



Kerwin L. Rakness

June 20, 1946 - June 9, 2016

Kerwin Luther Rakness was born on June 20, 1946, to Elenora Kittelson and Leif Rakness in Watertown, South Dakota, the third of four sons. He lived on a farm near the tiny town of Henry, South Dakota, where he graduated from High School in 1964.

He attended South Dakota State University in Brookings, South Dakota, from which he received B.S. degree in Civil Engineering in 1969 and a Masters degree in Sanitary Engineering in 1970. As a participant in the ROTC program he went directly into the U. S. Army and served with the rank of Captain at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, where for two years he taught food and water sanitation classes for military units heading to Vietnam.

He was married to Cheryl Ness on January 25, 1969; and their first son, Greg, was born in 1971, while they were in San Antonio. Later the family moved to Denver, where Kerwin was hired to work with the EPA. The man who hired him was none other than Bob Hegg, who later became his best friend and business partner. They worked with the EPA for two years, and their understanding of how this government agency operated was very useful to them in later years as they developed contracts for consulting with wastewater and water treatment plants. Kerwin also worked for a year in Denver with FMC, a private manufacturing company. Kerwin and Cheryl's second son, Eric, was born in Denver in 1974.

The family moved to Fort Collins in 1975, where once again Kerwin and Bob worked together, at M&I Consulting Engineering Company. There they focused their attention on developing an innovative approach to evaluating problems in the operation of sewage treatment plants.

A few years later, in April of 1982, Kerwin and Bob Hegg struck out on their own, forming a business partnership under the name of Process Applications, Inc. They took their concept of evaluating operating problems and presenting innovative solutions and expanded it, eventually moving into the field of ozone disinfection treatment of drinking water. This technology was already being used in Europe, but it was very new in the United States. Kerwin particularly immersed himself in the study of ozone treatment, and before long, he became a world-famous expert in this very important new field. He is recognized for his many scientific papers on the process, and a book titled, "Ozone in Drinking Water Treatment," is widely regarded as the "bible" for ozone water treatment plant operations. He has worked as a highly valued consultant for such plants in many places around the world, including Los Angeles, Boston, Las Vegas, Dallas, Hong Kong, Seoul, Toronto, York (England), and others.

His career record is impressive, but it does not nearly tell Kerwin's whole story. Perhaps other aspects of his life can best be summed up in son Greg's words: "Dad was all about keeping priorities straight. And for him, the priorities were God, family, and friends – in that order, and approaching all with a deep attitude of love." In other words, relationships and personal interaction were his basic values in life. And interestingly, those are the things that made him so successful in his business career as well. Bob Hegg states, "With all the scientific and engineering technical proficiency and know-how that Kerwin possessed, what made him so immensely successful were his people-skills. His ability to bring people together in team-work and in understanding how to

solve problems – that’s what made it all work.”

Kerwin’s people-skills are also what made him such a dear friend to so many, whether in his ROMEO Golf Club (where he was not only one of the best golfers in the group of 75 players, but also a much-loved and admired individual); or at his Church, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran, where he was so respected that Pastor Dana Peterson said recently, “When Kerwin spoke, it was like the voice of God – everybody said, ‘Well, if Kerwin says that’s something the church should do, then let’s do it!’”

And he was a deeply-caring family man – first to Cheryl, the sweetheart of his life; then to his sons and lovely daughters-in-law, and of course his beautiful grandchildren (Ellie, daughter of Greg and Pam; and Quinlan, Harper, and Saoirse, son and two daughters of Eric and Roisin). His grandchildren only came along a few short years ago, but in that time, everyone agrees he was “born to be a grandpa.”

His involvement with family extended outward, like many waves and ripples on a pond. Most closely connected are brother Fred and his wife, Sharon, of Atlanta, GA; brother Randy and his wife, Linda, of Watertown, SD; and sister-in-law Kathy of Valencia, CA, widow of brother Warren. There are also many nieces and nephews, and even more cousins both in the U.S. and in Norway. Kerwin was instrumental in bringing these many family elements together by organizing, along with his brothers, family reunions that take place every five years on the family homestead near Henry, SD. Kerwin worked hard to include the relatives from Norway, so that at the most recent reunion in 2014, there were 30 family members present from the “old country.” The reunions grew from a modest start more than 30 years ago to a wonderful gathering now of more than 400 people; and a few years ago, they drew the attention of Better Homes & Gardens magazine, which spotlighted the event in the middle of

America as “the best family picnic in the country.” For Kerwin, the family gatherings, and the frequent trips back to the farm, were always a source of great enjoyment.

In every part of his life, Kerwin was one who could get things organized and accomplished, and who got people to work with him joyfully and willingly. At church, he served on Church Council several times; on at least two different pastoral Call committees; as a Sunday School teacher; and on the Worship & Music committee for years. And he was always involved behind the scenes when new technologies were introduced (like the video system), or when fund-raising was needed (as with a new building program).

In his career, he was widely recognized by his peers as a leader, being a life member of the American Water Works Association, and serving on the Board of Directors of the International Ozone Association.

Within his family, he was the entirely beloved brother and father and cousin and uncle who would always be sure that everyone was included and that activities were kept going forward with joy and vigor.

Kerwin died on June 9, 2016, after only two months since he was first diagnosed with stage four cancer, and only eleven days short of his 70th birthday. He took his last breaths peacefully in the presence of Cheryl, who was joined minutes later by a few close friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions may be made to Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church Memorial Fund, 1200 S. Taft Hill Rd., Fort Collins, CO, 80521; or other gifts may be directed to the website CaringBridge.org, where Kerwin’s journal was recorded during the time of his illness.

May he rest in the peace and love of God, who kept him so securely throughout his life here on earth.

Previous Events

Funeral Service

JUN **16**. 2:00 PM (MT)

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
1200 S Taft Hill Rd Fort Collins, CO US 80521
Fort Collins, CO 80521

Tribute Wall

CJ

“ I am so grateful to have known Kerwin, and experienced his great generosity. He selflessly and graciously divulged much of his ozone treatment knowledge and experience gained over many years, to me here in Australia for no commercial gain, just to spread the use of ozone and the benefits it provides throughout the world. A truly kind and generous spirit.

My deep condolences to the Rakness family.

*Craig Jakubowski
Australia*

Craig Jakubowski - July 26, 2016 at 09:20 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.*



July 07, 2016 at 01:11 PM

JM

“ *Truly he helped so many people through the scores of ozone based water treatment plants he helped operate more effectively. He taught us all so much! A great man and a true gentleman! I will miss his kindness when we would see one another at conferences. Eternal rest grant unto Kerwin, O' Lord, and may the perpetual light shine upon him. Amen {Jim Malley, University of New Hampshire, USA}*

Jim Malley - June 16, 2016 at 08:28 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.*



June 16, 2016 at 03:54 AM



“ *I love how Kerwin took all of the gifts that God blessed him with and used them for good. Especially, that wonderful smile and personality that drew everyone in. Thanks for living a wonderful life cousin! We're going to miss you!*

Jolene Spilde - June 15, 2016 at 10:54 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.*



June 15, 2016 at 09:30 PM

MY

“ To the family members of Kerwin,
My deepest condolences on your and our loss. I know Kerwin from my relationship with him through our memberships in the ROMEO Golf Club. He was an excellent golfer and always willing to offer assistance to others when asked. I served on the club's Board of Directors along with Kerwin in recent years, where he almost single-handedly set up the club's entire season's schedule of courses. What I remember most about Kerwin is that he was always kind and considerate, as well as being competent and authoritative in his leadership. He was a wonderful human being, and though taken too soon from us all, his was a life well-lived! He will be missed by all who knew him.
... Mike Yahna

Mike Yahna - June 15, 2016 at 07:17 PM

GO

“ I first met Kerwin on the golf course in Watertown, SD. I enjoyed the time I spent with 3 brothers where golf was "just a game" and no ill words need be spoken over a bad shot, (and Kerwin didn't have many). It really wasn't about golf, but an opportunity to rise early, appreciate God's creation, see the sun rise, view the crops on the way to town, talk old times - growing up days, plan the work for the day, and share time together. And, they included me! So, there will be an empty spot in the foursome but oh such good memories. I am reminded of the words from a dear old song, "Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful" And, we certainly have.

Gordy Osthus

Gordy Osthus - June 14, 2016 at 10:51 PM

IT

“ *International Ozone Assoc.-PAG and others you have touched purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.*



International Ozone Assoc.-PAG and others you have touched - June 14, 2016 at 02:22 PM

JG

“ *I always respected Kerwin's knowledge in the ozone field as well as his kind demeanor. He will be missed. Julie Gass, Black & Veatch*

Julie Gass - June 14, 2016 at 12:52 PM

SS

“ *I was so shocked to see Kerwin's picture in the paper today! I'm so sorry and will keep you and your family in my prayers. He was an amazing person. You're so blessed to have had him all those years. He lives on in each of you.
Love & Blessings, Susan Shade*

Susan Shade - June 14, 2016 at 11:10 AM

DC

“Kerwin was a huge help to us in Metropolitan Boston when we started up our ozone drinking water plant in 2005. He taught us all to look at our craft in ways that we hadn't and we have extended those concepts to other parts of our work.

He took a group of us on a trip to visit facilities in Las Vegas and southern California and we had a great time on both the professional side (the plant visits) and the personal side (whether it was travelling, going out to eat, touring the Hoover Dam, or walking around exploring).

He had a manner about him that transcended one's station in life: he could speak to our Executive Director or one of our operators or maintenance staff and they felt he was one of them. He was loved by everyone at our plant and will be sorely missed. Whenever we sent a group to an IOA event he welcomed us at his table. I will never forget the corny ice-breakers he would start when a group gathered together; they always elicited great conversation and allowed everyone to get to know something about each other. We met the other ozone operators from around the country that Kerwin had trained and we joined the PAI 'franchise'.

He was gentle, kind, generous man. I see him every time I walk into that treatment plant.

We love you Kerwin, may you rest in peace.

Dave Coppes, Director of Waterworks, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority

David Coppes - June 14, 2016 at 06:59 AM

KD

“ It was an honor to know and work with Kerwin. Not only because of his great knowledge, but because he was such a great person to work with. Rest in Peace.

*Ken Dusold
Mitsubishi Electric*

Ken Dusold - June 13, 2016 at 08:59 PM

SM

“ TO the Rakness family ,I would like to express how sorry I am to hear of your loss. Kerwin as so many have mentioned was very much a part of several project we had. The knowledge that he had will truly be missed. He added so much to the industry.

*Sid McCain
Trinity River Authority of Texas*

Sid McCain - June 13, 2016 at 06:00 PM



“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.



June 13, 2016 at 04:19 PM

JJ

“ Jim & Beth Jackson purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.



Jim & Beth Jackson - June 13, 2016 at 01:37 PM

JJ

“ I will never, ever forget Kerwin and his kind and gentle teachings. He was a constant mentor to all those he worked with in ways that have touched my heart. I will always remember him as a wise and gentle friend and will try to live my life in a way that honors his memory. Jim Jackson

Jim Jackson - June 13, 2016 at 12:22 PM

SR

“ To our "dear and irreplaceable" Kerwin, we feel such a deep loss on this earth and in this life without your presence. You were such a thoughtful, good, confidence-building brother-in-law in all these almost 45 years. Yet we are comforted by the knowledge that you have entered your forever home with our Savior and God where there are pleasures forever more, that we can't even begin to imagine. We are happy for you, but sad for us.

Sharon Rakness - June 13, 2016 at 11:00 AM



“ Serenity Wreath was purchased for the family of Kerwin L. Rakness.



June 12, 2016 at 05:02 AM

JR

“ Uncle Kerwin, thank you for the life you shared with us. You blessed so many people in this life, me included, with your devotion to family and friends, and the deep compassion and love that you abundantly showered upon all. We miss you, we love you, we give thanks for your life, and the promise that Jesus gave you, that we will see you again. Rest eternal grant him O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him.

*Love you Uncle Kerwin,
Jared Rakness*

Jared Rakness - June 11, 2016 at 01:28 PM