



Kenneth Jensen Whitcomb

December 24, 1927 - April 25, 2026

Kenneth Jensen Whitcomb passed away peacefully on April 25, 2026, at the Pathways Hospice facility in Fort Collins, Colorado. He was born on December 24, 1927, the son of William Theodore “Ted” and Helen Marie Whitcomb, the second of their six children. He was raised in Wisner, Nebraska, a town of 1,327 people at the time.

Ken graduated from high school in 1945 as class valedictorian. He lettered in basketball and track. As a senior, he won several events at the district track meet and qualified for the state meet, but the state meet was canceled due to the war effort and gas rationing.

The war with Germany was over just before he graduated from high school but not the war with Japan. So, he enlisted in the army, starting in the reserve corps because he was only 17. He spent most of his time at Fort Belvoir, Virginia working in the Finance Office. He was in charge of the Officer’s Pay Section when he was discharged.

Ken used the G.I. Bill to go to the University of Nebraska where he graduated with a degree in Business Administration after only three years. He knew he wanted to teach, so he went to Wayne State College in Nebraska and received a second degree in Education with a teaching certificate. He taught school for a while in Plattsmouth, Nebraska where he noted there were a lot of

women teachers but only one man. Thankfully, he met the best woman – his future wife, Carol Rose Duerfeldt. Shortly, though, he went back to school at the University of Nebraska where he earned a Master's degree in Mathematics. He finished that degree in 1955 at a hectic time right as he and Carol were getting married.

Ken then joined Carol in Denver, Colorado that fall where she had begun teaching music at Bryant-Webster Elementary School. Ken got a job teaching mathematics at Manuel High School. After that first school year in Denver, he was invited to interview for a teaching position at Colorado A&M in Fort Collins. Ken was subsequently hired by the university, and they moved to Fort Collins in 1956. He taught mathematics there at what soon became Colorado State University for over 30 years.

Starting in 1956, Ken and Carol had four children over eight years: Roger, Mark, Sheri, and Duane.

Ken was an avid gardener. He had a large vegetable garden, many fruit trees, and lots of flowering plants including his prized rose garden. He also enjoyed friendships with his graduate students, and he was regarded as a kind and wonderful man and an extraordinary mentor. He played a strong game of handball, loved doing crossword puzzles, and as part of a Whitcomb family tradition, was always ready to play a game of cards. His older brother recalled that Ken seemed to know everything about anything, and his youngest brother wanted to follow in Ken's footsteps because Ken was so smart.

Ken and Carol were active members of the First United Methodist Church ever since they moved to Fort Collins. He participated in many committees and attended the Samaritan Sunday School class regularly.

He enjoyed traveling with his family. In a succession of RVs, the family visited

much of the U.S. and parts of Canada and often visited their extended family and friends in other parts of the country. In retirement, Ken and Carol visited Alaska, Hawaii, the Caribbean, the Panama Canal, Denmark, and Israel.

Ken retired from teaching in 1987, and he and Carol built their dream home in the mountains near Red Feather Lakes where they lived until health concerns led them back to Fort Collins.

Ken's wife Carol and two of his siblings (Gene Whitcomb and Jim Whitcomb) preceded him in death. He is survived by three siblings (Tom Whitcomb, Ruth Troyer, and Stan Whitcomb), his four children, 6 grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

Ken had a long and fruitful life and touched many people, including friends and family and his students, and he will be deeply missed.

Services will be held at First United Methodist Church, 1005 Stover Street, Fort Collins at 11:00 am on May 18th, 2026, with inurnment at the church columbarium immediately afterward.

In lieu of flowers, the family has suggested donations to the choir program of First United Methodist Church. To donate, go to the church website at <https://www.firstchurchfc.org>, click on the "Give" button in the upper right corner and select the "Music Department Restricted" fund. On the payment page, add a note that says: "In memory of Kenneth".

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 18. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (MT)

First United Methodist Church
1005 Stover Street
80524