



Kenneth Willis Jenks

March 7, 1930 - February 15, 2024

Kenneth Willis Jenks was born in his Aunt Cheney's kitchen in Laketown, Utah on March 7th, 1930 to Louise Willis and Alonzo Jenks.

On February 13, 2024, he was injured in a fall while walking, apparently after getting off a bus. He died from those injuries on February 15, 2024 in Corvallis Oregon where he lived during the Winter months.

Joel Alonzo Jenks married Louise Willis and had their only child, Ken. Alonzo died when Ken was 3 years old leaving Louise as a single mother running a movie theater, electrical generating plant and a "Chin-A-Kee" brand soda pop bottling plant that she and Alonzo had built in Lyman Wyoming. Ken learned to help Louise run the projector. He and his cousins shepherded for his uncle through his adolescence.

During his high school years Ken and Louise lived in Ogden. He wanted to be an actor and a poet until Ms. Lucille Chambers, a teacher at Ogden High, showed him that he was better as a playwright.

He met Collen Georgiana Birch while they were students at the University of Utah. At this time he worked as a projectionist for a local television station. He bluffed his way into this occupation as the projector in Lyman Wyoming bore no resemblance to the one at the K.S.L. television station. Ken and Colleen

were married and had three children. Kevin Michael Jenks, Nancy Louise Jenks and Kenneth David Jenks.

He taught theater at a small college in Chicago. The family moved back to Salt Lake City.

Colleen and Ken both experienced second hand racism in their respective High Schools, both having bad experiences dating across racial lines. They became political activists working with the NAACP at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. They organized a large public memorial service for the 1963 Birmingham Church Bombing. They canvassed neighborhoods helping to document the need for Anti-discrimination legislation in housing. Colleen went to the 1963 March on Washington.

While Ken and Colleen were getting their degrees, Ken was a technical writer for Hercules Powder Company making rocket motors. One of his co-writers spent his spare time writing a screenplay about Butch Cassidy. Ken obtained his PhD in Theater while having many of his plays produced at the Seagull Theater in Salt Lake City. He and Colleen divorced in 1969

Ken married Kristin Bennion. Together they had two children, Joshua and Jeremy. Ken obtained recognition as a very popular instructor for the "Intellectual Traditions of the West" in the University of Utah Honors Program. In 1971 he was awarded the Grand Prize for Playwrighting by the Utah Institute of Fine arts. Joshua died at the age of 16 months of Acute Myeloblastic Leukemia on October 30 1979. Kristin finished her M.S.W. and went on to have a successful career in Social work. They divorced.

Ken married Kimie Fujimoto, an Artist. Still recovering from the death of Joshua, Ken couldn't help but notice several of his fellow Professors and teachers dying of stress related illnesses. He chose retirement so that he and Kimie could spend the winter months traveling Mexico with their cat, Nakadai.

They took the sailboat "Phoenix" and discovered the San Juan Islands, purchasing land near Spencer's Spit on Lopez Island, Washington. They eventually divorced.

He remained a bachelor pursuing Zen Buddhism. He became active in the Buddhist communities of Lopez Washington, Corvallis Washington, and Las Cruces, New Mexico. His favorite environment were his summers on Lopez Island. At the age of 93 he was living an active independent life. Neighbors reported the morning of his accident he was in a good humour, he was last seen by neighbors and friends purposely walking the half mile to his Bus Stop. He embodied the fierce independence, toughness and practicality of a shepherd, As a Professor he taught to turn away from "The only sin-Cynicism" and instead embrace the good even if that was an onion for dinner. With the compassion of a Buddhist he dog sat and kept close and supportive for the young children. He sometimes talked of Jizo, bodhivista who cared for children.

His family will be looking for his presence and guidance, his students with unanswered questions. His neighbors who now see his darkened home and mourn the loss of the warm, bright presence he gave to the neighborhood, will now have to turn to each other and try to emulate his light.

Know his spirit resides in every soul he has ever touched, resonating within his energy.

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His family members include:

Great GrandChildren, .
Siegfried O Steckler

Anna Woodard
Gabriel Woodard
James Jenks

Grand Children:

Nick Jenks (Amanda)
Thomas Johnson
Elizabeth Gillett (Jeffery)
Maria Johnson Andrews (David)
Richard Johnson (Rita)
Solon Boomer-Jenks (Kirsten)
Victor Boomer-Jenks (Jaeren)

Children

Joshua Jenks
Jeremy Jenks (Erin)
Kevin Jenks (Shirley)
Nancy Jenks Owen (Richard)
Kenneth D Jenks (Lois)

Wives:

Kimie Fujimoto
Kristin Kanipe
Colleen Smith

Plays published include :

The Man in the Meadow (Performed in English and German) Utah State
Institute of Fine Arts Playwriting winner in 1971

The Girl From San Francisco, We, Sleepers after Swans, Opus 4, The Wall on
Gridley Ave, Who Shot Tiny Alice, love is a traveler and The Gift of Eutherian
Finchum.

His "Man in the Meadow" Play can be seen on You Tube

The Majestic Theater

<https://youtu.be/HpLPgLxewwE?si=yZW1AkwZUWtuauuf>

The Human Ensemble Productions

<https://youtu.be/0Elp7o87yAQ?si=bS3YAkNjclVVb90d>

His writings are included in the archives of both the University of Utah and Brigham Young University.

A ceremony is being anticipated on Spencer Spit, Lopez Island, Father's Day/Bloomsday, June 16 of 2024 and will be announced.

Tribute Wall



“ *Amazing Mind and Appreciation for Western Values - At age 17 I played the part of High Pockets. Ken was a Kind Soul. - MM - SLC*

Martin Samuel Mates - April 21, 2025 at 11:38 AM