

# Kenneth R Koppenjan

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Obituary



Guest Book

# Kenneth Koppenjan Obituary

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Kenneth R. Koppenjan, 84, of [Lake Wildwood, California](#), passed away on March 23, 2024 at home after living a productive life full of family, work and service. His death was due to complications from myelofibrosis cancer.

Ken was born on August 2, 1939, the youngest child of Henry Anthony Koppenjan and Hyacinth Dorothy Koppenjan, who met at the Alvin Theater in [Guttenberg, New Jersey](#). Henry played violin for the silent movies and Dorothy was the theater's cashier. Growing up in [North Bergen, NJ](#), Ken enjoyed going to the movies ("exciting times, for 12 cents you could not go wrong"), listening to Big Bands and making "roasted mickeys," a potato cooked with hot coals inside a tin can that was swung in circles on a cord until done. During these years, he shared a small bedroom with his older brother Robert and spent many summers fishing and exploring the woods near [Millinocket, Maine](#).

In school, Ken excelled at academics and had a gift for math and history, but as a southpaw was instructed not to write with his left hand. He reluctantly became ambidextrous. At 6'0", he was tallest kid on the high school basketball team (he played center). He also joined the track and field team and remained proud of his broad jump records. Ken graduated more than a year early and joined the U.S. Air Force at age 17, with his mother cosigning his enlistment papers. Following his military service, he met Diane Eleanor Passetti at a church picnic and they married in June 1963. They moved to [Lyndhurst, New Jersey](#), started a family and Ken completed both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Electrical

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As an electrical engineer, Ken worked in the growing aerospace industry. In 1975, he answered an ad in the New York Times for a position in California, and a few weeks later was packing up his family for a coast-to-coast move. For 31 years, he was up before the sun, making a 50-mile commute to work. Over his career, his projects included designing and building signaling/tracking modules for the Apollo moon missions, pioneering work for military and civilian communication satellites, guidance and telemetry systems and direct satellite television.

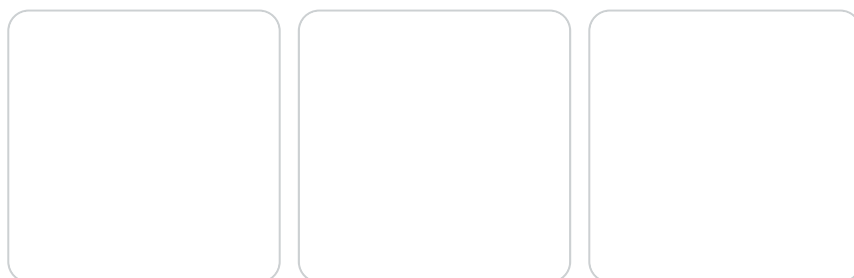
Ken and Diane retired to [Lake Wildwood, California](#) in 2006. He enjoyed his lakeview home and the time outdoors to manage the garden and landscaping. Outside of work and family Ken was active in the Lutheran church throughout his life, often volunteering for community outreach and support activities. He even helped start an after-school teen center in [Grass Valley, Calif.](#) Throughout his life he gave generously to the church and charities, over-tipped, and maintained a philosophy of gratitude. He had a strong sense of right and wrong, even when it was unpopular. On one occasion in the postwar years, he came to the aid of an elderly German couple being harassed by neighbors for their heritage.

To the end of his life, he maintained his sharp intellect. He worked complex math in his head, did his taxes by hand on paper, spoke succinctly and could beat most people at Jeopardy. Two of the things that made him most happy during his life were his family, and, as an engineer to his core, "when a plan unfolds per expectations." His life was very blessed with both.

Ken was preceded in death by Diane (2022), his beloved wife of 59 years,

and his older brother Robert (2015). He is survived by his sons, Steven, Brian and Gary; his grandchildren, Joshua, Benjamin, Sarah, Deanna, Parker, Jack and Dani; and his daughters-in-law, Michelle Koppenjan and Tina Koppenjan. He had been a resident of [Penn Valley, California](#) since 2006 and from 1975 to 2006 of [Simi Valley, California](#).

Arrangements are under the direction of the Hooper & Weaver Mortuary, Nevada City, California.



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**Michelle Koppenjan** April 4, 2024



**Michelle Koppenjan** April 4, 2024



**Michelle Koppenjan** April 4, 2024



**Michelle Koppenjan** April 4, 2024

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the



**Michelle Koppenjan** April 4, 2024



**Michelle Koppenjan** April 4, 2024

From the moment I came into the Koppenjan family, Ken was welcoming, kind & loving to me. He and Diane not only loved me,

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**Roy Herron** March 31, 2024

At a Koppenjan home dinner (Brian's parents were wonderfully hospitable to starving college students), Ken told a story about

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**Neil Michel** March 27, 2024

Ken was my second dad. I grew up a lot in his home. He was a role model in too many ways too count. Ken was devoted to his family, his faith, and his moral compass. Just a good, good man.

Showing 1 - 8 of 8 results

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