



Kenneth Harland Oelkers

December 19, 2017

Kenneth Harland Oelkers

Ken passed away December 19, 2017 in Cambridge, Minnesota, surrounded by his family. He was born January 3, 1940 in Lake City, Minnesota to Harland and Ruth Oelkers. Ken's mother passed away just before his fourth birthday and he was raised by his grandmother Anna Blaisdell in Lake City. He joined the Army after high school and spent time in France with the 543rd Engineers from 1959 to 1962. He was a very proud veteran.

Ken owned a Phillips 66 gas station in Minneapolis, then worked for Abbey Rents before starting his own tent rental business, K & L Tent Rental. Ken also owned Oelkers Game Farm and raised beautiful show pheasants, ducks, geese and many other types of birds and animals for many years. At the age of 50, he sold his tent business and game farm and moved to the north shore living in Two Harbors then Silver Bay for 20 years. He enjoyed the Superior Hiking Trail very much, he volunteered many hours working on the trail and he was the Trail Maintenance Supervisor for several years. He managed volunteer teams building bridges and campsites. He would hike with his chainsaw or weed trimmer all day, clearing trails. During the winter months he routed and painted trail signs. He loved the hiking trail and the north shore and he made some very dear friends along the way that all shared that love of the area. Ken also had a fascination with Alaska and collected every book he could find on Alaska. He traveled there one time and he enjoyed it very much. He moved back to the north metro to be near family as his health started

keeping him from doing the things he loved so much on the north shore. The kids and grandkids got to see him much more and spend quality time with him in his last 5 years. He had an affection for squirrels and spent most of his time either building structures for them, feeding and watering them, or just watching them for hours.

Ken is survived by his daughter Karen (Loren) Reis and grandchildren Brent, Kevin, Caitlin and Max, daughter Sharon (James) Thorndike and grandchildren Ken, Tony and Samantha, daughter Shelly (Jim) Hervey and grandchildren Wyatt, Rebecka and Brett and son Richard (Christine) Oelkers and granddaughter Nicole. He is also survived by his nephew that lived with the family for 10 years and was very close to Ken, Jim (Kris) Oelkers and their children Jo Marie, Michael and Mason. Also surviving Ken is his brother Jim (Pat) Oelkers.

Ken read his bible every night, with his cats snuggled nearby and his wood stove blazing hot in the winter months or in his den in the warmer months in front of a window where he watched his squirrels. He recited his favorite verse just before his death (John 3:16) and told us not to worry, he knew where he was going. He will be missed, but his family is so happy he is with his mother and grandmother again in heaven.

Visitation 4-7PM Wednesday, January 3, 2018 with prayer service at 6:30PM at Washburn-McReavy New Brighton Chapel, 706 4th Ave. NW, New Brighton. 651-636-9821

Tribute Wall

PM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Paul Mattson - December 16, 2018 at 10:23 PM

BK

“ 1 file added to the album Ken Oelkers



Beth Kaszynski - January 03, 2018 at 08:58 AM

BE

George and I met while staying at Ken's house during a work weekend. It was only appropriate he be at our wedding on the North Shore. He was heading south to help someone roof a garage after the wedding! How appropriate!

Beth - January 03, 2018 at 10:15 AM

PH

“ It was a privilege to know and be able to work with Ken as one of his “trail angels” on the SHT. We have many memories of those days to help us pass the time when we no longer are able to get around in the fresh air. We took a “sabbatical” from SHT work when Ken retired. There was no finer person, or anyone as dedicated to the trail than Ken was. Thanks Ken you were the greatest. They “broke the mold” when you came along.

Pete Harris - January 02, 2018 at 05:18 PM

JS

“ I am so grateful for all that Ken accomplished on the Superior Hiking Trail. He was dedicated and filled with passion for the trail. He has had a positive impact on countless lives. The work he did on the trail will continue to impact people as long as the Superior Hiking Trail exists.



Jo Swanson - December 29, 2017 at 03:10 PM

DZ

“ 2 files added to the album New Album Name



Dick Zeman - December 29, 2017 at 08:51 AM

BD

“ I had the privilege to meet Ken in the mid '90's and we became good friends. Ken became friends with many people who walked the Trail. He touched so many lives, folks that came just to spend time on the Trail he loved so much.

He invited me to stay with him only once, after that it seemed that he simply expected that I would stay with him in Silver Bay, I loved it. He would always find a space for some one to sleep and we loved him for his generosity as much as his caring.

Ken became the reason to go north and spend time working on the Trail. I came to feel like he was an older brother, one I never had. For me life with Ken, on the Trail and at his home in Silver Bay, was simply wonderful.

To his children, please know that your Dad was loved by many folks and that our thoughts are with you.

*Bruce Davey
Kasota MN*

bruce Davey - December 28, 2017 at 07:59 PM

TL

“ 4 files added to the album Ken Oelkers



Tom LeMay - December 27, 2017 at 08:37 PM

BM

“ Ken was a great friend and next door neighbor. He was extremely dedicated to the Superior Hiking Trail. All trail users should be very thankful for the time, work and commitment Ken put in for this trail. We certainly are. He will be missed.

*Bob and Betsy Myers
Silver Bay*

Bob Myers - December 27, 2017 at 12:20 PM

HM

“ I worked alongside Ken many times doing trail maintenance for the Superior Hiking Trail. A nicer, more-dedicated man could not be found. I so enjoyed our visits as we worked on the trail. My sincerest condolences to the family.

Heidi Rigelman Marx

Heidi Marx - December 24, 2017 at 07:53 PM

UP

“ Uncle Jim and Aunt Patti purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Kenneth Harland Oelkers.



Uncle Jim and Aunt Patti - December 24, 2017 at 03:11 PM

KR

“ 1 file added to the album Ken Oelkers



Karen Reis - December 22, 2017 at 01:45 PM