



Edward Griffith Kelly

DEC 2, 1922 - MAY 17, 2015



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Edward Griffith Kelly Sr, 92, went to be with the Lord at sunrise on Sunday, May 17, 2015 at Hope Hospice, after a very brief bout with cancer. Ed and his twin brother, Tom, were born to Dennis and Olive (Santini) Kelly in Key West, FL in December of 1922. Generations of the Kelly and Santini families were pioneers of Chokoloskee Island, Key West, and Fort Myers with rich tales of living off the land including mullet fishing, alligator hunting, rum-running, murder and other fatal tragedies, cigar-rolling, and coaxing crops from sandy Florida soil. Ed was a member of the 'Greatest Generation' and served in WW II on the Naval Destroyer USS Hemminger as an Electrician's Mate, First Class. Ed was born a third generation 'conch' in Key West in 1922, at a time when it was a rowdy, bustling city. He and his twin brother, Tom, were 8 and 9 of a brood that would number 12. His father, Dennis, worked as an engineer at the Navy yard, shoveled coal on military vessels carrying provisions to Fort Jefferson (Dry Tortugas), and was the first Caucasian cigar-roller in Key West. His mother, Olive, had enough of the raucous and unruly town, and pleaded with her husband to move to the Iona area of Fort Myers, where her brother, Leonard Santini, was farming. In 1925, Dennis reluctantly left the job he loved, and loaded his family and all their possessions into a sailing schooner for an overnight journey bound for Punta Rassa at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River. This would prove to be the beginning of a life filled with adventure and mangroves along the mosquitoed mudflats of Iona, the sandy sandspurred banks of Estero Island, and the crab-filled ditches leading to Punta Rassa. In between the long hot summers, Ed attended the two-room Iona School House, and then Fort Myers High School downtown. Ed and several brothers were well known on the Green Wave Football Team, making all-Conference and all-State. He headed into the Navy and 'saw the world' from the deck of a Naval Destroyer. At the end of the war, Ed returned home to work the farm fields with his brother, Emmett. He married Mary Kelly and settled



in Iona, off of what would later become Kelly Road. Ed and his twin, Tom would soon go into the farming business together, growing red Irish potatoes. Ed and Tom farmed in Iona, along Gladiolus Drive, and what is now Daniels Road. For several decades, they managed to eke out a living, and raise and feed 12 hungry kids. The Kelly twins worked hard all of their lives, and were never daunted by the back-breaking labor or the hot summer sun. For Ed, the dog days of summer always brought back his childhood love of everything saltwater. He was fearless in catching blue crabs, stone crabs, and lobster. His wife, Mary, bought him the first speargun in Lee County; a gift that would forever change the way the Kelly family acquired dinner. His tenacity for catching shellfish translated well to goggles, fins, and a speargun. Many a snapper, grouper, mullet, sheepshead, cobia, amberjack, and jewfish met its fate, and ended up fileted and fried. Every summer, Ed and Mary packed up the kids, and were joined by countless family and friends, camping in the Florida Keys. Days were endless hours of boating, fishing, spearfishing, snorkeling, and diving aboard the 20' Pooped Pappy. Evenings were large piles of lobster and fish for dinner, and night brought numerous kid-stuffed cots stretched under the star-studded beach of Bahia Honda State Park. Ed's fierce love for the saltwater and for his family is permanently implanted in his following generations. He lovingly penned a memoir of growing up in southwest Florida. Ed was predeceased by his wife of 48 years, Mary Elwyn Kelly. Also his parents, his brothers and sisters: Conrad Kelly, Sister Irma Kelly, Emmett Kelly, Dorothy Berry, Cecelia Hastings, Everett Kelly, Nick Kelly, Alan Kelly, and Joyce Rauth. Left to cherish his memory is his wife, Billie Headley Kelly; his twin brother, Tom (Kathleen) Kelly of Fort Myers / TN; his sister, Patty (Steve) Nott of Arcadia; and Billie's children, Wayne (Leona) Kelly of Fort Myers and Karen (Dennis) Aust of Bokeelia. Also surviving Ed are his children: Griff (Mary) Kelly of Seattle, WA; Danny Kelly of Fort Myers; Kathryn Kelly of Fort Myers; Tim (Dawn) Kelly of Sandpoint, ID; Lori Smith of Albemarle, NC; and Karen (Menas) Melsior of Gastonia, NC. His 17 grandchildren are Heather(Pat) McGuire, Erin (Mike) Rymer, Josh Kelly, Dana (Ken) Taylor, Shane (Tara) Kelly, Danielle (Travis) Kirby, Dane (Tiffany) Kelly, Travis (Cori-Anne) Kelly, TJ (Jessica) Kelly, Michele (Adam) Ridley, Brian (Krista) Kelly, Andrea Kraft, Heidi (Lou) Lewis, Justin Vanhoy, Menjay



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(Jenny) Melsior, Kasmia Melsior, and Logan Melsior. His 19 great-grandchildren are Tina, Lleyton, Cameron, Ben, Lorin, Anna, Seth, Scout, twins Jac and Lochlan, Elijah, Joshua, Keegan, Addison, Macklyn Mae, Rhylee Jean, Charlie Rose, Dallas, and Sophia. Also many dear nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends. A Visitation will be held from 5-8 pm on Thursday, June 11 in the Chapel at Fort Myers Memorial Gardens Funeral Home, 1589 Colonial Blvd, Fort Myers 33907. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Friday, June 12 at 1 pm at St. Cecelia's Catholic Church, 5632 Sunrise Drive, Fort Myers 33919. Immediately following the service, his family will attend the burial at Fort Myers Cemetery. Family and friends are then invited to a Celebration of Ed's life at 4 pm that day (Friday, June 12) for a fish fry in the Kelly family tradition, to be held at The Heights Center, 15570 Hagie Drive, Fort Myers 33908. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Ed's favorite charity founded by his daughter, The Heights Foundation, at www.heightsfoundation.org or mailed to 15570 Hagie Drive, Fort Myers, FL 33908. We are grateful to his many family members and friends who made his life rich, and loved him as we did. And we are thankful to Hope Hospice who made the last few days of his life very comfortable. Condolences may be left to the family at www.fortmyersmemorial.com.



Tribute Wall

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L. Dean posted:

I did not have the opportunity to know your loved one, but his obituary was hands down the best I have ever read. Oddly I enjoy reading obituaries, maybe because I am a medical professional or just because I love people in general. What a life he led!

June 23 at 6:17 AM



Steve Delago posted:

Lit a candle in memory of Edward Griffith Kelly

June 1 at 7:58 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Edward by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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