

# KENNETH RALPH SMITH

October 6, 1947 – March 5, 2011)

Kenneth Ralph Smith was born October 6, 1947 in the old American Fork Hospital on Main Street. His parents named him Kenneth after their friend and family doctor Dr. Kenneth Noyes who also delivered him. His middle name was after his father Ralph. Kenneth was the fourth child and first son born to A. Ralph and Mabel Cook Smith. You can imagine the excitement at the Smith home to finally get a boy after three beautiful dancing & giggling daughters. He was a healthy baby and the center of attraction. As soon as Kenneth was old enough, he loved to go out on the jobs with his dad.

Kenneth attended the three story Harrington Elementary School still standing by the police station today and started fourth grade at Greenwood Elementary when it was completed. Kenneth attended the old A.F. Jr High on the hill which use to be the high school hill and was located where the American Fork swimming pool and rec is today. Kenneth attended and graduated from the American Fork High School with he class of 1965

Kenneth was quiet and shy yet a very kind hearted giving person especially to his family. After graduation Kenneth worked for his father Ralph in construction on many jobs until he was later drafted into the Army in 1967. This was during the Viet Nam conflict and his mother was very relieved when he was stationed most of this time at the US Army Garrison located in Baumholder Germany. While in the army Kenneth was placed in an Artillery Division and served as a F.O. or Forward Observer. As a “forward Observers” you were trained to go ahead of the main body to observe and scope out what the situation was ahead.

Kenneth returned home from his service a few weeks early to attend his sister Cleo’s funeral. When they discharged him the Red Cross provided his transportation home, however he was never told which of his five sisters had passed away so he was left wondering which sister’s funeral he was going to be attending while traveling home.

Kenneth started work for Mountain State Steel the first year after returning from the army then he was hired by American Fork City to work for the Parks Department. One year later Kenneth transferred to work under his father in the Road’s Department. Kenneth worked for several years at the side of his father learning the skills of road maintenance. After his father’s retirement Kenneth moved into his fathers job as superintendent of the Roads Department. In our family we refer to our brother as Kenneth, at work he was known and called Kenny which he seemed to prefer.

Kenneth was an uncle to 12 nieces and 12 nephews and took great pride in all of their activities and accomplishments. He attended baseball, volleyball, soccer & football games. He supported his nieces when cheerleading, attended track meets, concerts and even dance & piano recitals. We can’t say he was on the front lines loudly cheering each one of his nieces and nephews on because Kenneth usually showed up and quietly stood in the back ground silently cheering them on with great pride. Kenneth was interested in every niece and nephew even though he could not attend many events for those who lived away-he was always aware of their progress. He shared in their interests and followed their progress by collecting news articles and paper clipping on mountain climbing, motor cross, sports and other achievements they were involved in.

We cannot remember a wedding, missionary farewell or homecoming Kenneth did not attend in our family and that was something considering Kenneth had to dress up to go to church.

*Kenneth was a Jazz Fan and collect Jazz memorabilia. he loved kids and children. If a child would enter the room. Kenneth would light up and as quiet as Kenneth was when children were around he could always find words to speak and joke around with them.*

*He loved to collect things through the years such as stamps, sports cards, baseball caps, t-shirts and coins and the nephews took great interest in all his sports cards.*

About six years ago Kenneth was not feeling well and his family became very concerned for his health. We had taken him to several doctors but no one could find the problem. One day His sister Marilyn received a call from Kenneth's work and was told it was the second day Kenneth had not shown up for work without calling, which was very unusual. Kenneth seldom missed work and never missed without calling in. When Marilyn checked on Kenneth he was not doing well and was unconscious. He was taken to the hospital and recovered however because his blood sugar had reach such high levels he was left with some brain injuries causing him to lose his short-term memory.

It's hard to describe the last six year of Kenneth's life. He became totally depend on his family over night. For one who loved his privacy and independence he was thrust into a world of total dependance, He lived every moment not knowing what happened to him because he could never remember past 15-20 minutes and no matter how often you may visit or be with him, we knew he would forget we were there a few minutes after we walked out of the room.

Kenneth took turns living at his sisters homes the first year after the accident but he longed to be in his own home. We felt as a family if he were in his own home it would feel more familiar and normal to him however because he needed 24 hour care it meant we would need to find people to help us care for him. How do you find people you can trust to care and love for a family members as much as you do? This was a concern and dilemma for our family however this is where our Heavenly Fathers love for Kenneth and our family became very evident and clear. As if Angel were sent to our home from above we were directed to very incredible caring christ-like people through these years who helped us care for our brothers every need. There are not words to express our gratitude for those who helped care for him. As a family and from "the bottom of our hearts" we would like to recognize and dearly thank each one of them publicly; Sheri Gilgen, Windy Opthof, Cathy & Dave Opthof. Then for the last six months when Kenneth needed total nursing care he was blessed to have his niece Kristy and her husband Brain Wilson help care for him and love him which he loved very much.

Kenneth developed an infection in his foot which sent him to the hospital. After three days he needed more care for this infection and was moved to the heritage care center in American Fork where he died three weeks later on Saturday, March 5th from an infection due to diabetics.

Because of Kenneth's shy quiet nature he might have been misunderstood and possibly unknown to some so we thought we would like to share with you some memories and thoughts from his nieces and nephew that will give you a glimpse into his life and the kind of person Kenneth was.

- **-Shane** When we were little kids Kenneth drove Blaine, Todd and myself down to Steel Days and gave us \$5 each. It took us all day to spend that much money as the games only cost a dime to play at that time, we thought we were rich.
- **Todd** Ken was a quiet guy who was always good for a joke delivered with his characteristic deadpan style of humor. I remembers what a passionate and dedicated Jazz fan Ken was and how he liked to have good long conversations about the team.
- **Shelly** I have very fond memories of my uncle Kenneth. Especially the times that I would walk into Grandma and Grandpa's house and he would give me a quick hello and go straight to my little ones. He was always so sweet to them. They loved him. I loved how, as soon as he knew we were there, he would come right over to grandma's house to see all of us. I also loved it when we would all be laughing about something funny and he would be trying not to laugh. He wouldn't even show his teeth as he laughed, but you could tell how funny he thought it was. In his very quiet, shy way you knew that you mattered to him and that he loved you very much. We were his world.
- **Brent** When we would go visit Grandpa and Grandma I knew within a few minutes uncle Kenneth would show up. He would walk around not saying much but when my Dad started joking around he would turn away only because he was laughing and he acted like he didn't want anyone to know he thought it was funny. I loved it when he came over because you knew he cared.
- **Shauna** I remember how fun it was to go to my Uncle Kenneths house but my favorite memories are with his red camero. It was exciting when he would take us for a drive. But the best part was to see his reaction. Kenneth the quiet shy uncle became the happy and proud Uncle. I think he enjoyed taking us around as much as we enjoyed going. To this day I can still remember how fun it was to see him so happy.
- **Paul** My memories of Kenneth are mainly from when he lived in the small home onthe corner. As a teenager, I remember when the church installed those huge satelite dishes at each of the meeting houses. It was not long after that Kenneth had a big, trampoline size satelite dish installed in his yard. I was amazed at the prospect of having hundreds of channels available in one home. To a teenager from Morgan, this made Uncle Kenneth a rockstar.
- **Becky** I loved Kenneth's dry sense of humor. He was always so quiet, So when he did say something it threw you for a loop. I think he got that from grandpa Smith. The last time we were down to visit him, he was asking my mother Barbara what was wrong with him. She was explaining to him that he had had some short term memory loss. He then said with a twinkle in his eye, and a sheepish grin, " Oh, so your name's Marilyn". My kids thought that was so funny! I loved it because I knew that the healthy, and happy Kenneth was still in there somewhere.
- **David** I remember one summer day my family had all gone down to American Fork to spend the weekend with Grandma and Grandpa. As we were approaching their house we could see Kenneth standing out front of his house near what seemed to be an increasingly flooded lawn. When we got out of the car, and without delay, we b-lined it over to Kenneth's lawn, which we were already calling, Lake Kenneth. Ken informed us that he was irrigating his lawn. . He told us if we were interested we could go and get our swim suits and play in the water. For the next 2 hours at least we spent our time running and diving into

Lake Kenneth. The entire time Kenneth and my dad were standing, perched on the water's edge, egging us on. I distinctly remember thinking how patient Kenneth was with us. He was always patient with us. Here we were invading his day of summer work with our fun, and he didn't seem to mind one bit. . Although Kenneth didn't have his own kids he always had a knack for making us feel , in a way, that we were his own. I never questioned Uncle Kenneth's love and interest in my life.

- **Brad** Whenever I think of Kenneth I think of running over to his house when we would get to Grandma and Grandpa's. He always had Halloween candy. We all loved Kenneth although I think we bugged him sometimes, though he never let on, as we'd look through his collection of Basketball cards. I remember getting tapped on the shoulder and turning around to see Kenneth acting like he didn't do it. I remember him doing it to my kids too. Then he'd have some funny comment. You never got a straight answer out of Kenneth. But what I remember most about Kenneth is the silent support. He wasn't one to cheer, but he was always there to support. I remember him coming to watch me at State Track. I didn't even know he was there until I'd see him with my Mom after the race. I knew Kenneth didn't have much to say, so It was something he did that let me know how much he cared.
- **Scott** Whenever we went to see our Grandparents I always got so excited to go to Kenneth's. He would always welcome us with a smile and a "hey". I especially liked the orange pumpkin container on top of his fridge because He would allow us to fill out little hands with all the mini candy bars we could hold, which was usually about 4. He must have not got many trick-or-treaters because as I grew older so did the candy, but what did we care it was free. We would dust one off, open it up, and gnaw on it for hours. I remember one thanksgiving talking to Kenneth; I must have been around six or so. I asked him how old he was. He looked straight into my little eyes and large glasses and said "98". I wasn't the brightest child, and I fully believed him. I walked away so confused. How could he be older then Grandma and Grandpa?
- **Mark** When driving by Kenneth's house we would look over and see if Kenneth's red car was at his house and if it was we would say, "Kenneth's home". We'd then pulled into Grandma and Grandpa Smith's driveway, pile out of the van, run into their house, give them a kiss and hug, go into the kitchen and get a cookie then head out the back door and right over to Kenneth's house. I'm sure there were a lot of times he'd be sitting watching his big screen in his bedroom, hearing our knock and sighing to himself. But regardless of our bad timing he always answered the door with a small smile. Before he could really say hi, we were in his home asking to look at his cards and hats,. What a rare treasure, an uncle who always made me feel welcome, who would make time between all of the other nieces and nephews sports to see me run at State track.
- **Emily** My uncle Ken was at every high school and college volleyball game he could attend-- which was many. He was a quiet supporter never said much but was always in the stands. Even if it was an all day tournament he was there the whole time He saved every article/picture that was ever printed about me. I will always be grateful for his support and kindness

- **Tracy** There are a lot of great things that I remember about uncle Kenneth but a few of my favorites would be going for rides in his sporty red car. I used to love going “trick or treating” at uncle Kens because he always handed out big size candy bars. And you couldn't ask for a greater supporter for you always had a fan with Kenneth around.
- **Vance** Over the years Kenneth has always supported us in our baseball and softball, even to the point of sponsoring a few of our tournaments. About ten years ago we changed the name of our softball team to Smithers to reflect ken and his support. We not only got new shirts and hats for the team but ken made sure all of our kids had matching shirts and hats. I will always remember his love and support and will continue to wear the smithers name with pride.
- **Wade** Ken, he loved watching sports, especially his Utah jazz. But even more than the Jazz he loved watching all of us play sports, I can't ever remember a time when Ken wasn't on the sidelines, silently cheering us on. He never had much to say, but when he did, it was with the best sence of humor. I hope we can all have a little time to be more like Ken.
- **Derek** If there was one thing ken alway did it was making time for his nieces and nephews. I would always make sure to get him an extra schedule for the upcoming ball season, Going anywhere with uncle Ken was always fun. I mean... a fast, red, T-top camaro and a free drink. Who wouldn't have fun? As the BIGGEST FAN he later became the owner of his own softball team that his nephews played on. We came up with the name.... SMITHERS!!!! After the best uncle, fan and friend!
- **Kristy** I remember when I was around the age of 10 my brothers, and cousins asked Kenneth if we could paint the outside of his house to earn some money. He agreed and with paint and ladders, we did it. Wow, now that I'm older, I can't believe he let such young kids paint his house. Kenneth loved seeing us have fun more than he cared about the outcome of the job we were doing. He made us feel more important than his house. Caring for uncle Ken the last seven months will always be treasured. He would light up when my kids were around, he loved joking with them. With Ken it was always a holiday, When we would leave he'd say Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, or Happy Easter, and sometimes my kids wanted to know why Santa didn't come, if it was Christmas. Even though Kenneth was faced with this trial the last few years he never lost his sense of humor.
- **Rebecca** I hadn't been in hair school long when he asked me for a hair cut! Now, that was brave! We pulled up a chair in grandma's kitchen and he waited patiently while it took me a good 30-40 minutes for one of my first at home hair cuts! He told every joke in the book about his then thinning hair on top! From then on he was a faithful client which says a lot when it took a good while before that 30 minutes time improved. Weather he liked his first few hair cuts or not he made me feel like he did and that was just like him to do so!
- **Deborah** When it would snow Kenneth would always plow the snow by our house first thing then he would always be careful to place the snow in a large pile so we could make a sleigh hill to slide down.

- **John Daniel** My fondest memories of Kenneth came at the beginning of every baseball game. This memory involves his red camaro. Before the start of any game or performance, many kids look for Mom and Dad in the stands. Many boys look for their girlfriends and girls for their boyfriends. I was a bit different. Don't get me wrong, I loved seeing my Mom and Dad in the stands. In addition, I was always a fan of the ladies; however, what I looked for was Ken's red camaro coming down the street. He never failed. If he ever did miss a game or performance, I certainly can't recall the moment. He never shouted from the stands. To many people, he may have gone unnoticed at the far corner of the bleachers; yet, for each of his nieces and nephews, they always noticed Kenneth was there. He always dressed in your team's latest fan apparel. His religious game attendance usually resulted in a hamburger and drink after each game. Kenneth didn't know how to say "no" and I think all the nieces and nephews can agree that we may have taken advantage of this from time to time. I do however feel that it was the chance to say "yes" that made Kenneth the most happy.
- **Jessica** When grandma and grandpa died Kenneth and his siblings were choosing keepsakes that were important to them that they would like to keep. One by one they took turns choosing and when it was time for Kenneth to choose something, he chose the brown & creme crochet afghan that had been placed on grandma's couch in her home for years. After making his choice, he then picked up the afghan and came over and handed to me-- because somehow he learned that I wanted it. I was excited yet humbled by Kenneth's thoughtfulness and sacrifice.
- **Lindsey** After Ken's accident he didn't get out much so when I saw him at my wedding I was really surprised and excited. Then I thought, 'why am I so surprised. Ken always made it to all my stuff-- why would he miss my wedding! Ken showed his love by giving us his time. I always knew he loved me because he even came to my four-hour dance recitals
- **Taren** One of my favorite memories of Uncle Ken was him coming to our sports games. I used to love being in the middle of a soccer or tennis match and I would see his red camaro pull up in the parking lot and I would be so excited that he came. He would always drive pretty far to come watch and he always stayed the whole time. He always made me feel pretty special in that he would spend part of his Saturdays supporting me. I loved it. Another fond memory of Uncle Ken is the countless slurpies We didn't have to beg him to hard because he would almost always say yes. We would all squish in his car and I am sure gab his ear off but he never seemed to mind.