



James "Mike" Michael Kelly

December 24, 1940 - August 17, 2018

James Michael Kelly, age 77, of Rockwall Texas passed away on August 17, 2018 in Dallas, Texas. He was born on December 24, 1940, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and was preceded in death by his father: James Eugene Kelly; mother: Louise Nilva McKinley Kelly; and sister: Kay Kelly. He spent most of his life in Phoenix, Arizona, where the family moved due to Mike's severe asthma.

Mike graduated from University of Arizona in 1963, where he was Blue Key Man of the Year in 1962 and 1963. In 1963, he was Fraternity President of Sigma Alpha Epsilon. He worked on Wall Street before being drafted for Vietnam. At the last minute he was not able to serve due to his asthma. He went on to train horses in Florida where he was discovered by Robert Uihlein, Jr. of Schlitz Brewery and hired to train green broke polo ponies from Argentina for the Schlitz Brewery organization. From there he and his father went on to own and operate four nursing homes in Terrell, Texas, and one in Italy, Texas. Dale Evans, born and raised in Italy, Texas, often came to sing and play the piano for her mother and the residents of the Italy home.

In 1982, at the age of 39, Mike sold his nursing homes and reinvented himself as an underwater photographer. Later he began to take wildlife photos, participating in his favorite contest in South Texas where photographers teamed up with local land owners, vying for a total of \$100,000 cash prizes to be split between the land owner and photographer. Mike's articles and photographs were widely published. Through the years he became a world-renowned photographer.

His honors included an Eden Rock, Grand Cayman photo which won the coveted BBC Underwater Photographer of the Year Contest. His photographs were featured in National Geographic, on the first cover of the new magazine Nature Photographer, Ocean Realm Magazine, Scuba Times, Australia's Sport Diver Magazine, Tauchen German Magazine, YAM Israeli Magazine, Zoo View Magazine, Cayman Divers Guide, The Oceans-A Celebration, and Treasures of South. His work was featured as a cover and article in Philippine Airlines' Mabuhay in-flight magazine and an article for American Airlines in-flight

magazine. Mike also had a feature article and photo in Children's Weekly Reader. Mike signed with the Image Bank in Dallas which was purchased by Getty Images. Getty Images represented Mike for several years.

Mike is survived by his wife: Donna; sister: Kim Kelly and brother-in-law Ted Ledgard of Eugene, Oregon; sister-in-law: Pat Holtman of League City, Texas; nieces: Cassie and husband Danny Atkeisson of The Colony, Texas, and Tricia and husband Daryl Wray of Austin; great nieces: Kacy and husband Christopher Thinger of Spring, Texas, Emily and husband Richard McLemore of Omaha, Nebraska, and Amy Wray of Atlanta, Georgia; and great nephews: David and wife Claudia Atkeisson of Amarillo, Texas, and Aaron Wray of Austin, Texas.

A celebration of Mike's life will be held 4:00pm Saturday, September 29, 2018, at Reflections at Rest Haven Funeral Home - Rockwall Location with Pastor Danny Atkeisson officiating. Memorials in Mike's name may be made to Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children at www.scottishritehospital.org and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital at www.stjude.org/donate.

Events

SEP **Celebration of Life**

04:00PM

29

Reflections at Rest Haven Funeral Home - Rockwall Location
2500 State Highway 66 East, Rockwall, TX, US, 75087

Comments



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Tricia Wray - August 28, 2018 at 08:04 PM



“ Mike and Donna came Washington to celebrate Kacy's high school graduation in '05. Mike took time out to help with Amy's batting practice!

Tricia L Wray - August 30, 2018 at 09:53 PM



“ Mike and Donna, from the day we met in January 1987, have become among my closest, most trusted friends on this earth. I feel honored and fulfilled to enjoy that relationship for these past 32 years.

mike bocchieri - August 28, 2018 at 11:12 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Life in Cayman



Mike Bocchieri - August 28, 2018 at 07:11 AM



“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Kim - August 27, 2018 at 12:47 PM



“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Kim - August 27, 2018 at 12:46 PM



“ Mike would go anywhere and do anything as long as he had a camera!

We sure will miss him.

Anna and David G.

david - August 27, 2018 at 10:09 AM



“ We will miss seeing you in Cayman but will remember all the happy times we had there. RIP sweet Mike and love and hugs to Donna and all the family.

Pat and Georgia Kenney

Georgia Kenney - August 26, 2018 at 05:58 PM



“ My memories of Mike are always with Donna...will always remember his kind and enthusiastic tales of their dives, trips...his underwater photos too! Their visits to PURE ART.

Am sending the family my regards and love from Grand Cayman. He was special and will be missed very much.

Debbie van der Bol - August 26, 2018 at 05:29 PM



“ "Uncle Mike" with David & Emily Atkeisson February 24, 1999 at Bosque del Apache, NM. We had lunch at the Owl Café and went to take some photos of the wildlife.

Good memories!



Cassie Atkeisson - August 25, 2018 at 12:22 PM



“ I remember Mike as a fearless SCUBA diver as well as a great personal friend. He told the story of the time he and Donna descended by helicopter to dive amid thousands of schooling hammerhead sharks. It was mating time so apparently not hungry! Still, Donna said, it was disconcerting being "bumped" by them on the surface.

Another time it was getting up close and personal with grizzly bears catching salmon in Alaska.

Mike lived life to the fullest. He will be sorely missed.

Norman - August 25, 2018 at 10:28 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Horseman



Kim - August 23, 2018 at 05:24 PM