



## Kenneth Nordahl Thompson

November 15, 1937 - July 9, 2020

Kenneth “Ken” Nordahl Thompson, 82, died at Canyon Creek Memory Care in Billings, MT on Thursday, July 9, 2020 with COVID-19. A Memorial Service will be held at 11:00 A.M. on Friday, July 9, 2021 at First Lutheran Church in Beach with Pastor Roger Dieterle officiating. Interment will take place at the Beach Lutheran Cemetery. Silha Funeral Home of Beach has been entrusted with the arrangements.

Ken was born to Theodore “Ted” and Sophie (Erickson) Thompson on November 15, 1937 at the old NP Hospital in Glendive, MT. He grew up and attended schools in Beach, ND, graduating in 1955 second in his class. At Beach High School, Ken participated in basketball and football, FFA and band (at the spring music festival his clarinet solo received a Highly Superior rating). Summers he would be at second base for the Beach American Legion or the “Bees” baseball teams.

He attended Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, for two years then transferred to South Dakota School of Mines in Rapid City, SD graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in chemistry. He then entered graduate school at Montana State College in Bozeman where he received his Masters of Science and PhD in chemistry. After graduating, he briefly taught chemistry at South Dakota School of Mines.

He began his industrial research career with Pratt-Whitney Aircraft, West Palm Beach, FL where he helped develop heat-resistant coatings on the Lunar Lander engine; then at Anheuser-Busch labs, St. Louis, MO investigated the

chemistry of flavor in beer; and then to Clinton, IA where he worked at Clinton Corn, a division of Standard Brands. There his research led to his patent on a process to increase the yield of high-fructose sugar from corn. Ken retired from industry in 1974 and returned to Beach to farm as his dad approached retirement.

Ken served the 39th District in the ND legislature from 1978 to 1990; and served as chair of the appropriations committee. He enjoyed golf at local courses and when the biennial Legislature was adjourned he often traveled to southern states in winter to play golf.

Ken was preceded in death by his parents.

Ken is survived by his brother, Gary of Columbus, MT and sister, Sheryl (Wayne) Saverud of Kalispell, MT. Also surviving are his nieces: Erica (Scott) Anderson of Torrance, CA, their children Tyler and Haley; Sara (Gabe) Russell of Maple Valley, WA; and Anna Saverud (Ian Welch) of Bozeman and son Oliver. Ken was respected by all who knew him. He was a wonderful son, brother, and uncle loved by his family who will surely miss him.

Memorials may be given to Golden Valley Manor, 260 5th St. SW, Beach, ND 58621; or to the donor's choice. Remembrances and condolences may be left with the family at: [www.silhafuneralhomes.com](http://www.silhafuneralhomes.com).

## Cemetery Details

### Beach Lutheran Cemetery

Beach, ND 58621

## Previous Events

### Memorial Service

JUL 9. 11:00 AM (MT)

First Lutheran Church  
225 2nd Ave SE  
Beach, ND 58621

# Tribute Wall



“ *Kenneth Nordahl Thompson*

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December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM

“ I remember watching Ken play baseball for Beach. He was very good, and the dozens of cars parked around the ball field would honk horns when there was an exciting play. Later I got to know him after he moved back to Beach. He had played baseball in Florida with his employer's team, and told of playing in West Palm where there was a banner across an intersection advertising the game and billing them as "an all-white team". I think he was happy to be back in North Dakota!

Brian Keohane was instrumental in urging Ken to run for the legislature in 1978. Ken was the perfect candidate; we ran him as Mr. Clean. He was modest, and didn't want his name at the top of the ads for the 5 newspapers in the huge district because the other candidates, Leland Roen and Mike Olienyk were both up for reelection. But the ads would have read R O T if they had been listed first, so Ken agreed to the design. It got easier in later years as his running mates were Joe Whalen, Bill Bowman.

One morning early in his first session, my phone began to ring non-stop. A furious bunch of Bowman voters were calling because their special baby-Weather Mod had been voted down the previous day. They were fired up, and said "your boy voted against it". I let Ken know about the complaints, and I am sure they called him too. So that afternoon, through an obscure rule that allowed a re-vote within 24 hours, the Weather Mod bill came up again. It passed, but Ken voted against it a second time! That is called resolute, and the Bowman people ended up impressed with their new representative! We had a lot of fun in the politics of District 39, the largest in the state, bigger than the state of Connecticut, with voter addresses in 3 states. He is the only PhD in chemistry elected to the legislature, and did a remarkably good job there. I was proud to occasionally be introduced as his campaign manager.

Jim and I eventually bought the house where Ken's grandparents raised their family. He was happy to see us in there and visited many times. He told us stories of his Dad, aunts and uncles, and about the many types of trees growing on the property. He arranged some meetings with his dear nieces and my daughter when they were all little girls. He was so proud of them. Rest in Peace, dear

*friend.*

*Mary Sue (Reiter) Lawin*

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**Mary S. Lawin** - July 06, 2021 at 05:35 PM

LB

“ *I was deeply saddened to learn of Ken's passing. My sincerest condolences to Gary and Cheryl and their families and to the extended Thompson family. I have so many wonderful memories of playing football (I was a freshman in HS when he was a junior), basketball and, especially baseball (what an outstanding second baseman he was! Ryan to Thompson or Thompson to Ryan to start a double-play!!). The amazing thing was that in all the years and different sports we participated in, I never heard a curse word or foul expletive from Ken. What a wonderful character he possessed! He was an outstanding student academically as well. Not only did we attend high school together for two years but we were together for three years as Montana State University as Ken completed a Ph.D. in Chemistry (carbohydrate chemistry as I recall. I later finished my Ph.D. at Virginia Tech). His life was full of accomplishments. Again, my prayers and deepest sympathy to all his family!*  
*Leo Bares, 216 Overlook Rd., Staunton, Va 24401*

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**Leo A. Bares Bares** - July 28, 2020 at 11:09 AM

DM

“ *I admired and respected Ken.*

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**Dick Melvin** - July 21, 2020 at 10:19 PM

SD

“ *What an outstanding career Ken had. He was so unassuming. He was a gentle and kind soul. God bless his memory.*

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**Sharon Farstveet Dietz** - July 21, 2020 at 12:29 PM

BL

“ *I am sorry to learn of Ken's passing. Please accept my condolences.*

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**Bill Lardy** - July 19, 2020 at 07:56 PM

ME

“ *Mark And Dawn Egan lit a candle in memory of Kenneth Nordahl Thompson*



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**Mark and Dawn Egan** - July 14, 2020 at 01:37 PM