



## Kenneth Arvle Nielson

January 17, 1940 - June 17, 2020

Kenneth A. Nielson

1940 - 2020

Kenneth A. Nielson, 80, passed away on June 17, 2020 in Kaysville, Utah. Ken was born in 1940 to Arvle and Clara Nielson. After World War II, Arvle and Clara divorced, and Ken was raised by Arvle and his new wife Donna, with whom Arvle had an additional six children.

Ken grew up in Hunter, Utah (now West Valley City), where he liked to shoot guns, ride horses, and be involved in Scouting. He also was a hard worker. His earliest jobs as a teen were thinning beets in farmers' fields, peeling potatoes at a potato chip factory, and delivering papers for the Deseret News. One of his favorite jobs before college was working for two summers (1957 and 1958) for the Utah Parks Company at the Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim. He worked in the kitchen as a dishwasher and later as a baker's helper. This experience inspired a scary story he loved to torment children with throughout his life that featured a Phantom of the Grand Canyon. He also hiked rim to rim three times, a 24-mile trek that he completed one time in 9.5 hours. His bakery experience later earned him a position in the original Harmon's bakery in Granger, Utah. He also worked in Kennecott Copper's Bingham copper mine on the track gang, a group that used 16-lbs spike hammers to build and move the train tracks so the copper could be transported out of the mine.

He graduated from Cypress High School in 1958. A highlight of his high school years was performing with an acapella choir, which sparked a lifelong love of music. He then continued his education at Brigham Young University, graduating with a Business Administration degree and a minor in Portuguese in 1966. With business degree in hand, he took a position in the Industrial Engineering Department of Kennecott Copper, where he oversaw the work simplification and suggestion systems at the Magna Concentrator.

Ken's religion classes at BYU, especially a class on the Book of Mormon, played a big role

in his spiritual growth and his belief that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Christ's true church and that the Book of Mormon contains the word of God. As his testimony grew, he felt a strong desire to serve a Church mission. In 1960, Ken was called to serve in the newly-formed Brazilian South mission, where he served for 32 months. It was a defining experience in his life. He spoke of it frequently and remembered it fondly. During his mission, he sang in a quartet called the Mormon Melodaires, a group that performed more than 280 concerts in Brazil and Uruguay, recorded an album, and appeared on Brazilian national television. This effort produced more than 10,000 missionary referrals and significantly raised the profile of the Church in those countries. Throughout his life, Ken remained close friends with those he served with in Brazil. He also kept up his Portuguese after his mission as a teacher in the Missionary Training Center, and by speaking Portuguese with friends and others he would meet. He also became proficient in the Spanish language.

Ken continued to pursue and share the love of music that he developed in high school and on his mission by participating in Church choirs throughout his life. He also enjoyed performing in Church meetings with a group called The Lighthouse Singers. Another big interest of his was cars. He was particularly proud of the dark green 1950 Oldsmobile 98 hardtop convertible that he purchased on his own before his mission.

During Summer 1966, some mutual friends, Gary and Linda Eldridge, set Ken up on a blind date to go waterskiing with a beautiful girl named Kaye. For him, it was love at first sight. He also quickly fell in love with Kaye's two-year-old daughter Rebecca. By the end of the year, Ken and Kaye were married in the Salt Lake Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They then moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where they raised their four children in Danville, California. There, Ken worked for 10 years with a manufacturing company before going into residential and commercial real estate sales and management for the next 30 years. Kaye and Ken divorced, but they always sought to make family interactions as comfortable as possible, and they eventually remarried in 2015. During his single years, Ken served in the bishopric of a Single Adult congregation, and for many years oversaw the Single Adult activities, such as dances and conferences, for eight stakes in the San Francisco Bay Area. He also served the youth as a seminary teacher, Scout leader, and Sunday School teacher. In one memorable Sunday School class, Church apostle Elder Dallin H. Oaks slipped into the back of the room unannounced to observe.

Ken was a dedicated fan of the Oakland A's and Raiders. His children recall going to many games together or watching them at home as a family. Other memorable family activities were visits to a number of National Parks, and annual trips to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Ken

also started a tradition of emptying his pocket change into a large water cooler bottle each night after work. Then, once a year, his children would count and package the change, and this money would fund trips in the family station wagon to Disneyland and other locations in Southern California. Other fun traditions remembered by his children include their Dad making them avocado milkshakes; taking them to pizza and the movies on Friday night; competing with them on video games like Pac Man, Galaga, Space Invaders, and Donkey Kong; playing Shark in the pool; and scaring anyone he could by wearing a creepy old man mask on Halloween.

Ken loved to document the world around him with his camera and took thousands of pictures during his lifetime. When visiting with friends and family, he frequently shared the pictures he took of people, events, and items he found interesting.

Ken also loved to travel on his own, and went on trips to Portugal, Mexico, Hawaii, and Brazil. After his parents completed a mission in Switzerland, he traveled with them to East and West Germany, Norway, and his ancestral homelands, Sweden and Denmark.

Ken retired in 2010 and moved back to Utah. He served for three years as a tour guide at the Conference Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, where he had many spiritual experiences. He was always willing to serve in the Church, and believed that his lifelong, diligent Church service was key to the ongoing growth of his testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When asked what he wanted future generations to remember about him, he said they should know that he loved the Lord, missionary work, and his family.

Ken is preceded in death by his parents, birth mother and a much missed daughter.

Ken is survived by his loving spouse, three children, three sons-in-law, nine grandchildren, and many extended family members.

# Comments

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“ When I was little I always felt you were perfect! Now that I am older I've appreciated your love and support of myself and my family! So grateful for our visits before the pandemic. I'll love you always and forever! Your youngest decade sister.

**Tamara Smith** - June 19 at 12:38 PM