



# Kenneth J. Johnson

JAN 4, 1940 - MAY 27, 2024



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## **Kenneth J. Johnson**

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**K**enneth John Johnson, age 84, of Rehoboth Beach, DE (formerly of Wilmington, DE) died peacefully at home on May 27, 2024.

Born January 4, 1940, in Pittsburgh, PA, Ken was the son of Edward Henry Johnson and Kathryn M. (Johnston) Johnson. The family moved to Johnstown, PA in 1945, and Ken graduated from Johnstown Central High School in 1957.

He continued his education at Franklin & Marshall College, where he earned a BA in English Literature. He was also president of his fraternity there, Delta Sigma Phi. One of Ken's proudest achievements was successfully challenging the national organization's policy on minority membership. Under threat of having their charter revoked, Ken and his fraternity brothers prevailed, eliminating a discrimination clause. The chapter was honored by F&M's administration and received national media attention. Ken was active in everything musical at F&M – men's glee club, chapel choir, Conestogies (select male octet which entertained alumni functions throughout the Northeast) and college musicals.

Ken furthered his education at Wesley Theological seminary, where he became an ordained Methodist deacon, and at Howard University School of Social Work, where he was an NIMH scholarship recipient and graduated with highest distinction.

In 1968, Ken married Marjorie Crooks in Washington, DC. Despite the end of their marriage 30 years later, many happy memories remain. Their daughter, Cara Michelle, was born in 1971 in Wilmington, DE to complete their family of three. Family vacations to Stone Harbor, NJ, the Grand Canyon and other National Parks, Canada and Disney World were particularly memorable. He loved being a father, and was actively involved in all of Cara's activities, including chaperoning school field trips and being part of the marching band pit crew. That love multiplied when he became a grandfather, and he enjoyed supporting his grandsons in all of their activities as well.



## Obituary

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Ken was hired by Wilmington Child Guidance Center (later known as Delaware Guidance Services) in 1971 and worked there through 1993. Throughout those 22 years Ken wore many hats, but arguably his favorite was supervising second year social work graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania, Hahnemann University, Bryn Mawr College, University of Maryland and Widener University. Ken's supervisory skills resulted in being selected for several ad hoc positions on faculty committees. He received the Social Work Supervisor of the Year award from the University of Pennsylvania.

Throughout Ken's time at Delaware Guidance, he maintained a small private practice. From 1993-1998, he continued his private practice full-time. In 1998, Ken returned to Delaware Guidance which had opened a new clinic in Rehoboth Beach as Director of the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP). With a staff of bright, energetic therapists, IOP provided quality service to some of Sussex County's most emotionally troubled youth and their families.

In 2003, Ken attempted to retire, but soon after, he was seeing private clients, facilitating support groups for cancer survivors (he started the first support group for Wellness Center/Cancer Support Community) and continued these for 6 years. Initially asked to temporarily fill the role of Minister of Caring at Epworth Methodist Church, Ken experienced some of his greatest professional and personal moments over the next 7 years. Ministering to the ill, shut-ins, homeless, the hospitalized, the terminal, and the bereaved was a humbling and totally rewarding experience.

Ken was passionate about the arts. He studied piano for 12 years and was a finalist in the National Federation of Teachers competition. He continued to play piano through much of his life for personal enjoyment. He was a great supporter of the arts, and of his daughter and grandson's musical endeavors. Equally important was Ken's love of theater, appearing in countless high school and college productions. For many years he looked forward to his biannual trips from Rehoboth Beach to New York City to see Broadway shows with friends. He also loved film and enjoyed going to the movies and film festivals.

Ken was a voracious reader with eclectic tastes, from Joyce Carol Oates to David Sedaris. During the pandemic, Ken re-read all the Dickens' novels. Words fascinated him, and he was sure to complete a crossword puzzle daily, along with playing Wordle, Quordle and Connections daily with friends. He also enjoyed playing games (and winning!) and played many rounds of Sorry! and Phase10 with his grandsons.



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Ken's love of dogs was unconditional. Throughout the years, he found true companionship from Spunky, Milo, Chloe and his faithful companion of 15 years, Dudley. His love of tennis started in his early teens and lasted his entire life. His annual trips to the US Open with his three buddies rank high on his list of memorable times. Ken took great pride in his gardens and spent countless hours in his yard. He was so grateful for the friends who took care of his gardens when he was no longer able to. Ken also enjoyed cooking and hosting dinners. He was especially known for his secret recipe Christmas fudge.

Ken's faith journey started at age 5 and continued throughout his life. In addition to brilliant, challenging sermons, Ken deeply immersed himself in the writings of Frederick Buechner and Henri Nouwen. He enjoyed attending The National Cathedral services online during the pandemic and found a home in his later years at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Lewes, DE. Throughout his life, he volunteered countless hours of service to the churches he attended, and learned a new skill later in life when he joined the handbell choir, where he made several dear friendships. He also found that volunteering for the Food Bank of Delaware brought him great joy. Ken was a tireless advocate for those in need.

Of all of life's gifts, Ken treasured friendships most. Both in his professional and personal life, Ken was humbled and grateful for all the connections and sharing he had with others. He wanted to express special gratitude to Pat Loughlin, Linda and Howie Gregory, Beth Nevill and Karen Kreiser, Gail Stenger, Tom Popovich, Fred Gentry, Freida Morgan, and Jon Worthington for always being there.

Ken was preceded in death by his parents, his beloved sister-in-law Nancy Johnson, and many cherished friends who enriched his life, notably Helen Mullarkey, Tom Daughtry and Mark Palmer.

He is survived by his loving daughter, Cara J. Stanard and son-in-law Scott Stanard of Wilmington, DE and his two wonderful grandsons, Gregory of Los Angeles, CA and Benjamin of Wilmington, DE. He is also survived by his brother Edward T. Johnson of Vero Beach, FL, his former wife Marjorie C. Johnson of Wilmington, DE, and his nieces and nephew.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider a donation in Ken's memory to one of his favorite non-profits: The Wilmington Children's Chorus ([wilmingtonchildrenschorus.org](http://wilmingtonchildrenschorus.org)) or Miriam's Table ([miriamstable.org](http://miriamstable.org)).



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At Ken's request, there will be no funeral service. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Please sign the Tribute wall located on this site.



## Tribute Wall

**Kenneth J. Johnson**

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JS

**Janet Spring** posted:

I became a friend of Ken's when we served on a committee called PeaceMeal which provided a meal and a meeting place for individuals living with AIDS and HIV in Wilmington. Tom Daughtry spearheaded this committee and many local churches were involved in this project. Even after Ken retired to Rehoboth Beach, we would get together once in a while and have breakfast together at Crystal's. He was a truly wonderful person and will be missed by many.

June 19 at 5:10 PM

CS

**Cara Stanard** June 20 at 7:06 AM

Janet, it made me smile to read the word PeaceMeal - that was such an important and rewarding part of my dad's life work. Thank you for sharing your memories. Cara

MA

**Maria** lit a candle in honor of Kenneth.

I worked with Ken for many years. I witness how he helped others. He will be missed! RIP Ken

June 19 at 7:09 AM



DB

**Donna Baker** posted:

Ken was so supportive of our daughter in her time of need and we are so grateful. Praying for the family! <https://bmacards.com/9nn6wh>

June 12 at 6:45 AM

JU

**Janet Urdahl** posted:

You will be missed!!!

June 5 at 6:42 AM

TO

**Ted Olson** posted:

A gentle and compassionate healer has gone to the nearer presence of God. May his memory be a blessing and may he dwell in light and peace.

June 4 at 5:47 PM



# Tribute Wall

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**Keith Johnson** posted:

A wonderful Uncle that I have many fond memories of including playing tennis with and taking me to Six Flags at 12yrs old and many other visits over the years. He had a gift of helping and educating others with passion.

June 4 at 2:13 PM



**Beth Ewell** lit a candle in honor of Kenneth.



June 1 at 6:40 PM



**Pamela Waters** June 27 at 4:38 PM

Ken lived behind me in Fairfax for many years. I was recently divorced and he was always willing to lend a helping hand. I enjoyed watching Cara grow up. He was missed when he moved to start a new chapter in his life. Hugs to you Cara.



**Beth Ewell** June 1 at 6:43 PM

Ken came to visit me after my cancer surgery. I will always remember his kindness. May he rest in peace.



**Mark Manchen** posted:

I have so many wonderful memories of Ken. Rest in Peace, my friend. My sincere condolences to his family.

June 1 at 2:47 PM



**Reber Whitner** posted:

ken lead a support group at The Cancer Support Community that i was a member of years ago. He was so kind and caring and patient. He help me thru a very scary time in my life. He loved to remind us that "We were Driving the Bus" thank-you Ken

June 1 at 6:54 AM



# Tribute Wall

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**Daniel Halvorsen** lit a candle in honor of Kenneth.

I had the pleasure of meeting Ken about 20 years ago, a friend who was always there when he was needed. He helped several dear friends when they were at the end of life, on a dime with love and compassion to share. He will be missed by so many people who cared and loved him.



June 1 at 6:33 AM



**Marilyn Cromartie** June 4 at 9:49 AM

My husband and I met Ken and Marj when Marj and I worked as PT's at Fairfax Hospital. Cara was born 3 months before our daughter, Meghan. Over the years we shared our journeys together and supported each other through happy and sad times. I am one among many who will remember Ken with great admiration and love.



**Carolyn Cattafi** lit a candle in honor of Kenneth.



June 1 at 5:04 AM



**Wm Robbins** posted:

Ken saved my life. I was considering suicide and contacting Ken... he immediately came and encouraged and led me from my dark place. He lived his faith and his smile was contagious. Thank you, Ken... I will look forward to the day when I see you again!

May 31 at 2:50 PM



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**John Hulse** posted:

Ken was a Friend who always took time to make whoever he was with feel important and cared for. His devilish twinkling eyes and hearty laugh revealed a wicked sense of humor that we all loved. But it is Ken's love of family, friends, and those in need that I will miss the most. We will never meet someone with such a big heart (in such a slender body). My deepest sympathies, Cara and "boys." Although we've only met for the briefest times, I know how much your dad / grandfather loved you. May his memory be a blessing to all who knew him. ❤️

May 31 at 10:20 AM



**Beverly S. Johnson** June 6 at 7:12 AM

Ken spent many hours with my husband Chuck and me in 2012 while Chuck was in Beebe Hospital/ after Chucks passing he kept in touch to make sure I was able to get all the legal paperwork done..goodbye faithfull friend enjoy heaven



**Susan Morrison** June 3 at 7:28 AM

Ken was one of God's finest!



**Jean Charles** June 2 at 1:52 PM

I met Ken at PFLAG and immediately felt his warmth. It was my pleasure knowing him and he'll always have a warm place in my heart.Such a lovely human being!Jean Charles



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Kenneth by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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