



John Richard Keller II

September 25, 1948 - July 7, 2014

John R Keller II age 65 of Dixon, IL and Crystal Springs, MS died Monday July 7, 2014 at his home in Dixon. He was born September 25, 1948 in Dixon, the son of J. Richard and Mary (Risley) Keller. John was a special education teacher, Financial Aid Director at Shimer College, and Director of Housing for Zion, IL. He served as past president of Lake County Easter Seals and past president of Zion Lions Club. John was a Red Cross volunteer and a board member of the Franklin Grove Creek Preservation Area. Protection of natural areas was his lifetime passion.

He is survived by three daughters Maria (Jeff) Dahnke of Barrington, Barbara (Danny) Nickels of Wadsworth and Traci (Dell) Baker of Antioch, IL, six grandchildren, Jacob, Nate, Vivian, Ava, Melia, and Jaiden, his mother Mary Keller of Dixon, one sister Candy (Ray) Rezner of Ft Meyers, FL, one brother Bruce (Kathy) Keller of Dixon, and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his father.

At John's request, there will be no formal services. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the "Franklin Grove Creek and Preservation Corporation" and sent to John Keller Memorial, PO Box 51, Barrington IL 60011-0051.

Tribute Wall



“ *John Richard Keller II*

October 08, 2023 at 11:30 AM



“ *John Richard Keller II*

December 31, 2022 at 02:40 AM



“ *I have just finished a Christmas card to John, wanted to verify his address, and came upon this site. My dad, Joe Keller, and his dad were cousins, and he had once offered to fill me in on our descent from Degory Priest on the Mayflower.*

He was such a friendly personable man to talk to on the phone a few years ago. I'm very sorry to hear he was in pain, and hope the family has loads of wonderful memories.

I will send the card to his Mississippi address, with the hope of its being forwarded, and hearing from you.

Molly Keller

Sacramento, CA

Molly Keller - December 14, 2015 at 09:13 PM

FM

“ I just recently heard of John's passing. I'm very sorry for your loss. I too met John at Shiner in the 90s. One of his favorite sayings was "it is what it is" among so many others. He had the craziest stories. One time he took my husband and I to the airport and THAT was the scariest ever! We also had the pleasure of his presence at our wedding in 1995- in Ohio! He died too young...I know he had lots of pain even then and he endured it with an amazing strength. Oh I won't forget his shenanigans or his wit and humor. God bless your family for your loss. My husband Richard and I are sorry to hear that John Keller, Financial Aid director extraordinaire is no longer on earth. He's probably still adventuring. Just not in pain anymore. God bless. Francine and Richard Murray

francine murray - August 18, 2014 at 08:28 PM

GM

“ Gary And Elizabeth Magnuson lit a candle in memory of John Richard Keller II



Gary and Elizabeth Magnuson - July 24, 2014 at 01:33 PM

TH

“ John was full of vitality and enthusiasm. Anything that life threw at him, he was ready to take on. He was full of mad schemes and ideas, which more often than not, he turned into reality. He was generous with his time and money. When I was a student at Shimer he taught me not to take myself so seriously. He showed me that action is often better than over-thinking a problem. John was a master story-teller who rarely let the facts get in the way of a good tale. More than anything, John was a good friend to me when I was a rather lost young man. Although I had not been in touch with John for 23 years, I shall miss him and know the world is the poorer for his absence.

Thomas Heidkamp - July 24, 2014 at 11:09 AM

JP

“ John and I spent a lot of time serving the community with the Zion Lions Club. Even though he and I were opposites on politics we had many good times. The late night poker games, the pop corn pops for the Labor Day Parades in Zion and many cans of Old Milwaukee!! So sorry to loose him so early in life. God Speed John and may God Bless you and your loved ones. John Paxton

John Paxton - July 21, 2014 at 10:48 AM

MH

“ The world has lost a one of a kind, free spirit who brought great warmth and humor into everything he did. Whether he was trying to get a bunch of college kids to a "Just Say No Rally" (not necessarily just to drugs but whatever you want to say "No" to... like meat if you were a vegetarian) or dealing with the drama of growing up. He was a friend, confidant, and someone who made you feel cared about during a big time of life transition. He could sell ice to Eskimos and rally everyone together.

One of my fondest memories was of John hanging off the back of a pick up and dropping a pebble off a bridge to "prove" Einstein's theory of relativity. His hair was flying in the wind, smiling, and was on top of the world, bringing his curiosity and big personality to everything he did. John helped "form" me; he taught a tightly wound, insistant girl to relax, have fun and smell the flowers.

Thank you for sharing your Dad with us. He was always proud of you and would tell us stories about what wonderful people you were. My condolences to you during this difficult time.

Mary Herman

Mary Herman - July 18, 2014 at 05:27 AM

EA

“ Thank you John, for making Shimer one of the best experiences possible.

Edwin Alvarez - July 17, 2014 at 09:34 PM



“ I remember the mischievous twinkle in John's eye. I met him as a student at Shimer College.
"I love you Alice B Toklas"
Chris Heinisch

Christine Heinisch - July 17, 2014 at 03:29 PM

JB

“ I knew John from my Shimer days. He was such a huge presence, always. His booming voice, his razor-sharp wit, his steadfast commitment for finding a way for anyone who wanted an education to get one, regardless of financial means. I only knew him as a friend my first two years at Shimer, and then the economy took a turn for the worse, and my mother lost her job, days before tuition was due. You better believe that John pulled together financial aid for me, in record time. I was amazed and grateful, yet not surprised at all that he pulled it off. He will be missed by so many, and left such an indelible mark on the lives he touched. My deepest condolences to his family and close friends.

Jennifer Barnes - July 17, 2014 at 03:18 PM

SI

“ John was one of a kind. I remember interviewing with him before I went to work at Shimer - feet on the desk, cigarette hanging out of his mouth and that cocked eyebrow as he regaled me with his vision of Shimer (I was a grad). Charming, hilarious, and passionate about his beliefs, he will be missed. My deepest sympathy to all of you. Blessed be.

Suzanne Irilli - July 16, 2014 at 10:31 AM

TB

That is hilarious, and so much my dad. Thanks for sharing, it made me smile.

Traci Keller Baker

Traci Keller Baker - July 16, 2014 at 09:28 PM

TR

“ *The Ranken Family sends are love and prayers for your family on your loss. May God be with you and your family.*

Sincerely,

Bill & Tracy Ranken

Mark & Donna Ranken

Tracy Ranken - July 16, 2014 at 09:42 AM

SB

“ *My name is Steve Beisiegel. I knew John at Shimer College in the early 1990's and only within the last year or so did I lose touch with him. He was a sweet, funny, smart problem solver and a pillar of strength, optimism, and seemingly boundless energy. I know I benefitted greatly from knowing him and I was honored to be called his friend. He was also, as Director Of Financial-Aid, instrumental in getting a heck of a lot of young people the ability to get an excellent education.*

My sincere and heartfelt condolences. He was far too young. ~

steve beisiegel - July 15, 2014 at 09:56 PM

MD

Thank you for your kind note Steve. It is great hearing about the impact my dad had at Shimer. I know he really loved that position and the great people he met there. Best regards, Maria

Maria Dahnke - July 16, 2014 at 05:44 PM

TB

Thanks for sharing! He was an awesome guy and affected lots of lives.

Traci Keller Baker

Traci Keller Baker - July 16, 2014 at 09:29 PM

ES

I was one of those souls who never would have gone to Shimer without his assistance. But more than that, his office was a second home. A place where friendships were wrought, coffee was made, and generally mischievous good-deed-doings were plotted. He is missed by many of us. Much love to your family.

Elisabeth Sherman

elisabeth sherman - July 17, 2014 at 01:18 AM



Every poor bastard who crossed paths with John Keller came out changed. Sometimes enlightened, sometimes confused, sometimes reeking of whiskey and unsolicited wisdom, but always changed. He didn't walk into a room. He detonated into it like a philosophical depth charge. You could feel the gravity shift. The air got stranger. He was a human event.

The man had the kind of luck you only read about in apocalyptic footnotes. He moved to Montserrat to build an artist colony. A place for creativity, madness, and maybe a little peace. And the Earth itself rose up in revolt. The volcano didn't just erupt. It buried his estate in volcanic ash like some Old Testament joke. John called it strategic relocation. Said it added flavor. Said it didn't mean shit to a tree.

His mouth was a weaponized paradox generator. "Honesty is the best scam" was not a joke. He believed it. He lived it. He spread it like gospel. You'd be halfway through arguing with him before realizing he had just given you the best advice of your life. He was a conman for good. A bastard for justice. A slob of the highest moral order.

And Christ, the way he ate. He could ruin a suit with a sandwich. He could feed a pack of stray dogs without dropping the fork. But you couldn't look away. That was the trick. He made a spectacle of being unapologetically human and dared you to flinch.

He gave money to broke kids and time to lost causes. If you needed help and he could help, he did it. No hero bullshit. Just action. He turned financial aid into guerrilla warfare against the system. Quiet. Effective. Totally insane.

John Keller was not a man you missed. He was a man you remembered. Because once he got inside your life, he rewired it. Nothing was ever quite the same after.

Raise a glass. Tip the ashtray. Rest in glorious, offensive, uncontainable chaos, you beautiful lunatic.

C. Carr - April 18, 2025 at 07:03 AM