



Kenneth Franklin Sunderland

July 18, 1929 - September 29, 2013

KENNETH FRANKLIN SUNDERLAND July 18, 1929 ~ September 29, 2013
Kenneth Sunderland, beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather, died September 29th after a long illness, bravely fought. With a life-long love of aviation and all things flying-related, Captain Sunderland left on his last journey Sunday morning, surrounded by his family. Ken was born in the Panama Canal zone, to Dr. Franklin Vaughn Sunderland, a Navy physician, and Wilda Crispelle Sunderland, a teacher. The young family relocated to San Diego, where Ken graduated from Hoover High School at 16 and entered the army at 17. Stationed in Japan during a freezing winter, the California teen was quickly recruited into the 11th Airborne Division, which touted steam-heated barracks and a large beer hall. As a paratrooper, Ken made a number of jumps, and it was a source of amusement to him and his family that his first formal introduction to aviation was jumping out of perfectly good airplanes. With peacetime, Ken returned to San Diego and began college at San Diego State University. His other interests included building hot-rods, racing experimental cars across the Mojave desert, and performing gymnastics on the beach, the latter in the hopes of attracting feminine attention. Ken left SDSU to attend Northrop Aeronautical Institute. After graduating from Northrop, Ken worked at Convair and United in mechanical line maintenance, and from 1955-1960 as a flight engineer at Pan Am. During this time he also built his flying hours in an unpredictable old beater plane that offered him many opportunities for unorthodox landing experiences in beet fields and

meadows with surprised sheep and cows and the occasional surprised farmer. In 1960, Ken was hired at Hawaiian Airlines and moved to Hawaii with his wife and infant daughter. Ken spent the next 30 years there, moving from trainer to co-pilot, to Captain and Chief Pilot, and raising two daughters and a son in Hawaii. Upon retirement, Ken moved to his homestead in Washington state, continued flying for pleasure, and tried his hand at farming, although his tender heart ensured that all livestock were transformed into permanent family pets. Ken is remembered by his friends for his keen sense of humor, engaging stories, distrust of government, love of wordplay and terrible puns, and mad skills as a pilot. He was fond of saying that he'd lived an amazing life filled with adventure and got everything he ever wanted. Ken is survived by his daughters, Gwen and Kira Sunderland; son, Dr. Paul Sunderland, grandson, Pila Sunderland and granddaughter-in-law, Dr. Anna Barrett Sunderland, and great-grandson, Henry Sunderland. His family is ever thankful for his playfulness, kindness and unwavering integrity and are grateful that they have so much for which to grieve. Funeral services are Sun., Oct. 6th at 3 p.m. at Evergreen Memorial Gardens, 1101 NE 112th Ave., Vancouver, WA.

Tribute Wall



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

Evergreen Memorial Gardens - July 03, 2025 at 08:00 PM



“ Ken's mother Wilda was my aunt. I saw Ken a few times during my early years. The last time I saw Ken was in about 1975 when my parents and I were vacationing in Hawaii and he visited us at our hotel. I'm sorry that I didn't get a chance to know him better.

Les (Nick) Crispelle - December 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ I knew Ken when I was a young teen. He let me 'help' build his house when he moved to Amboy. Always nice and patient. Have a great flight Ken, I know the landing will be a good one.

Paul Cleveland - October 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ I knew Ken when I was a young teen. He let me 'help' build his house when he moved to Amboy. Always nice and patient. Have a great flight Ken, I know the landing will be a good one.

Paul Cleveland - October 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ Always smiling, respectful of everyone. It was always a pleasure to fly a bid with him. He was loved and respected by every crew that had the honor of being on his flights. Farewell our Captain.

Leroy Perry - October 04, 2013 at 12:00 AM

PZ

“ To one of the 'good guys', I wish you blue skies ahead, Ken, as you head west. Phil Zane

Phil Zane - October 04, 2013 at 12:00 AM

CH

“ Kira, Gwen, Paul: I have fond memories of working with your dad & for your Dad. Kira I have some slides for you, taken in Canada during our trip to the BC cabin 1979. Provide mail address & I'll send to you. Currently in nursing home following fall & pelvis fracture time to heal (est 6 weeks), Condolences to each of you. Clay

clay higbee - October 04, 2013 at 12:00 AM