



Kenneth Richard Olson

March 9, 1925 - June 17, 2018

Ken Olson passed away on June 17, 2018 in Chanute, Kansas. Ken was born in Erie, Kansas on March 9, 1925, son of A.B. and Nancy Comstock Olson. He was preceded in death by his parents, and by his sister, Margery Olson Miller, and his brother, Alan Burnell Olson. Ken is survived by his nephews and nieces, Kent Miller, Don Olson, Janis (Miller) Ward, Phil Miller and Marianne (Miller) Davis, and by numerous great- and great-great nieces and nephews.

After graduating from high school in Chanute, Ken enrolled at the University of Kansas and was accepted for medical school. By 1943, the United States was engaged in World War II and he received his draft notice. Ken says his draft board “just laughed” when he showed his medical school acceptance, and he was drafted. He hoped to join the Navy, but when his physical exam revealed he was color blind, he entered the Army, where his medical school acceptance led him to be trained as a Surgical Technician. Ken proudly served with the Army’s 109th Evacuation Hospital, landing on Utah Beach in Normandy on D-Day. His unit followed closely behind the front lines to provide medical support for Patton’s troops as they moved through France. Ken remained in Europe throughout his wartime service.

After the war, Ken studied one more semester at KU before returning to Chanute to join the Olson Mercantile Company. The family business was

founded in 1907 by Ken's grandfather, and operated Olson's Supermarkets in Chanute, Erie, Parsons and Savonburg. Ken was proud to have shared management of the company for three decades with his brother-in-law, Ernie Miller. The family business was quite successful and was sold in 1975. After his business career, Ken continued to serve on the Board of Home Savings Bank, the Chanute Library and was a Vestry member of Grace Episcopal Church.

Ken shared his compassion for others by serving as a hospice volunteer when hospice care was in its infancy in the U.S. He spent six months each year providing hospice support care in Clearwater, Florida. He was especially proud that he flew to England to meet Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of St. Christopher's Hospice, the world's first purpose-built hospice.

Ken was a lifelong learner. As an adult, he studied at the American School in Leysin, Switzerland to learn French, Spanish and German. Despite being color blind, he was a lover of art and took weekly art lessons, traveling to Kansas City with his friend Mrs. Alison Guinotte. Ken was a classical pianist and organist, and a lover of all music. He particularly enjoyed musical scores by Erich Korngold and Max Steiner from movie classics of the 1930's - 1950's.

He also loved to travel and did so extensively, always increasing his understanding and appreciation of the world beyond his hometown. He took his nieces and nephews with him on trips to Europe and South America, and made several trips to London, always staying at the world-famous Claridge's. In later life, he regularly traveled to Denver, Kansas City and Tulsa to visit family and attend holiday gatherings.

Ken maintained numerous friendships and connections over the years. He enjoyed organizing and attending class reunions and luncheons, and meeting for coffee and conversations with friends at Cardinal Drug. He made daily

visits to the fitness center at Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center – which he continued until his last hospital admission!

Ken's life was enriched by the loving and compassionate care provided to him over the last years of his life, enabling him to remain in his family home. The family is thankful for the devotion of his caregivers: Nancy Merritt Ahlquist, Stacy Carpenter, Glenda LeRoy, Diana Cole, Joyce Fox, Lisa Kinkel, Ruth Ponce, Jennifer March, Siara Droegmier and Hallea Geiger.

Though he was a lifelong bachelor, Ken was an important part of a large and loving extended family whose members kept in touch with him throughout the years. Whenever someone visited or called, he always wanted to know the latest about the families of his nieces and nephews. And those relatives made a point of traveling to Chanute from around the country to visit "Uncle Kenny". He was the last of our family's Greatest Generation, and he was loved and respected by all of us. He will be greatly missed and dearly remembered. Rest in Peace, Uncle Kenny.

The family will hold a visitation on Saturday, July 28, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. at the Grace Episcopal Church in Chanute. The funeral service will follow at 10:00 a.m. at the church. Online condolences may be left at: www.countrysidefh.com. In lieu of flowers, Ken's family suggests memorials to the Grace Episcopal Church or Castaways Animal Shelter and may be left with or mailed to the funeral home. Arrangements have been entrusted to: Countryside Funeral Home 101 N. Highland, Chanute, KS 66720.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL **28**. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Grace Episcopal Church
213 S. Lincoln
Chanute, KS 66720

Memorial Service

JUL **28**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Grace Episcopal Church
213 S. Lincoln
Chanute, KS 66720

Tribute Wall

JW

“ We offer our condolences to the family. Your loss is one shared by many. There is no doubt that Kenny made a positive impact on many lives and lived a rich full life. We wish you comfort in this time of sorrow. May he rest in peace. Jerry and Jan Weis

Jerry & Jan Weis - June 26, 2018 at 08:34 AM

BL

Kenny was a dear man and, in my opinion, way ahead of his time. In the 70's he sold 33 1/3 albums from his grocery store that you couldn't find anywhere else!

Brenda Lindsay - June 30, 2018 at 01:59 AM