments. He was a brilliant physical comedian and prone to making up lyrics to songs as he joked about whatever was happening in his life. He was an excellent chair dancer. He loved candy and naps and walks; he enjoyed the new traditions he and

Laurel came up with to brighten holidays and regular days.

He was kind and offered to help people, giving technical support or advice when he could. Laurel's mother referred to Kevin as an "angel" because he really went above and beyond not just for Laurel, but for her family as well. (Kevin and Laurel joked that her mom was saying he had to be an angel to put up with Laurel.)

Words friends used to describe Kevin after his passing: kind, patient, quiet, hilarious, voice of rationality, principled, loyal, authentic, compassionate, supportive, funny, and kind-hearted. Those who watched his gaming streams and videos deemed them "wholesome" with some referring to Kevin as inspiring and a good role model for others who played those games. The people who watched his streams and whose streams he watched appreciated Kevin for showing support to others wherever he could and trying to bring cheer.

Kevin loved to make people laugh, he loved to help people and do things for people. He didn't drive and was a big fan of both biking and public transit. He loved the Minnesota State Fair and Mystery Science Theater 3000 (and Rifftrax) and the music of Dessa and of Cats Laughing and he liked going to concerts at the Lake Harriet Bandshell (or First Avenue or elsewhere). He enjoyed science fiction movies and shows (Star Trek: The Animated Series and Person of Interest were two of his favorites). Miracle on 34th Street was his favorite holiday movie and he'd watch it most years and get emotional about it in his own stoic Minnesotan way.

In Kevin's YouTube bio, he listed his influences: "Books: a pinch of The Book of the SubGenius but more strongly The Principia Discordia and Zen Without Zen Masters. Video: Viva and Jerry's Country Music Videos, Season 0 of Mystery Science 3000, the Boschwitz boys era Plywood Minnesota

commercials, and Let's Bowl! Music: The Wallets, The Residents, Frank Zappa, and Cats Laughing." In case you weren't clear on just how Minnesotan Kevin was, that list should clear it up; he lived his whole life in Minnesota, his internet bios usually said "born, raised, and growing old in Minnesota."

He would walk many miles to get to and from events rather than ask for rides from friends (even those who lived near him) as he didn't want to be "that guy who always needs a ride." For years he didn't have a driver's license and refused to get a state ID, possibly because he was stubborn and enjoyed confusing people when he used a passport as ID.

Kevin loved living in southwest Minneapolis in a location where he could easily walk to Lake Harriet, the Lake Harriet bandshell, Lyndale Park, the bird sanctuary, the rose garden, and the Peace Garden. He loved to take walks in those parks (and posted a lot of photos and videos from there). The memorial he wanted is a bench on top of Pageant Hill in Lyndale Park, under a very tall tree; he also wanted a wake full of music and laughter and conversation (we'll have to work on making these things happen).

Each time he and Laurel drove past someone walking their dog, Kevin would say "hi doggie hi doggie hi!" and hope that the dog would look his way and be excited if they did and disappointed if they didn't (never mind that the dogs could not actually hear him from inside an enclosed motor vehicle).

He loved watching cat videos on the internet (especially Maru & Hana & Miri) and also had taken to watching videos of pets being groomed. He loved watching videos from the Wildcat Sanctuary. He loved the We Rate Dogs calendar and the Dog Rates and I've Pet That Dog photos and videos. He was a friend to animals and animals really loved him. He liked big dogs and silly cats and all manner of wild animals. He was heartbroken over the recent

deaths of his and Laurel's beloved cat friends.

Kevin remained the same quiet, shy, weird, smart guy he was as a kid and teen but didn't get beat up as an adult-- instead he beat himself up, thinking the very worst of himself. He was convinced he was among the worst humans in the world even though he knew well there were lots of worse people out there. Depression lies to you. Kevin was amazing, but was convinced the world would be a better place without him and that Laurel would be better off without him-- no matter how often she told him that wasn't true.

He didn't leave the world (or Laurel) willingly, but he was so very tired of living with depression. When your depression is as bad as his was, it does take a toll on all aspects of your life including your health. Add to this that he was horrified by how badly this pandemic has been mishandled. He was horrified by the popularity of eugenics, racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and so many awful things among folks with power and platforms. He was concerned about the rise of fascism in the United States and elsewhere. And frightened for friends and strangers with less privilege than he had.

One of the last things he said on his last day was about how the overwhelming depression of the last year had finally lifted a bit heading into the election, only to crash back down on him hard with the election results. He was heartbroken and horrified, as so many people were. And scared of what lay ahead for him (and Laurel and everyone) in a future with no end of this pandemic in sight and with the prospect of losing Medicaid, Medicare, the ACA, and Social Security.

Kevin G. Austin deserved a better life than the one he had, but he did the best he could under unfortunate circumstances. Depression sucks, bullies suck, the fact that it is nearly impossible to get the help one needs when one needs it sucks. Means testing is bad. How different would his life have been without

the bullying? With a better social safety net? With less stigma around depression and better treatment for it?

Would Kevin still be here if these last few years hadn't been so awful, if the pandemic hadn't increased the degree of difficulty on everything? There's no way to know, we don't actually know what killed him. (Was it growing up in Lake Elmo drinking well water full of PFAS? There's no telling.)

Laurel, the person writing this, is devastated and unsure how she goes on without her best friend and partner in everything. Twenty four years was not nearly enough, there were still so many things she wanted to share with Kevin, tell Kevin, ask Kevin, show Kevin, do with Kevin. They were supposed to finally get the help they needed together, they were supposed to weather the next four years together. They were supposed to grow old together. Finally maybe get the depression to ease up with better treatment, finally maybe get more social support or financial assistance. Finally get some help with home repairs. Doing any of this without Kevin is unfathomable. Losing her parents, their cats, and now Kevin in three years is too much. They were everything. Kevin was everything.

Kevin would want people to fight for social justice, to play games, to go for walks in the park, to listen to music, to read good books, to enjoy good (and bad) art, to be kind to animals (and pet all the dogs and cats they're allowed to pet). He'd want you to fight fascism. He'd want you to stay up to date on vaccinations and wear a mask when around other people and demand improvements to indoor air quality (and to just basically take this pandemic seriously). He'd want you to support Laurel, since he's no longer around to be her biggest support and fan and cheerleader. Mostly though, you should fight fascism and push back against eugenics. Fight for Social Security and Medicaid and Medicare and the ACA. Don't let the bullies win.



# Tribute Wall



“ 3 files added to the album *Selfies*



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**Laurel Krahn** - April 01, 2025 at 12:12 AM



“ 1 file added to the album *More Photos*



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**Laurel Krahn** - March 08, 2025 at 04:36 PM

JA

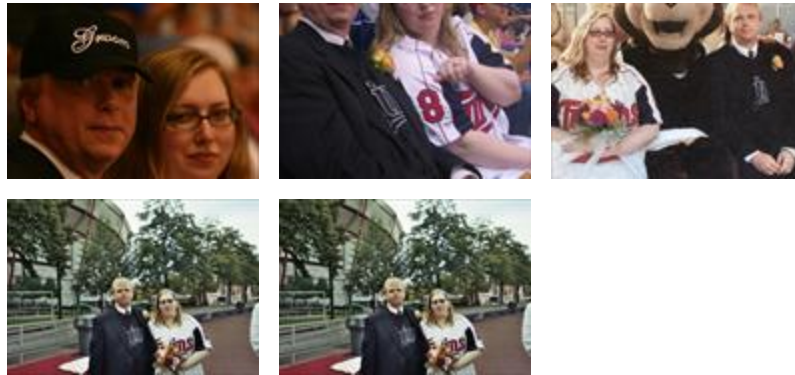
“ *I didn't know Kevin or Laurel and now I do. They are like me struggling while often pretending everything is OK. I'm sorry Depression has robbed you both. I'm angry that you can't be together longer. I'm sorry we didn't get to know each other. This obituary is a testament to love. See you on the other side.*

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**Jeff Altman** - February 22, 2025 at 03:40 AM



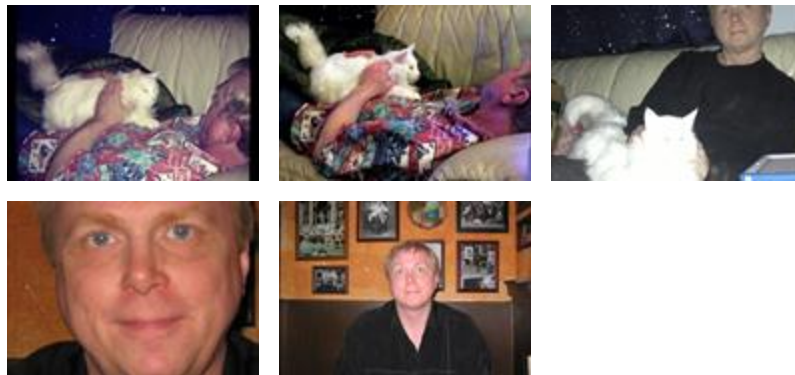
“ 16 files added to the album *Wedding*



Laurel Krahn - February 21, 2025 at 11:30 AM



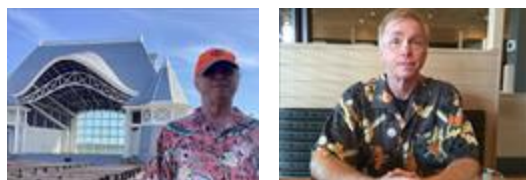
“ 6 files added to the album *More Photos*



Laurel Krahn - February 20, 2025 at 06:21 PM



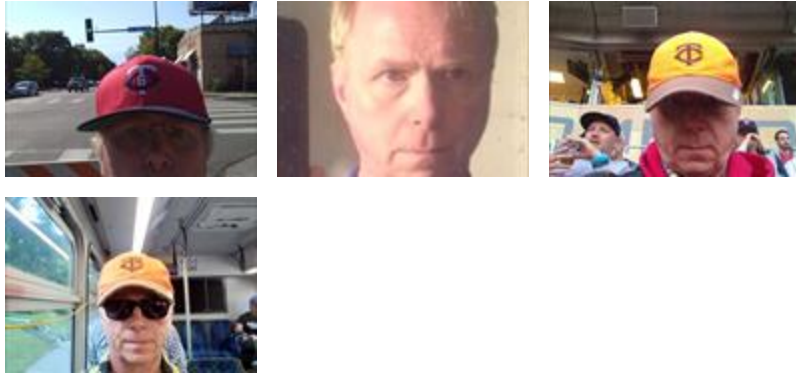
“ 2 files added to the album *More Photos*



Laurel Krahn - February 20, 2025 at 05:30 PM

LK

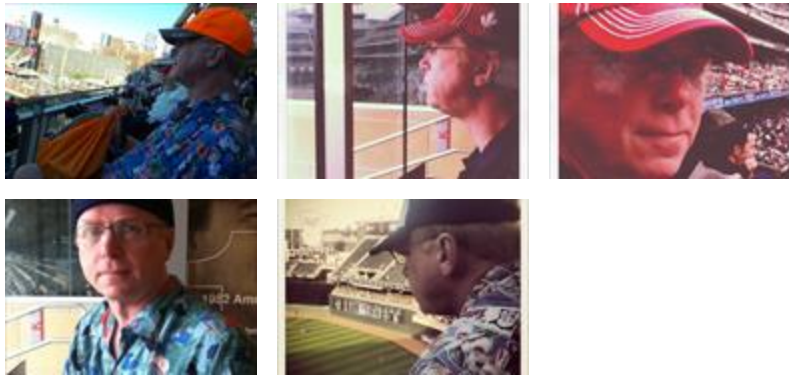
“ 4 files added to the album *Selfies*



Laurel Krahn - February 20, 2025 at 05:23 PM

LK

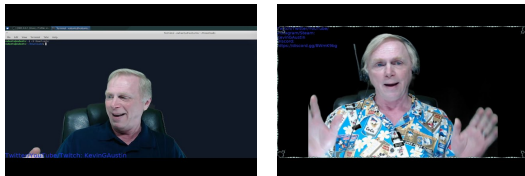
“ 25 files added to the album *Twins Games*



Laurel Krahn - February 20, 2025 at 05:08 PM

LK

“ 2 files added to the album *Kevin G. Austin Video*



Laurel Krahn - February 20, 2025 at 04:52 PM



*Song starts near the 2 minute mark; from August 2020.*

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**Laurel Krahn** - February 20, 2025 at 05:09 PM