



## Joseph Edward Kelley

October 9, 2022

Joseph Edward Kelley, artist, craftsman and outdoorsman, left this life too soon on Sunday, Oct. 9, 2022, at age 55.

Joe was born in Fairfax, Virginia, but lived most of his life in Blacksburg. He loved the New River Valley's mountains, creeks and rivers, and spent as much time as he could hiking or paddling, sketching and painting them.

He graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in architecture, but had a calling as a visual artist and pursued that vocation for years while supporting himself as a skilled carpenter and contractor. Most recently, Joe had worked for the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke as head preparator and art handler. The last day of his life he helped to install an art show at Washington & Lee University and that night worked at the Taubman on the opening of its newest visiting exhibition.

In 2016, Joe had a retrospective of his paintings and other works in the folk art tradition -- featuring imaginary birds and "Piano Haints," sculptures crafted from parts of a discarded piano he "rescued" from the side of a road -- at the Ruth C. Horton Gallery in Virginia Tech's Moss Arts Center. He was also part of the Mountain Lake Workshop in the early 1990s and helped to create "Pathways: Appalachian Trail Frieze" that was recently featured at the Taubman.

Aside from his artwork, Joe was a dedicated volunteer for the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club, serving as a co-maintainer for a 6-mile stretch of trail in the beautiful Sinking Creek Valley of Craig County for more than 20 years.

He had many memorable hikes there with his faithful trail dog, sweet Clementine.

Joe was one of those people blessed with the ability to build or repair just about anything. He performed jobs large and small as a contractor, and had an innate ability to troubleshoot and come up with a solution. He was an Eagle Scout and regularly found ways to use his talents to help other people.

Joe is survived by his wife, Dominique Francesca, his mother, Mary Kelley, both of Blacksburg, his brother Brian (Leigh Anne) and nephews Colin and Kevin of Roanoke, his brother Patrick and nephews Aidan and Liam, of Massachusetts, sisters-in-law Monique Francesca (Souleymane Dicko) of Paris, France, Angelique Corcoran (Michael) of St. Paul, Minn., and parents-in-law Marlowe and Christiane Cassetti of Penrose, Colo. He was predeceased by his father, Joseph Eugene Kelley. Joe had a large circle of beloved friends too numerous to mention from his nearly 40 years in Blacksburg.

Family will receive friends at McCoy Funeral Home, 150 Country Club Drive S.W., Blacksburg, from 2 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 16, 2022, with a celebration of life beginning at 3 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to support the arts in your community, or to a local trail or outdoors organization.

# Previous Events

## Receive Friends

OCT **16**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home Chapel  
150 Country Club Dr S.W.  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

# Tribute Wall

JR

“ Remembering Joe's beautifully absurd sense of humor as depicted in his comic strip in the Collegiate Times @1988-1991.  
"These elves are superior and they make an excellent cookie!"  
Glad I was able to spend time with this special guy.  
My condolences to the Kelley family and all Joe's friends.  
Joy

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**Joy (Baum) Reid** - October 16, 2022 at 02:16 PM

CF

“ Joe saved my dog. When my dog was young she got spooked, ran off, and got lost in the woods for 3 months back behind where Joe used to live on Cedar Run. One day Joe stopped by to talk and he asked, 'where's Ester'? I told him we didn't know and expected the worst. A few weeks later Joe texts me that there is a strange dog barking at him in the woods on his hike. He sends me 'woods directions', and I was able to get to his spot later that day to find the scared starving dog. Ester is still with us.

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**cavan fleming** - October 16, 2022 at 06:04 AM