Eugene Russell Kelly

Eugene Russell Kelly was born 8 October 1893 in Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota to John J. Kelly (1847-1901) and Catherine Ann Flynn (1857-1918), both born in Kingston, New York to Irish parents. In 1895, the Kelly family was living at 2200 18th Avenue South in Minneapolis. Eugene's father worked as a manager. Five years later, the family was living at the same Minneapolis address, and at six years old, Eugene was the youngest of seven children. His older siblings were George F (born Aug 1877), Florence T (June 1882), John C (March 1883), Walter L (March 1889), Catherine A (May 1886), and Mabel L (March 1891). Another child, William, may have died young. John Kelly's occupation was listed as a machinist; however his obituary would say that he was a head waiter at Regan Brothers Restaurant in Minneapolis.

Eugene's father died at age 48 on 12 November 1901 in St. Peter State Hospital, Nicollet County, Minnesota; the family still lived at 2200 18th Avenue South in Minneapolis. The 1905 Minnesota state census lists Catherine and her seven children living together at 2120 17th Avenue South in Minneapolis. Eugene was only 11 years old at the time, but many of his older siblings were old enough to work in jobs such as piano tuner, bank clerk, painter, stenographer, and printer.

At the time of the 1910 census, only Eugene, Mabel and Walter were still living at home with their widowed mother. Sixteen-year-old Eugene was working as an apprentice at a printing company. By the time of his draft registration on 5 June 1917, Eugene was working as a laborer at Swift & Company in South St Paul, where he lived at 128 5th Avenue North. He was 23 years old and single. He was described as being of medium height, slender build, gray eyes, and sandy hair. It noted "flat footed" on his registration card.

Eugene enlisted on 26 July 1917 as a private in Battery B, 151st Field Artillery (the "Rainbow Division" including the "Gopher Gunners"). During service, he was wounded on the same day as Private Hans Thorstad, a coworker from Swift & Company who was in his same unit. Eugene sailed from Hoboken, NJ on October 18, 1917 on the USS *President Lincoln*. His mother, Katherine A. Kelly at 2120 17th Ave S in Minneapolis was his emergency contact.

Eugene left St. Nazaire, France on Jan 20, 1919 on the USS *Mongolia* (the first American ship to sink a submarine) bound for Hoboken. Eugene was mustered out of service on 21 February 1919 at Camp Dodge, Iowa.

Meanwhile, Eugene's mother, Catherine, had died on 5 November 1918 in Minneapolis. Eugene went to live with his sister, Mrs. J. L. Montgomery, in Minneapolis. A thrilling account of his experiences appeared in the *Star Tribune* on 2 March 1919 in a story titled, "Returned Gunner Tells of 151st's Glory":

> After 19 months service with the 151st field artillery and after being gassed by the Germans and poisoned by drinking water, Private Eugene R. Kelly has returned to Minneapolis… Private Kelly took part in nearly all of the battles in which the (151st) regiment was engaged. He was in the campaign of the Champagne, at Chateau-Thierry, in Lorraine, and in the Argonne region. He was sent home as a member of a casual company… He had several narrow escapes from being killed. On one occasion he was in guard outside a dugout in an outpost position which was being shelled by the Germans. A high explosive shell burst near him breaking the door of the dugout against which he was leaning into kindling wood, but leaving him uninjured. Another time he was almost buried by earth thrown up by the explosion of shells but he managed to escape without a scratch. He was gassed while returning to a dugout after serving a gun during a night attack. As he was passing through a wood on the way to a dugout the Germans began a terrific bombardment. He threw himself on the ground but before he could reach his mask he had inhaled gas. He succeeded in putting the mask on before he was overcome, but he was unable to return to his battery and was not found until several hours later. He recovered from the gas but was poisoned by drinking water late in September (1918). The effects of the gas and of the poisoning caused him to be declared unfit for further duty and he was sent to eight different hospitals in France for treatment and finally returned to the United States.

In 1920, Eugene lived with his brother John, a cattle dealer, in St. Paul and worked for a packing house. At the time of the 1930 census, Eugene, still single at age 36, was lodging at 10 East Summit Ave in St. Paul. He was working as a salesman, and the census records noted his World War service.

By 1940, Eugene had married Teresa M. and was living in St. Paul with their son, Ronald A. (age 8) and a roomer named John Olson. Eugene's occupation was listed as Senior Clerk, WPA Project Farm School. The family appears to have been renting a unit at 1648 Charles Ave.

On April 26, 1942, Eugene registered for the WW2 draft. He was 48 years old, living at 628 Simpson Ave, St. Paul, MN. He listed his wife of the same address as his emergency contact. He was still working at the University Farm School in St Paul, and listed his employer as W.P.A. Research Project. He was 5'6", 145lbs, with gray eyes and gray hair.

Eugene died on 25 June 1977 in Hennepin County, Minnesota at age 83. He is buried in Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis.