



Patricia Marie Kelly Santelman

February 23, 1929 - December 29, 2023

Patricia Kelly Santelman passed from this world early on December 29, 2023, as her children and surviving siblings kept vigil with her through the night and preceding days. She is survived by her sister Janet, brothers Jerry (Ruth), Tom (Teresa), and Dan (Katie); children Jane (Paul) Berge, Mary (George King), Kate (Bill) Richtman, John (Melody Watson), and Lynn (Paul Navarre); ten grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews. A funeral mass will be held at 11 am on January 12 (with visitation from 10 to 11 am) at St. Edwards Catholic Church in Bloomington, followed by appetizers and a lunch in the St. Edwards social hall. The funeral will be live-streamed. Details can be found online at <https://www.washburn-mcreavy.com/> Memorials can be made to the Minnesota Society for the Blind.

Patricia was born to Lloyd and Agnes Kelly on February 23, 1929 in Luverne, MN, the third of eleven children and the oldest daughter. The young family soon moved to Charles City, Iowa; into a beautiful white house with plenty of room, a home Pat loved. However, during the Great Depression they lost that home to foreclosure, and moved to Waseca, MN. It was in Waseca that Pat grew up, surrounded by family and lifelong friends, among them Joan (Groebner) Bower, Idabel (Clasen) Stenzel, and Joan Connors. The family belonged to Sacred Heart Catholic Church, and the children attended Sacred Heart Catholic School. Pat was an avid reader who loved learning. She graduated high school as class valedictorian, and went on to attend the

College of St. Teresa in Winona, MN, where her sharp, inquisitive mind and independence of thought delighted, challenged, and sometimes shocked the Franciscan sisters who were her beloved teachers. She graduated (again as valedictorian) from the College of St. Teresa in 1950 and began her career as an English teacher, first in Brewster and then in New Richland, MN.

It was in New Richland that she met Lyle Santelman, a blond math teacher and recent graduate from St. Olaf. Noticing that many of the other, single teachers seemed to have their eyes on Lyle, Mom vowed that she "wasn't going to enter into that competition". But Lyle had other ideas. They were married August 7, 1954. In 1958, Lyle was hired to teach mathematics in St Louis Park, MN, and they moved to the Twin Cities where they raised their family of five children, Jane, Mary, Kate, John, and Lynn. In 1964, Pat's two youngest brothers, Tom and Dan, joined the family after a tragic car accident took the life of their mother, Agnes.

Pat returned briefly to teaching English at the Academy of the Holy Angels before John was born, where her sister Janet was the French teacher. While her youngest two children were at home and in early elementary school, Pat began a career as a freelance writer, writing magazine articles and book reviews. In the 1970s, Pat made her first trip to Europe as a chaperone for the French class on their trip to Paris. She returned many times to Europe with Lyle, tracing his family roots in Denmark and Germany, and tracing her family roots and visiting the ancestral Kelly farm in Ireland. In the early 1980s, she decided to return to school once more, this time to the University of Minnesota where she earned her PhD in English, writing several articles, as well as her dissertation entitled, "Fantasy Themes in Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries and Women's Fiction: Women's Voice in Nineteenth-Century America".

Pat and Lyle were excellent bridge players. They played frequently and belonged to several bridge groups, including a Kelly Bridge group consisting

of Pat's family members. Even after Pat lost her sight due to complications from retinal detachments, she could still play the bridge hand in the newspaper when it was read to her, well into her 93rd year. She could remember all the cards in her hand and on the board, and the run of play.

Lyle passed away December 3, 2017, and Pat lived on independently in their apartment for nearly six more years despite the challenges imposed on her by her loss of vision. A fall in mid-August 2023 signaled a decline in her strength and mobility, and eventually, her death. She spent the four months before her death in the care of her family, her Joyful Companions ("Team Pat"), and the kind caregivers in Assisted Living at Summit Place. In her last few weeks, hospice helped provide the equipment and support to give her the best care and comfort possible.

Our mom was not only a teacher, she was also a free-lance writer and a wonderful storyteller. Through her stories, we learned about life in rural Minnesota in the early 1900's, what it was like to live through the Great Depression, World War II, and the aftermath. Her book, "Even the Angels", is a story celebrating life interrupted by tragedy. It chronicled not only the lives of the family members killed in "the accident", but also told the story of growing up as part of a Catholic community in southern Minnesota. She had many favorite stories. We all loved to hear the story of "The Second Date" with our dad. At Christmas time, she would tell about the time her brother Ray set "A Trap for Santa Claus", or "The Perfect Christmas Tree", which was a sad little tree until her boyfriend (who eventually became our dad) was enlisted to help set it up, fix the branches, and decorate it. Each story had a point, each story revealed something Mom had observed about the character of the people in the story, and the nature of the times and places framing the story. Some of the stories helped illuminate family dynamics. They told us why her sister Sharon was destined to become a nun after a miraculous recovery from

pneumonia when the doctor had given up on her, or how her grandpa Patrick Vincent Kelly had given up drinking when his mother made him swear on his dead brother's grave to never take another drop of alcohol. She adored her father Lloyd, and loved telling stories about how he went out of his way to tell people he appreciated them.

Mom, we will miss hearing you tell your stories, but you made sure to tell them often enough that we all know them by heart, and now we can tell them to each other. We will miss your bravery and your quick wit (cracking jokes with the hospice nurse). But we rejoice knowing that you are now able to see our dad and all those you loved who have gone before you. We rejoice that you are finally free of the body that could no longer sustain your wonderful mind. We like to think that just maybe, you might be the valedictorian of this year's graduating class.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 12. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Edward's Catholic Church
9401 Nesbitt Avenue South
Bloomington, MN 55437

Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 12. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

St. Edward's Catholic Church
9401 Nesbitt Avenue South
Bloomington, MN 55437

Tribute Wall



“ *Much love from Joe and Katie Kelly Sears purchased the Rose Impression Casket Spray for the family of Patricia Marie Kelly Santelman.*



Much love from Joe and Katie Kelly Sears - January 10, 2024
at 01:59 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Patricia Marie Kelly Santelman.*



January 09, 2024 at 07:36 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Patricia Marie Kelly Santelman.*



January 08, 2024 at 11:47 AM

GK

“ *Graciousness, Welcoming and Family. These three words come to mind as I reflect back on my introduction to the Santelman family many years ago as a suitor of the second oldest daughter (Mary) at their beautiful home at 4821 Garfield Ave. Nothing but big smiles greeted me upon my first entry into the house, with Pat waiting in the kitchen to say a special hello and welcome. The fact that she and my mom were both Teresan’s provided a common thread to our initial conversations, focusing on family life in small town Minnesota. I was invited frequently to partake in family meals and celebrations during my year-long courtship of Mary, all spearheaded by Pat. The dinners, always delicious, were times of sharing current happenings interspersed with stories of past events across the extended Kelly family. Of course, I learned to play bridge, initially at her younger brother Dan’s house, and Pat (and Lyle) were quite patient as I learned bidding and the playing of a hand. Mary and I announced our engagement during the holidays in 1984. Upon my return to MN after visiting my parents for Christmas in Tucson, Mary picked me up at the airport and said there would be a few people at the Garfield house to help celebrate our engagement. The house was packed. All of Pat’s brothers and sisters in the Twin Cities plus those visiting for the holidays were in attendance, along with Mary’s siblings, brother-in-law, and many cousins. All warmly welcomed me on this festive evening, and it was clear that the love and support of Pat’s family would surround us as we started our life together. This was all spearheaded by Pat, of course. I will be forever grateful to Pat for her graciousness during this year, and her support and love as Mary and I started our married life together. I will miss Pat greatly. With love and fond memories, George King*

George King - January 07, 2024 at 05:58 PM