

Kathy Vegter Dean Celebration, Sunday, August 30, 2026, 1:00 pm

Thank you all for coming to Celebrate Kathy's wonderful—but far too short—happy life. Kathy was so robust, active, and smiling that most of our community said, "I never knew anything was wrong." Any who has difficulty standing is welcome to grab a chair, move around, or find a spot to sit.

When I was a teen, I often went to sleep listening to Franklyn MacCormack's "Night Sounds" on WGN radio. He introduced each show with his signature tagline, "I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you." Little did I know I would meet a girl who would in real time make me the man I am. I had promised her dad, whom she idolized, that I would make her happy. I grew up stoic, reserved, driven, determined—all fine qualities. In my devotion to Kathy, she made me happy, gregarious, hospitable, romantic, adventurous, fun-loving, full of zest. But Kathy changed me most by her soul. Such an innocent and trusting and tender flower whom I could carelessly and thoughtlessly cut easily and deeply. Such a delicate rose I soon discovered, I could not bear to wilt. She, by her gentleness, molded me to be more charitable, less judgmental, more patient, more sensitive, more thoughtful, and kinder. To be honest, I feel pretty lost right now, especially on weekends.

Who knows why certain ideas get into your head. With our conservative backgrounds, it never occurred to me that we might divorce. But I'd seen plenty of old couples—not fighting—but just two people living in the same house. I didn't want that. Just like you vow to stay in shape, or vow to stay out of debt, I vowed to own romance, adventure, and magic to the end—whatever it took. My standard soon became "however I treated Kathy when we were teens, I would treat her always "till death do us part." It occurred to me early on that it was disingenuous—not to speak of selfish—to treat a girl winsomely to get her, and then wax lazy once you "had what you wanted."

Whenever she pulled in our driveway, I appeared before she turned off the truck. I'd open her door, say "Hey Gorgeous," and carry in her groceries because I'd have done that at age 19. She drove home for the last time on Thursday, July 30, and we repeated this routine. I bought her a lot of clothes, for the last time on April 11, because I'd bought her clothes at 20. She always exuded the excitement of a junior girl going to prom when UPS delivered her Venus package. I made her 5 cards every year—birthday, her father's death, our first meeting, engagement, wedding—the last just days ago on August 3—because I would have done so at age 21. I loved

surprising her with my card and hearing her say, "Okay, what day did I forget this time?"

We met when we were 18 and fell for each other really hard. She said, "Two things I want to do: bike and dance."

We appeared 3 times on the JPAC stage. In February, 2023, we were featured in a multi-media show called "Tales of Adventure." I said to the script writer, "Why would you pick us for your show?" Teresa said, "You and Kathy are a love story and your bike trips are adventure—two necessary elements make for a great story."

Please celebrate Kathy with her 12 minutes in the spotlight during "Tales of Adventure."

Tales of Adventure: (13)

Kathy and I saw *Les Miserables* live several times. As most of you know, for decades our hangout has been the Butterfly. We grew to be part of the fabric. Many nights Mike Williams sang "I Dreamed a Dream." He kills that lament. After Kathy was diagnosed, if Mike hadn't sung it yet, Kathy would request it. In any case, Kathy would grab me, and we'd head to the floor. We'd lock tragic, mournful, and melancholy eyes, as we covered the floor silently and elegantly lamenting our sentence. No one else knew or could tell why we struggled deeply as Mike sang...

Then I was young and unafraid
And dreams were made and used
And wasted...
No song unsung
No wine untasted
I dreamed we'd spend our years together
But the tigers come at night
With voices loud as thunder
As they tear your hope apart...
And still I dream she'll come to me
That we'll grow old together
But there are dreams that cannot be
And there are storms
We cannot weather
I dreamed that life would end so different
Than this fate I'm handed.
Now life has killed the dream I dreamed.

Here's Mike to relive it for you...

Mike: I Dreamed a Dream (4)

Though Mocha Moment would not exist without many of you who aided our ascent, and it wouldn't exist now without the incomparable team we have, there is still the sense in which "Kathy and I built Mocha Moment." Privately the risk, the anxiety, the exhaustion. And the scene of so many happy times for us. Amber insisting "you can make better muffins than these." Jordan standing on a dish tub to take orders at drive-thru. Down time in the kitchen.

One afternoon, the pace was slow. Two or three staff hanging out with us in the kitchen. I flirted, "I always call you gorgeous. You never call me handsome." Kathy responded, "Let's just say you're rugged." Whenever I told that story later, Kathy insisted she had said, "Rugged Handsome." I demurred, and she persisted, "You don't want to be a pretty boy, do you?" We had lots of fun.

A different day, after the tattered jean look arrived, again in the kitchen when it was slow, I pointed out ripped jeans on one of our baristas. "How come she gets to wear that, and you throw mine away when they finally get comfortable." With that Vegter fighter look, Kathy cut off all discussion with adamant and decided finger pointing, 1-2-3. "That's different. You wouldn't understand. And I'm not going to explain it to you." So funny.

The hardest thing is walking in our house and finding her glider empty. Looking at her recliner on our deck and she's not there. Walking downstairs and finding her sewing machine silent. Taking down my bike for our Sunday ride, and not taking hers down too to pump up the tires and oil the chain. Walking through Mocha Moment kitchen, seeing Felix and Rocket washing dishes, but not seeing Kathy at the bakery table baking with Ziggy, Hank, and Leo with their little rolling pins, and working in some treats. Dozens of times I grandpa joked, "I thought you were supposed to be baking." Kathy always chimed back, "Treats are part of it. You can't bake without treats."

Zach will favor us with "Empty Chairs and Empty Tables." (4)

After we got the bad news, and had hugged and cried a very long time, we held hands and listened to Tim McGraw...

Looking at the x-rays...

"...this might really be the real end..
Man, what'd you do?"...
He said, "I went skydiving, Rocky Mountain climbing,
Went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fu Manchu
And I loved deeper, spoke sweeter,
Gave forgiveness I'd been denying"
And he said,
"Someday I hope you get the chance
To live like you were dying"

After she swallowed the bitter pill, we bought our TREKS, and Kathy put 7,766 miles on hers while dying. Rode across Ohio, Ontario, Canada, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee—all Stage 4 and Chemo. In June she rode across Wisconsin on morphine. Early the week we started our final adventure, she had been unsure if she could handle the growing pain and discomfort. Then she announced, "They just upped my morphine. Let's ride." And ride we did. 390 miles. The Mississippi to Lake Michigan. Our last hurrah. Our last Sunday ride was to Rock Bar & Grill in Beloit, on Sunday, June 28. Back through Big Hill Park. 25 miles round trip.

Sports Illustrated lists Roger Kahn's *Boys of Summer* as the #1 sports book of all time. It's about baseball, but it's really about life. Kahn was the reporter for the lovable losers, the Brooklyn Dodgers, who could never beat the Yankees. The Dodgers sported at least 6 future hall of famers. In those days, there was no money in baseball. After Hall of Fame careers with tens of thousands cheering them, Duke Snyder, Jackie Robinson, Sandy Koufax, and all the other former stars, became bar tenders and used car salesmen. Kahn gets the idea to track them down and interview them 15 years after the spotlight—from tens of thousands cheering them to serving Old Style in some nondescript bar. The theme: decline after greatness. Kahn's unforgettable great lines describe these men—and Kathy. Decline after greatness. "You celebrate a team triumphant, but you fall in love with a team in defeat. Because losing after great striving is the story of man, who was born to sorrow, whose sweetest songs tell of saddest thought, and who, if he is a hero, does nothing in life so becomingly as leaving it. I treasure Kathy's noble, infectious, and courageous spirit, as she becomingly left this life.



**Our last photo together
Anniversary #53**

**With only 5 more days to
live, that winsome,
infectious, radiant smile.**

Virtually every card and comment, verbal or written, I've received in the past few days highlighted various versions of "Kathy's infectious smile," or her "beaming face," or "radiant glow." Looking through a few hundred photos of her, I could not find a photo of her not radiating happiness. I thought of Joni Mitchell: "You don't know what you've got till it's gone..." With 5 days to live, on August 3, she took this standard photo (her last) on our deck to celebrate our final anniversary, radiating her standard beam.

Please celebrate Kathy in this [Video Tribute](#). (17)

Amber you are so much like your mother. I could not pay you a higher compliment. You called to mind some favorite lines from Longfellow's "Village Blacksmith": Your Mom and I toured his home and memorial garden on a Boston bike trip. Third from the left on the impressive sculpture in Longfellow Park in Cambridge is "The Village Blacksmith."

Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands
The smith, a mighty man is he
With large and sinewy hands...

....

The smith hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir
It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!



He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Amber will sing "How do I Say Goodbye." (3)

Cyndi and Rainbow Bridge performed for our 50th Anniversary.
Unforgettable. Gary is a good friend. We've often danced to him and his
band or "sitting in" at the Butterfly.

Harlan Howard said, "Country is 3 chords and the truth."

Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers sang, "You Can't Make Old Friends."
This song is Truth if I ever heard it.

What will I do when you are gone?
Who's gonna tell me the truth?

"Kathy, I picked my first Romas." "Steve, they're small and late."
Who's gonna finish the stories I start
The way you always do?

Kathy was my #1 fan on all my stories. I'd start an old favorite,
and she'd be so tickled she'd blurt the punchline. It got so
regular that i started each story with "Kathy, don't blow the
punchline." I'd give anything to be at the VFW with Kathy this
Friday night and have her ruin my story by starting with the
punchline.

When somebody knocks at the door
Someone new walks in
I will smile and shake their hands
But you can't make old friends
When Saint Peter opens the gate
And you come walking in
I'll be there just waiting for you
Cause you can't make old friends

Cyndi and Gary are going to favor us with "You Can't Make Old Friends." (4)

Some never get the chance to love. After 9/11, Queen Elizabeth said in her
speech to America, "Grief is the price we pay for love." My sorrow is the
barometer of Kathy's 55 year love affair with me.

"I could have missed the pain,
but I've had to miss the dance."

Gary will sing, "The Dance" (4)

Another song Mike kills is "My Way." Kathy never ever let us stay seated on "My Way." Those lines became her lines. She was never going to let anyone, especially me, tell her how to think or what to do. And she was never going to let religious traditions stop her from having fun. As Mike belted those words, she echoed by enunciating deliberately, "I took the blows, and did it my way."

Mike is going to relive "My Way." (4)

One of the many people without whom Mocha Moment would not be is our nephew Jon. 10 good friends said they'd give me a week to build MM. Handy friends. Too many Indians, not enough Chiefs. I called Jon. "Will you come lead a framing crew if I top your wages and buy you a plane ticket?" With two chiefs, Jon and Ben, we started on Saturday morning and closed in the roof on MM by Friday night. Crazy fast. Thank you again, Jon.

Jon is a member of Kathy's vast Vegter tribe. The Vegter tribe loves it when Jon lightens our hearts with "Only Imagine."

Jon: "Only Imagine" (4)

At some point every night at the Butterfly, Mike would announce, "Kathy and Steve, we have a little song for you, The "Ashokan Farewell," Then we'd would waltz to that haunting music. Ken Burns made it famous in his Civil War documentary. The Sullivan Ballou clip is likely the most well known. The Ashokan Reservoir, up in the Catskills, supplies 40% of NYC drinking water. For decades (1980) Jay Unger has operated "The Ashokan Fiddle and Dance Camps" just a few miles down from the reservoir. In 1982 he wrote a song to close out his weekly camp. Again, Jon will relive for us countless times waltzing to this tune as we both knew "we would be parted sooner, rather than later." Enjoy the photos of Kathy and me as we spent the morning of June 8, 2022 riding around and thrilling to be at the Ashokan Reservoir. Accompanying John are two younger members of the Vegter tribe.

The sun is sinking low in the sky above Ashokan
The pines and the willows know soon we will part
There's a whisper in the wind of promises unspoken
And a love that will always remain in my heart

My thoughts will return to the sound of your laughter
The magic of moving as one
And a time we'll remember long ever after
The moonlight and music and dancing are done

Will we climb the hills once more?
Will we walk the woods together?
Will I feel you holding me close once again?
Will every song we've sung stay with us forever?
Will you dance in my dreams or my arms until then?

Under the moon the mountains lie sleeping
Over the lake the stars shine
They wonder if you and I will be keeping
The magic and music, or leave them behind



Jon: "The Ashokan Farewell" (4)

Kathy and I regularly discussed our beliefs, which are centered on the Cross. We rehearsed often that we derive from the cross these few maxims: I am loved by an overarching love, ultimately there is justice, thankfully there is forgiveness, life's not fair, forgive all the people making it not fair, and do good to whomever you can in whatever time you've got left. Kathy epitomized the "Beatitudes." I can only quote them in the old KJV. Only one of eight needs any rephrasing, the first. "Poor in spirit" means not "thinking you know everything," not being a "big shot."

The Beatitudes

Kathy epitomized these virtues: and she left her lover, her sons, her daughter, her grandsons, her granddaughter, and her wine ladies better people. ..and her Mocha Moment, her Walnut Street neighborhood, her Janesville, and her America a better place.

Jon his going to lead us in the 4 common verses of that great American anthem...

Amazing Grace — The American Anthem (4)

You think this celebration is long? We haven't granted one of Kathy's main wishes today. You have no idea how many times when we'd finished tearing up the floor to some great American rock tune, Kathy would say, "I want that played at my funeral." "Footloose" Play that at my funeral. "If there's a Rock and Roll Heaven"... Play that at my funeral. "Jailhouse Rock". I want that one played at my funeral, too. When we rode up through Mississippi, we spent two nights in Tupelo. Kathy had me take at least 20 poses of her touching Elvis' hand in the famous sculpture.



However, our first song was the Lettermen rendition of "I Can't Help Falling in Love with You." She owned the old vinyl album before I met her. She proudly brought it out, and we wore it out. Let's honor Kathy this way: Embrace your husband, your wife, your partner, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your child, your parent, or a consenting stranger and let's slow dance, as Kathy and I have many times at the Butterfly to Mike singing...

Mike: "I Can't Help Falling in Love with You." (3)

The Show Must Go On. Queen.

The show must go on
Inside my heart is breaking
My makeup may be flaking
But my smile, still, stays on
On with the show
The show must go on

We toured John Greenleaf Whittier's Amesbury, Massachusetts home riding down from Maine on a 2022 bike trip. He wrote "Snowbound," a lengthy ballad. An aged man writes to his surviving brother reflecting on a romantic night around a blazing fire when they were youths as the blizzard howled outside. Sizzling cider, baked apples, roasting nuts. You get the idea. Around the hearth: mother, father, the village school master, the aunt, grandma. All gone now. And Whittier ends the ballad this way.

But first, two terms need definition: cypress trees—think darkness in a Louisiana swamp; and mournful marbles—gravestones.

Snowbound

Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,
Her radiant face smiles no more.
We turn the pages that she read,
Her written words we linger o'er.
But in the sun she casts no shade,
No voice is heard, no sign is made,
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
but Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!
Love will dream, and Faith will trust
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must!

—John Greenleaf Whittier, *Snowbound*



Thank you friends, for Celebrating the light and love of my life, Kathy Vegter Dean, the paragon of motherly nurturing and dedication to Caleb, Jared, Amber, Seth, and Jordan. Farewell and Godspeed, my dearest soul. Somehow, somewhere, meet we must!

