

Kelley was state worker, gifted mechanic

By Priscilla Aguirre

Express-News Staff Writer

William Lawrence Kelley Jr. had many talents, from fixing up cars to helping others with their welfare benefits.

Kelley, known as a man of few words and a committed Christian, died May 27. He was 77.

At an early age, Kelley knew he was great at putting parts together and was mechanically inclined, his brother Ed Kelley said.

"When we were young teens our neighbors threw motorcycle parts in a wash tub outside and we asked if we (could) have it," his brother recalled. "They let us take the parts and he reconstructed it in no time. He ended up driving it up and down the street."

Growing up on the South Side, Kelley graduated from Harlandale High School in 1957. In school, Kelley was involved with the auto body shop class, where he would spend most of his time working on projects.

After he graduated, Kelley served in the Army National Guard for two years. Kelley continued his service in the Army Reserve and was honorably discharged.

"Back in the day on the South Side it was known to join the Army after high school," his brother said. "He also wanted an adventure, and he really did enjoy his time in the service."

After he started his family, Kelley earned a degree in business at Southwest Texas State College, now Texas State University, in 1974.

"He wanted to set a good example for his son and so he decided to get his degree," his brother said. "He picked business because he wanted to help others, and he shortly scored a job where he could do that."

Kelley worked for the Texas Department of Human Services, assisting individuals with welfare benefits. He retired in 1998.

"The main thing he loved from his job was being able help people," his brother said. "He was proud of his time there and everybody loved him when he was around."

In retirement, Kelley let his mechanic side flourish. He was passionate about hot rods, buying and working on them. He owned his own hot rod and kept it in a storage unit, his brother said.

"On a good day he would drive it around and clean it up with his buddies," his brother said. "I didn't know much about cars, but he always helped me with it. He was just a fine person, great brother and an outstanding individual."

Kelley's other hobbies were being with his family, listening to music and playing the guitar.



William Lawrence Kelley Jr. enjoyed hot rods and helping people.

William Lawrence Kelley, Jr.

Born: April 17, 1938, San Antonio

Died: May 27, 2015, San Antonio

Preceded by: Parents Marie and Lawrence Kelley; brother Frederick Roger Kelley

Survived by: Brother Ed Kelley and sister-in-law, Nancy; sons Rodney Kelley and Billy Johnson; daughter Lorrie McGiluray; granddaughter Christine Carroll; great-granddaughters Hayden, Morgan and Emily; niece Kristal Kelley; and nephew Brandon Kelley

Services: Funeral at 10 a.m. Tuesday at Porter Loring North Chapel, 2102 N. Loop 1604 East

"I took my dad to dinner for his 77th birthday, and it meant so much to him," his son Rodney Kelley said. "It was the little things that made him happy, and he was a gracious person. When you had a problem he didn't stop helping you until it was solved. He watched out for everyone he cared for, and I'm sure he still is."

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