



W. Keith Slattery

December 10, 2019

William Keith Slattery, Jr., known to friends and family as “Keith,” and the last of the great tall-taletellers in his family, passed away peacefully a few days after his final helicopter ride, on Tuesday, December 10, 2019.

Keith Slattery was born on June 5, 1940, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the second child of Anna Rita Rosenbaum Slattery and William Keith Slattery, Sr. known as “Bill.” After that, we could never be sure what exactly was true because his stories were legendary in our family, especially for having extra details no one else seemed to recall. The rest is what we think is true.

As a kid, he was known to pull a few pranks on the “nuns” at school, who were the only people in his life to ever call him William, and it was always with a certain tone that told him his antics were not amusing – at least to them. At home Keith took apart the family television, just to see how it worked and was often tasked with fixing various things around the house. He loved visiting his maternal grandmother’s farm in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and playing with his dozens of cousins.

A guy who loved working with his hands and learning hands-on, he decided to enlist in the United States Air Force, where he served to the best of his ability for four years. Keith graduated at the top of his helicopter mechanics class and became barracks chief and shift leader. He went on to be stationed in Alaska, where he worked in helicopter search and rescue, saving lives, and even one time helping a woman deliver her baby. Of his time in the service, his favorite Captain wrote, “His most outstanding trait is his thoroughness,” which drove the rest of us crazy because it took him twice as long to do most things, but apparently was a good thing in the Air Force from 1959-1963.

What happened next in his life is a love story for the ages. They even wrote a song about it “back in late December 1963,” at a Christmas party where he met Joan Frances Oteri, a 19-year old cutie he fell head over heels in love with even though she had no idea what a Corvette was and didn’t see his candy apple red pride and joy in the parking lot as he suggested to her in his opening line to impress her. So smooth. After his someday-to-be mother-in-law, Anna May Oteri made him pork chops one night before picking Joan up for a date, he knew he’d found the one. They were married on February 19, 1966, because his new wife loved the idea of a wedding with snow on the ground near Valentine’s Day.

Life wasn't all fast cars and full plates of food. Sadly, in December 1967, his wife gave birth to their stillborn son, who we know he finally got to meet in heaven and is now teaching his boy how to fix St. Peter's sweet ride.

The first of their two daughters, Felicia Slattery, known to him (and many others) as "the big mouth," was born in June 1970, quickly followed by the favorite daughter, Dana Slattery Broccolo in May 1971, only 11 short months later (do the math on that one - the man loved his wife... what can you say?!). There were some hard days when his girls were young while he worked seven days a week in "the shop," a car repair and body shop he owned in partnership with a friend. Some days the young couple had to decide between paying the electric bill or buying baby formula, but they always got through it together.

In 1977 he decided a better way to provide for his family was in order, so he joined the last company he would ever work for, unless you count corporate mergers and company name changes, beginning a decades-long career in the meat industry. Teepak, now known as ViskoTeepak, one of the world's leading manufacturers of meat casings, hired Keith to work on the machines that used their product. Keith learned how to fix a machine known as a Frank-o-matic – the thing that stuffs your hot dogs and sausages, so that whenever there was a problem with one of Teepak's customers, Keith would be called in to save the day. He traveled across the country and around the world fixing all kinds of machines, and later helping formulate product that would work better with the various technologies. He was most at home on the manufacturing floor, fixing machines and bossing everybody around from the presidents of the companies to the floor workers – and he loved every minute. In 1980 he was transferred for work to Chicago, Illinois, so they loaded up the gold Chevy station wagon and headed west from Philly, settling in Wheaton, Illinois. Multiple trips to Japan, Scotland, and the Czech Republic along with his coast to coast national travels made him a frequent flier on his beloved United Airlines, where he feasted on free pretzels and Bloody Marys in their lounges at every airport he visited. He retired at age 70, kicking and screaming all the way because there were still machines to be fixed and floor supervisors to yell at, but Joan wanted him home and he'd do anything for her.

Over the years with those miles he earned he took his family on fun trips to places like Niagara Falls, Disney World, Maui, Hawaii, and the ever-exotic Wisconsin Dells. In the 1980s before GPS was a thing, Keith taught his teenage daughters to read a map and tasked them with charting a driving trip from Chicago to California and home through the Grand Canyon to celebrate Keith's mother's 70th birthday. During that harrowing trip, Keith and his daughters survived a mule ride to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and back up again in a torrential and suddenly freezing downpour all while riding on a suicidal mule. He was relieved his city-slicker wife stayed back at the lodge that day. That summer they played cassette tapes of Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again," the jazz musical "Ain't Misbehavin'," and the Pointer Sisters "Jump for My Love," during which he would "jump" in

his seat while driving every time the chorus came on to squeals of laughter from his family. As his daughters went off to college and later moved into homes of their own, they relied on their Dad as their handyman because he wouldn't have it any other way. You see, everyone else was "a bunch of idiots," unless he liked them and then they were just "dummies." He couldn't trust his beloved daughters to all that, so he fixed everything, except we're not sure who is going to fix our broken hearts now that he's gone.

When his older daughter, Felicia married Brent Parkhill, he had the joy of becoming one of his favorite lifetime roles: Poppy to Grace Anne Parkhill and Miranda Joan Parkhill. One year when the girls were babies, Felicia and Brent had the nerve to move from Wheaton 30 minutes away, taking those grandbabies with them. So, he and Joan built a house three miles away from them and moved to Oswego, Illinois, where they spent 13 years babysitting and watching his granddaughters grow. Then, Felicia and Brent moved AGAIN – this time across the country to Knoxville, Tennessee. After Brent talked about how great living in Knoxville is, Keith was convinced and persuaded Joan to move across the country and to build another house, this time in the Farragut neighborhood. Meanwhile, Dana married Joe Broccolo in December 2018, and he knew his younger girl finally found a good man with a wonderful, welcoming family who treats her like one of their own. They live in South Elgin, Illinois with their greyhound Payton, named after one of Pop's all-time favorite running backs, good ol' number 34 from the Chicago Bears. Based on how much he loved Felicia and Brent's dog Sadie, we know he would have loved playing with Payton, too.

Some of Keith's favorites included Yosemite Sam, Monty Python, the Chicago Bears, a good medium rare steak, attending Sunday mass, and watching superhero movies with his girls. He enjoyed a nice Sunday brunch with "his honey baby," followed by a drive to nowhere in particular. From the time they were three and four years old, one of his favorite traditions with Felicia and Dana was to take them to lunch and Christmas shopping for Mom. This year he was in the hospital on Black Friday after a massive heart attack the Saturday night before. But Dana and Felicia were there with him, and he was awake and aware, so Dana suggested we shop online and sneak a cracker into the ICU so we could say we kept the tradition going again this year. It wasn't the same, but he was happy to be with his girls. When the good doctors and nurses at Parkwest Hospital in Knoxville knew there was nothing more they could do for him, they suggested Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville might have more expertise and the opportunity for state-of-the-art procedures. Always one to try his best, the family decided to allow him to be airlifted to Nashville via helicopter, where sadly all the best medicines and procedures couldn't heal his very weakened and damaged heart.

Today we know he is with his son, mother, father, step-father Papa Bill Emmerling, who married his mom after Bill Slattery died in 1965. He's with his sister Sylvia Loterizo and her husband Jerry. And his younger brother John Slattery sadly is in hospice now. There are

other beloved family members there, including his nephew Kevin McShane, his brother-in-law Joey Oteri, and mother-in-law and father-in-law Anna May and Tony Oteri, who are surely cooking up a storm for him with a pot of homemade Italian gravy bubbling away on the stove.

Keith Slattery lived his life according to his Catholic faith in Jesus Christ. He helped more people than anyone ever knew, selflessly giving his time and resources to those he loved and for strangers in need alike. He asked us to send a hammer with him to heaven in case St. Peter needs to fix up anything while he's there. We'll also include a tape measure because everything always has to be perfect or it's not right. Thank God he'll have eternity to get everything straightened out up there because that's how long it felt like it took him to do things some days, and we will surely miss those times.

You can visit with Keith's family at the Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Knoxville, Tennessee (711 Northshore Drive) on Monday, December 16, 2019 at 1 PM. His funeral mass will begin at 2 PM and will be celebrated by "THE BISHOP," as he liked to call him, Bishop Richard F. Stika. Guests are encouraged to wear an item of clothing in Keith's favorite color: yellow. There will be a private family burial with full military honors on Tuesday morning.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Knoxville Catholic High School Theater or Robotics Departments. Poppy loved his granddaughters and would be happy to see support for what they love doing. Their donation link is:

<https://www.knoxvillecatholic.com/support/> In the Additional Comments section please indicate Theater or Robotics. In the memory section use his name: Keith Slattery.

Events

DEC **Receiving of Friends** 01:00PM - 02:00PM

16

Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
711 S. Northshore Drive, Knoxville, TN, US, 37919

DEC **Funeral Mass** 02:00PM

16

Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
711 S. Northshore Drive, Knoxville, TN, US, 37919

Comments



“ A tribute video has been added.



Rose Mortuary - December 16, 2019 at 11:56 AM



“ Joan.Felicia,Dana, Lots of great memories (and laughs) come to mind about days working with Keith in the 80s. We all valued his mechanical expertise (especially on the F-A-M machine which many accounts used making their products). Another attribute just as critical in our business was the CARE factor he instilled with the customers. When Teepak had product issues, the customers would say quote," I don't have to worry about it cause Keith will handle it - end of story". The Townsend company who made and sold the F-A-M would want to install a new machine. The accounts would say no thanks, we'll have Keith from Teepak do that and were told just do what Keith wants. Joan and girls, he was truly one of a kind!!! I'm grateful and better off for knowing him. Keith, get things organized up there for all of us old Teepakers to join you someday. So long. Steve

Steve Gibson - December 17, 2019 at 11:13 AM



“ Thank you for your kind words and great memories of my Dad. We love hearing the stories!

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:43 AM



“ Rest In Peace Teepak Brother.... job well done!! You were loved and admired by everyone in the organization and our Customers. Several Teepak Brothers and Sisters have gone before you. I'm sure there's lots of good loving stories being shared this day.

My sincerest condolences to Your loving family.

Rob Sevening

Omaha, Ne.

Rob Sevening - December 17, 2019 at 10:21 AM



“ Thank you, Rob for your condolences and kind words. We have been sharing all the stories...

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:40 AM



“ Just found out your father passed. So sorry for your lose, Keith was a good man and I was happy to know him.

Robert Backus - December 14, 2020 at 10:45 PM



“ I am a fellow Teepak-er (1988-1999) and worked and traveled with Keith many, many times. My Deepest Sympathies to family and friends. So sad to see all of us aging and passing on. Part of life, unfortunately.

Boy, did Keith and I use to love giving each other #\$\$\$. If he didn't give it to you and you didn't give it back, he didn't like you. If you traveled with Keith at all, it did not take long to figure out his favorite food was pizza. In 4-nights on the road, he made me eat pizza 3 -nights, no matter how much I fought him. Two of my favorite things he said all the damn time were:

“We're gonna take this to the NEXT level!”

And

“Pizza is the perfect food, it has all 6 food groups.” But Keith, there are only 5 food groups – “Nope there are 6, you forgot about beer. It's a food group!”

RIP Brother – take it to the NEXT level.

Best Regards,

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Ron Crawford - December 16, 2019 at 06:00 PM



“ Ron, we loved your stories about my Dad! You described him to a "T." Thank you for your kindness.

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:42 AM



“ 66 files added to the album LifeTributes



Rose Mortuary - December 16, 2019 at 10:07 AM



“ Your NTi Family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of W. Keith Slattery.



Your NTi Family - December 16, 2019 at 09:44 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of W. Keith Slattery.



December 15, 2019 at 12:39 PM



“ My deepest condolences to you all. Such beautiful words remembering a clearly special man. My prayers are with you and your family. May you remember and cherish the wonderful memories and hold them forever in your hearts.

- Dave H., a client of Brent's

Dave H - December 15, 2019 at 12:27 PM



“ Thank you, Dave. Every prayer and kind word means so much to us.

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:42 AM



“ I share your sadness and feel like I met your father just reading the wonderful obituary you shared about your Dad. It must have been therapeutic to remember those highlights of his life and yours, Felicia. Those are the memories that will get you through this.

A client of Brent's, Linda Huinker



LINDA Huinker - December 15, 2019 at 11:51 AM



“ Thank you, Linda. It was my privilege to write a tribute to my Dad's life.

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:43 AM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of W. Keith Slattery.



December 14, 2019 at 10:46 AM



“ Very sorry for your loss. Your family will be in my thoughts and prayers.

Jane Sheets - December 14, 2019 at 09:42 AM



“ Thank you, Jane.

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:44 AM



“ Joan and family, so sorry to hear about Keith. I spent many hours working with him in the 80s for Teepak. He was a man of Perfection and never left the job undone or half way. The customers respected him and was the first to call when they needed help. I have many great memories of those years with Keith. Steve Gibson.

Steve Gibson - December 13, 2019 at 03:42 PM



“ I second Steve's comments. I learned so much from Keith. He was a man who taught things technical but also showed what business ethics and character.

Gene Hibshman

Gene - December 14, 2019 at 09:38 AM



“ Thank you both so much. Gene, my Dad loved to teach. Steve, thanks for coming back to write more stories.

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:44 AM



“ Dear Joan and family, my deepest sympathy to you and your lovely family, God Bless you all..I had the pleasure of meeting Keith a few times, and knew right away he was someone special, Joan we had great times at Curves, and going to see Lt Dan Band, coming to your lovely home...hugs and love my sweet friend , blessed our paths crossed !
sincerely,
Sherry Brookner

Sherry Brookner - December 13, 2019 at 03:28 PM



“ Thank you Sherry. My Dad enjoyed those outings to see the Lt Dan Band.

Felicia - December 24, 2019 at 10:45 AM



“ Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of W. Keith Slattery.



December 13, 2019 at 12:06 PM



“ Janet & Dean Palombi purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of W. Keith Slattery.



Janet & Dean Palombi - December 12, 2019 at 11:10 PM