

Kenneth Jay Nielson

February 10, 1929 ~ July 4, 2020

Kenneth Jay Nielson, age 91, passed away peacefully at home July 4, 2020 with his wife of 62 years by his side.

Kenneth was born in Brigham City, Utah on February 10, 1929. He was the third of the four children of George Anthony and Lola Delphia Nielson. All of his siblings; George Junior, Jean, and Ralph preceded him in death. Kenneth finished his work here on earth and is now enjoying a joyous reunion with his loved ones and cherished friends.

He graduated in 1947 from Box Elder High School, where he loved athletics and was prominent in 3 major sports, competing on both the Utah state championship basketball and football teams. He also played semi-pro baseball in 1946-47. He was student body president and valedictorian of his High School graduating class.

At the University of Utah, he played football and received a letter his freshman year. He also lettered in varsity baseball his sophomore year. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

Ken then volunteered to serve a 2 ½ year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Holland, a land and people he loved and would speak of constantly throughout his life, even sharing his Dutch with anyone who would listen.

In 1953, following his mission, he began Medical School at the University of Utah, and to everyone's surprise after one week in class he was drafted and served his country as an interpreter in the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany for 2 years. After those 4.5 years living abroad, he always spoke fondly of Europe and had a life long love of travel. He then returned to Utah and the University of Utah Medical School.

On September 20, 1957 he married his sweetheart, Elinor Marie Yancey in the Los Angeles Temple, and together they raised six children, four boys and two girls.

Ken completed his internship at Los Angeles County Hospital and he loved his residency in Internal Medicine at Stanford University. Under the tutelage of his mentor at Stanford, the late Dr. Edward Rubenstein, Associate Dean of Postgraduate Medical Education, Ken made a great impression on the medical staff. Dr. Rubenstein later wrote this personal letter to Ken: "Stanford is fortunate to claim you as an alumnus, and a physician of great integrity and clinical skill. Of all the young physicians I've come to know during nearly a half century at Stanford, I can think of no other who has such a rich and fulfilling life. The love and goodwill that you exude has rewarded so many. When I hear people questioning the logic of the universe, I think of you and how you would answer them."

In 1963, he joined the Bryner Clinic in Salt Lake City, where he loved practicing Internal Medicine for 40 years. He also loved teaching the medical students at the University of Utah School of Medicine, and received the Outstanding Clinical Faculty award in the Department of Internal Medicine in 1996-97.

Immediately upon his retirement, Ken served another mission as the physician providing loving care for the 250+ missionaries serving in the Salt Lake Family History mission on Temple Square. Following this mission, he served in the Church's medical mission office for many years helping missionaries throughout the world.

For over 50 years Ken lived in the Monument Park 11th ward. He thought of the members there as family. He cherished these friendships and was a loyal friend to all. He was such a social person and loved to talk to everybody because he was genuinely interested in others. He loved delivering Brigham City peaches and apples from his family fruit farm to friends and neighbors.

After a debilitating stroke 2 1/2 years ago, he surprised us all with his will to live and endure many physical challenges. Through the tireless, devoted and loving 24/7 care given by his son Bob and his wife Elinor, and through all the challenges of a pandemic, we got a few more unexpected years with him. He fought a good fight and finished his course. It brings us great comfort to know that he can once again walk and talk freely and his brilliant mind has been restored.

His family was everything to him. He dearly loved his wife and children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, siblings, in-laws and nieces and nephews. He loved family history and for years would talk about his ancestors and had a great love of his heritage.

Ken devoted his life to serving others. He was a kind, compassionate, humble and caring physician and was loved by all who knew him. He taught us by example to serve others without recognition. Ken exemplified Christ's love of others by his constant nurturing and caring for others. He had a strong testimony and love for the Savior. He was a faithful and dedicated member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are so grateful for our knowledge that death is not the end and that families are forever.

Ken is survived by his loving wife Elinor and six children and spouses: David (Kathryn), Kris (Judith), Bob, Elinor (John), Kate (Scott), Stephen (Jill). Also 17 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers please consider donating to the Perpetual Education Fund. A graveside service will be held Sunday, July 19th at 9:30 am for the immediate family.

The graveside service will be recorded and available later on Youtube. Send an email request to KennethJayNielson29@gmail.com for details on how to view the service.