

KENNETH EARL BALL



Kenneth Earl Ball passed peacefully into God's eternal care surrounded by his family, on 1 August 2024, just three days shy of his 93rd birthday. Born in Beadling, PA, 4 August 1931 to the late Anna Mechtel and Thomas Renshaw Ball, Ken was also the husband of the late Nancy S. Ball.

Ken was a 1949 graduate of Mount Lebanon High School, and then a 1954 graduate of Slippery Rock State Teacher's College, majoring in physics and mathematics and earning a teaching degree. Upon graduation, Ken served two years in the United States Marine Corps. He and wife Nancy lived in McMurray for nearly 50 years, then moved to New Oxford in 2007 to be closer to family. During their time in McMurray, Ken was a long-time member of Westminster Presbyterian Church, where he gave seminars and also served on the hunger task force. In his retirement years, Ken was a member of the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church.

Ken's work spanned decades of cutting-edge industrial development. After his USMC service, Ken was employed by Martin Aircraft to work on sea and nuclear-powered planes. Later, he worked for Mine Safety of America, and under them, developed the "Billion-Air", a device to detect toxic fumes down to one part per billion. At least one of these was used in a space capsule during the Apollo program. Ken later founded his own company, BEK Technical Publications, and worked as both president of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Instrument Society of America, as well as managing the Society of Carbide and Tool Engineers. He installed environmental control rooms for over 100 institutions, including Duke and Howard Universities. He also installed gate controls for six locks on the upper Monongahela River, as well as acting as an advisor to NOAA's coastal technologies program. Ken also helped to found chemical separation technology in 1985. Most recently, Ken appeared as part of a panel reviewing the history of manufacturing carried by PBS's White House Chronicles in 2020.

Ken may have been short in stature but he was huge in heart. A very generous man, he was always ready to lend a helping hand whether it was physical work, financial or business oriented. Being very fun-loving, Ken had a great sense of humor, loved to explore new places and technologies which gave him many a story to tell. Ken started a family tradition of writing poems for birthdays and special events that could not be outdone by anyone else. He was a beloved PapPap to his grandchildren, and they were his pride and joy. Time spent with PapPap was full of fun and adventure.

Besides technology and industry, Ken's passion was sports, notably soccer. Having grown up in the slag heaps of Beadling, he helped take the Beadling soccer team to its 1954 national championship, and also played soccer for the Armed Forces team. Ken was also an avid Pirates, Steelers and Penguins fan. Simply put, he loved all things Pittsburgh.

Ken is survived by daughter Susan (Ball) Kolmer, daughter Joan (Ball) Heft, granddaughter Alison (Heft) Preston, grandson Paul Heft, grandson Benjamin Kolmer, granddaughter Bethany (Kolmer) Norseen, grandson Garrett Kolmer, and six great-grandsons, plus a number of nieces and nephews.

Ken was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Nancy, his brother, Thomas Melvin Ball, and his sister, Gladys Camaioni.

A celebration of life will be held at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Upper St. Clair on Saturday, 19 October 2024 at 2 PM. Memorial donations can be made either to the Benevolence Fund of Cross Keys Village or to Gettysburg Presbyterian Church, with Ken Ball written on the memo line.

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