

# Steve Kelly

*December 16, 1962 ~ November 5, 2024*

Steve Kelly, 61, of Salt Lake City, UT, passed away on November 5th, 2024, surrounded by his family after a courageous battle with cancer.

Steve lived a life filled with achievement, service, love, and insatiable curiosity. He was a devoted husband, son, brother, uncle, and friend, whose legacy will endure in the countless lives he touched. Raised in Lancaster, PA, Steve earned his Eagle Scout in Troop 99, fostering a love of nature and the outdoors that lasted a lifetime. In high school, he was a star multi-sport athlete (the first person to be a 4-year letterman in Football and Wrestling) at Manheim Township High School, where his talent earned him a football scholarship to the United States Air Force Academy. During his time at the Academy, Steve played on and coached a team that went from a losing record to being ranked #5 in Division I. In 1984, Steve was honored as the inaugural winner of the Brian Bullard Award (aka the “Air Force Heisman”) recognizing the characteristics of unselfishness, 110% effort, total team commitment, and pride in his role on the team. His proudest moments came from defeating legacy powerhouse teams and winning all four of the bowl games in which he participated.

After graduation, Steve served as a U.S. Air Force helicopter pilot, flying the UH-1 Huey, MH-53J Pave Low, and HH-60G Pave Hawk. His career was marked by heroism and service, with Steve completing 324 lifesaving missions, receiving the 1996 American Legion Aviation Valor Award for commanding the retrieval of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown’s body in Croatia, evacuating embassy personnel from Liberia, and leading extraction efforts for wounded soldiers on the battlefields of Afghanistan. Following his military service, Steve transitioned to a successful civilian career as a pilot, flying for Continental Express and later becoming a Captain for Delta Airlines. He most enjoyed flying international routes, with frequent trips from his hometown of Salt Lake City to Amsterdam and Paris, earning the respect of his colleagues and passengers alike.

In 2008, after being diagnosed with cancer, Steve faced significant physical challenges but remained determined to live life to the fullest. Through sheer will and dedication, he threw himself into physical therapy, eventually becoming a member of the USA Para-Cycling Team and competing in international events placing as high as 12th in the world. Team USA chose him to receive the Stars and Stripes Award for being the most inspirational teammate. He also participated in and raised funds for the Huntsman 140 ride, a grueling 600+ mile event that raises money for cancer research. Steve’s commitment to helping others extended beyond his own recovery. He volunteered for the Trails Adaptive program, which empowers athletes with disabilities to enjoy outdoor sports and recreation. One special memory was supporting paraplegic athletes, along with his brother, learning to wake surf through Wake for Warriors, just three months before his passing. Outside of his professional accomplishments and philanthropic efforts, Steve was a passionate photographer, particularly of birds. Over the last 20 years, he became

renowned for his stunning images of birds, capturing their beauty from across the United States. He particularly loved sharing this love with his father (Andy) on trips from Maine to Florida to Utah and collaborating on photoshop projects over the internet. Steve also had a deep love for history, often exploring American Indian remnants, Civil War battlefields, and historic aviation sites in the American West.

In the last few years of his life, Steve focused on spending quality time with his wife, Holly—the love of his life—along with his nieces and nephews, parents, and siblings. He cherished these moments, bringing joy and laughter to those around him, always putting others before himself and completing house projects during every visit.

Steve is survived by his beloved wife, Holly Kelly; his parents, Andy and Betsy Kelly; his in-laws, Tom and Maria Russell; his sister, Kristie (Bill) Sindorf; his brother, Scott (Amy)Kelly; his brothers-in-law, Eric (Eeiron) and Matthew Whitley; and his cherished nieces and nephews, Trevor Sindorf, Josh Sindorf, Jackson Kelly, Morgan Kelly, Emma Whitley, and Ensley Whitley.

Two celebrations of Steve's life will be held in Utah and Pennsylvania.  The first will be at Larkin Sunset Gardens (Sandy, UT) on November 23, 2024 at 2:00pm (luncheon 12-1:30pm) and the second will be at Valleybrook Clubhouse (Lancaster, PA) on December 7, 2024 at 1:30pm (luncheon 12-1:30pm).

Steve will live in our hearts forever!

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Huntsman Cancer Institute (https://give.huntsmancancer.org/page/67433/donate/1), a cause that was close to Steve's heart.