



Kenneth L. Kiernan

July 10, 1928 - February 21, 2021

It is with a heavy heart we announce the death of a dear husband, father and friend, Ken Kiernan. He passed away peacefully, the evening of February 21, 2021, due to complications of congestive heart failure and amyloid heart disease. He was 92 years old.

Kenneth Leo Kiernan was born in Dearborn, Michigan on July 10th, 1928 to a mother with a family history going back before the American Revolution. His father was the son of Irish immigrant parents and was an attorney for Michigan Consolidated Gas Company. Tragically, Kenneth's mother died when he was 4 years old. It was a difficult time both emotionally and financially as it was the Great Depression. Sadly, his father could not afford a babysitter and there was no family nearby to help, so Ken and his older brother, Frank, were placed in an orphanage. They spent much of their childhood at Barbour Hall in Kalamazoo, Michigan, an orphanage/school run by Sisters of St. Joseph. After the Depression, Ken's father remarried and he gained another brother, Ralph. In high school he excelled in academics and sports. In sports, he was especially good at basketball and baseball. He graduated with honors: president of his class and valedictorian. Always a high achiever, he graduated University of Michigan with honors and a Bachelor's Degree in Linguistics. As is the case in life, nothing goes as planned: the Korean War began and Ken was drafted. Ken nearly spent 2 years in Korea, from January 1951 to November 1952. The Korean War was a life changing experience for him. He saw the devastation of war first hand: the suffering of others and himself,

spending 3 weeks in a hospital after driving over a landmine. Later, he was invited to continue a career in the military, but chose to return to civilian life. After his wartime experience, he joined the General Motors' Parade of Progress, an exhibit that toured the country, combining entertainment, education and promotion, informing the public about advances in technology and science. He made many friendships during this period, some becoming lifelong. He followed that up with a PR position at Aerospace, working along side his brother in Sacramento, CA. It was a good time in his life: spending quality hours with family and friends. Also, he made happy memories playing catch with his young nephew, Frank Jr.! Again, Ken was bit by the wanderlust bug, which resulted in many enjoyable months traveling Europe. One of his most memorable adventures was growing cotton in the Australian outback, near St. George. The operation went belly up, but he and his group of buddies had the distinction of being some of the first entrepreneurs to grow cotton there. Now, it is a large, thriving industry. The outback could get miserably hot and it was hard work, but he was entertained by the personalities of the people he met and some of their colorful sayings. On a side note, he was very proud of how he protected a family of kangaroos from discovery (as they are hunted frequently by the locals). So, even though it was not a financial success, it was a unique and exciting experience. He loved Australia! For years, he frequently talked about returning there. In 1964 he worked in the Whirlpool pavilion at the World's Fair in New York City. His future wife, Katherine, was working at the Scott Paper exhibit and by pure coincidence, they met at a mutual acquaintance's party. They were married in the same year! Shortly, thereafter, drawn to the natural beauty and job prospects, they moved to Walnut Creek, CA to begin a new chapter. In 1966, Katherine gave birth to their only child, Kylie. Not too long after, Ken and Kay moved back to the East Coast, to Florida, near the Everglades National Park and decided to open a gift store. The store was very successful; focusing on exotic imports from all over the world. Unfortunately, they felt they could not stay there, due to health concerns relating to their daughter. This prompted them to finish their

graduate degrees, so they would have more career and location choices. Katherine received her Master's in American History from Hunter College in New York and Kenneth received his Master's Degree in Educational Psychology from East Carolina University in North Carolina. Many moves later, the Kiernan family settled in Santa Barbara, CA. Kathy and Ken held a variety of positions in the city. Kenneth was assistant principal, guidance counselor and journalism instructor at Bishop Diego High School. Some time after that, Ken worked at the Probation Department as a Juvenile Corrections Officer. He was able to use his skills as an educator and counselor to help young people with problems. He also worked for a time at the post office. After retiring, Kenneth edited and self-published a book he had completed nearly 25 years earlier. Both Ken and Kathy enjoyed the arts, literature, nature and spending time with family and friends. Always a man of letters and a word smith, he relished a clever turn of phrase that brought a smile. He also had a melodious voice and barely needed any prompting to break out in song, especially one from a favorite musical. One friend remembered his gifts as an orator, with his resonant speaking voice. In addition to these talents, he was a devoted husband always and a loving father. He supported his wife during her lengthy illness and his daughter, during her medical challenges. He will be forever missed and forever loved, leaving an empty space only he can fill. But though we may grieve his loss, may he find joy in the afterlife, surrounded by all the loved ones who have gone before...He is preceded in death by his wife, Katherine Kiernan, of 51 years; brothers, Frank and Ralph Kiernan; sister-in-law Lyla Kiernan; parents, Frank and Florence Kiernan; step-mother, Kathryn Kiernan. He is survived by his daughter, Kylie Kershaw(Robert); brothers-in-law Henry Kafel (Carol) and John Kafel (Suzanne); sister-in-law Judy Kiernan; cousin Sharon Dante (Steve); several nieces and nephews, as well as close family friends. No public ceremony will be held at this time, but an online memorial is being planned for the future. In the meantime, please go to www.wrhsb.com to

read about his life, share a special memory, or a few thoughts and photos of Ken. Donations can be made to the American Heart Association.

Tribute Wall



“ I have known Ken since 1953 and he was the "best of the best" in all catagories.

Mike Morrison

Mike yahoo - April 13, 2021 at 05:59 PM



Thank you, Mike! He felt the same about you.

Kylie Kershaw - June 18, 2021 at 01:17 PM

MB

“Mr. Kiernan, as I called him, was my guidance counselor at Bishop Garcia Diego from 1974-1978. That was his title to me, but he never knew he was literally one of the most influential men in my life. Leaning back in his chair, with his hands behind his head and a big smile, he would ask, “What can I do for you today, Maureen?” He was a doer. He made me feel special, listened to, and loved. He would show up to my basketball games to give that extra cheer from the bleachers. My parents were fond of him, as being the youngest of six children, they knew Mr. Kiernan would give me that extra bit of self confidence, a young adolescent needed. I can’t count how many times throughout my life, I have thought back to those conversations, that “saved” a girl from self doubt and sadness when I needed it most.

He never shared his amazing life stories with me, as he easily could. It was always, about ME.

I would love to read his book. Please share the title. I am over the moon he had a wife of so many years, a daughter and so many family and friends. A man who traveled the world and lived life with such adventure! I am smiling today, remembering him.

Mobatthey@gmail.com

Maureen Colleran Battey

Maureen Colleran Battey - March 19, 2021 at 06:56 PM

KK

Thank you for the beautiful tribute to my Father. Your words would mean so much to him. He loved his job - it was actually more of a calling. It was deeply satisfying for him to help students achieve their goals and watch young people grow. He always remembered fondly his time there...

Kylie Kershaw - March 27, 2021 at 01:55 PM

KK

“ *Kylie Kershaw lit a candle in memory of
Kenneth L. Kiernan*



Kylie Kershaw - March 16, 2021 at 08:13 PM

KK

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Kylie Kershaw - March 09, 2021 at 01:50 PM

KK

“ February 22, 2021

Someone else has joined the orphan club.

The orphan club is a club that has no dues; no annual meetings; no fundraisers. It is a club that only happens when both of your parents are no longer with us.

Yesterday I was told that my brother-in-law had left this world to join his wife and his brothers. He was living in an assisted living facility in California which he liked and enjoyed the people around him.

In my mind he will be always remembered as the guy who wore a pink/white vest that his and my mother-in-law made. I cannot remember if it was knitted or crochet, he always told me it kept him warm because she made it from her heart. He was a guy that liked to read about anything on any subject. He would give the shirt off his back to a total stranger. He often took care of my father-in-law when my mother-in-law wanted to go somewhere. He would sit on the couch with him and watch old John Wayne movies. John Wayne was my father-in-law's favorite actor.

He ended up passing away the ripe old age of 93. He lived life to its best and never turn back--he kept on going forward even until the end.

He passed away at a place called Serenity House in California. I googled it seems to be a nice place from what their website shows. Now he is in peace and does not have to worry about anything anymore. His family will grieve but, in their hearts, they know he is at peace.

I almost forgot he was my "guinea" pig for my writings. My sister would send him several chapters at a time. Now what am I going to do with my masterpieces?

Suzanne Kafel

Kylie Kershaw - March 07, 2021 at 02:17 PM

KK

Thank you, Suzanne, for always cheering my Dad up with your humorous writings! And thank you for allowing me to share your kind tribute now...

Kylie Kershaw - March 07, 2021 at 02:19 PM

NW

“ *Ken was one of the most gracious and interesting men I've ever known. His amiable disposition and droll expressions made him a delight to be with. As a devoted husband and father Ken was without peer.*

In conversations his occasional recollections hinted at a life of many rare experiences; but when I read his history, I was stunned by all his accomplishments and endeavors to make our world a kinder better place.

His friendship was a gift I will always treasure in my heart.

Nan Withington

Nan Withington - March 07, 2021 at 12:39 AM

KK

Dearest Nan, Thank you for your beautiful words! He and we adore you (and not just because of your delicious cookies)...

Kylie Kershaw - March 07, 2021 at 01:57 PM

EC

“ There was such a fun-loving aspect to your dad. Seeing the pair sitting out back on the alley with your dog - all three looked so content!

You and Rob were great neighbors, but they were icing on the cake. Some couples have a little bickering when you visit with them. This pair did not. She spoke he smiled. He spoke she smiled.

It likely was their sweetness that I had the feeling I'd seen them before. Maybe it was one of 2 days spent at New York's World Fair. My condolences to y'all as this is a very sad life event. Yet I think Ken is happier now with his beloved.

Thinking of y'all

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Champion - March 05, 2021 at 05:10 PM

KK

Elizabeth, what sweet words, so perfectly expressed! Thank you for your tribute - I agree, I think he is happier now that he is with my Mom...

Kylie Kershaw - March 07, 2021 at 01:58 PM

KK

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Kylie Kershaw - March 04, 2021 at 04:30 PM

FK

“ I was blessed to have him in my life. I will treasure the memories, especially of his time in NY. Rest in Peace Uncle Ken. Love, Frankie

Frank kiernan - March 04, 2021 at 04:30 PM

KK

*Dear Cousin Frank,
Thank you for your heartfelt words and sweet tribute. My Dad always treasured those times with you, too!*

Kylie Kershaw - March 07, 2021 at 02:02 PM

FH

I will miss this special Irishman; his humor and his kindness always made my days better. He is with his Kathy now, no more worries, just peace.

Felice Hunter - March 12, 2021 at 11:22 AM

KK

Thank you, Flea, for your sweet tribute. Yes, he is with my Mom, at peace, and no more suffering...

Kylie Kershaw - March 15, 2021 at 03:21 PM

JS

I had Mr. Kiernan as my journalism teacher at Bishop Diego in 1975. He was one of my favorites...a true gentleman, inspirational with a great sense of humor. He took a genuine interest in his students. Over the years, I have wondered what became of him. I am so happy to learn of his wonderful life and great family. RIP old friend!

Jim Simpson - March 16, 2021 at 10:33 PM

KK

Thank you, Jim, for sharing this special memory. He would have been so happy to know he made a difference in a student's life.

Kylie Kershaw - March 19, 2021 at 12:08 AM

SD

My cousin Ken was a very special person to me and to my family. He was actually my mother's first cousin, but he was between us in age. I remember Ken from my early childhood, when he used to come down to Florida to visit my grandparents. My grandmother took a special interest in both Ken and his brother, Frank, because their mother (her sister) had died at a very young age when the boys were quite small.

Ken was always regarded by my family as "handsome and brilliant." We were eager to receive his letters and to learn of his latest adventures. He was so gifted in so many areas that it was difficult for us to know what his choice of profession would be.

Although he had many girl friends over the years, as soon as he met Kathy, he recognized immediately the girl with whom he wished to spend his life. They had a truly blessed marriage, which was made complete by the birth of Kylie, of whom they were both so very proud. They were also very happy with Kylie's choice of Rob as her husband.

Ken and I spoke on the phone from time to time, and my husband and I were always delighted to visit him when we were in California. Up until almost the end, Ken's voice sounded youthful and full of energy. He did indicate to me, however, that he missed Kathy very much and looked forward to being once again with her. I take comfort in that.

Sharon Connors Dante - March 25, 2021 at 03:29 PM

KK

Thank you so much, Sharon, for the wonderful tribute and your kind words. Yes, we do take comfort in that they are together again. Hugs and love always...

Kylie Kershaw - April 07, 2021 at 05:49 PM