A Ceremony of Rememberance and Celebration of the Life of Kenneth Edward Harper
August 21, 1921 - March 15, 2013

Dance as if everyone is applauding you
Dance like one who has been ripped and torn
Who knows a power stronger than fear.

Dance like one who has no fear of making a mistake
Dance awareness with all your partners:
  Anger, fear, jealousy, envy, sloth,
  Courage, love, joy, trust and peace.

Cha Cha Cha the golden streets of heaven
  Swing on the pearly gates
  Rap the blazing streets of hell
  Experience the fire-dance of the damned.

When your last dance calls to you
There will be no fear of dancing with death.

One of many dance poems written by Kenneth Harper - this one written in 1998

APPRECIATIONS
Kenneth felt deep appreciation for all of those who attended his dance and Tai Chi classes and to those beings who received his counsel.
Kenneth mentored each of us four children to think for ourselves, to explore, innovate and be creative. He taught us how to talk, listen and work through our troubles and challenges creatively with dignity and respect for which we are profoundly grateful. He always thanked each one of us each time we interacted with him. We deeply appreciate all that we have received in all our interactions and in how he lived his life.

For those wishing to make donations honoring Kenneth Harper - the family would like to offer two possibilities.

In Kenneth’s last days we were accompanied by the loving support and care of Kenneth’s doctors Dr. Stolzberg, his staff, and Dr. Williams as well as the staff of Valley of the Hospice Sherman Home. Their commitment to respectful dignified end-of-life ministration was a support and comfort to all of us, and to Kenneth. We express our gratitude for what these people gave to us. Donations can be sent to: Hospice of the Valley
1510 E. Flower St Phoenix, AZ 85014 www.hov.org/donate

Donations for the family of Jolie Bouchard, a beautiful child with multiple disabilities who brings smiles to everyone who meets her. There is a basket for donations for her care and equipment at the back of the hall. Checks made payable to Sandra Harper on behalf of Jolie.

Ventana Lakes
Sun City, AZ
March 23, 2013
Kenneth Harper was an original thinker for whom creative expression was as natural as breathing. He expressed himself through dance, carving, drawing, painting, and the loving way he lived his life. He was a published author and a minister who helped thousands of people with his kind counsel and gift for deep listening. Throughout his life, Kenneth was passionate about the art of inquiry, education, and parenting.

As a young man he traveled across the country as part of a musical quartet. Later, he became the youngest-ever head minister of Glide Memorial Methodist Church in San Francisco. Along with Mary Jane Harper, his wife and mother of all his children, he was a Methodist missionary in Zimbabwe, where he was profoundly influenced by the people of the Shona tribe.

At the University of Kentucky, Kenneth was a Professor, the Director of Fraternities, the Director of Foreign Students, and the Dean of Men. From 1966-1968 he was the National Director of the training programs for the VISTA Volunteers, now called AmeriCorps VISTA – it is a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty.

In 1969, Kenneth became the provost and founding President of Pima College in Tucson. Here he began to realize his life-long dream of how education could happen. In his highly innovative style, and working with others, they developed structures and environments that were conducive for student-centered learning. He hired the faculty based on their teaching and communication skills in the classroom. At the heart of his philosophy was inclusion.

The symbol for Pima is a circle of 6 “P’s”. This is a symbol of inclusion for all the diversity of students who would be welcome at Pima. One P is for Mexican Americans, one P is for Native Americans, one P is for African Americans, one P is for Asian Americans, one P is for European Americans, one P is for women.

In the early 1970s he was the President of Riverside City College in Riverside, CA, and then later a professor. In San Diego, CA, he founded his own church, the Natural Renewal Guild, to provide and teach spiritual counseling skills. He also served as a Professor, Dean, President and Chancellor of Golden State University.

In 2006, Kenneth moved to Ventana Lakes in Phoenix, AZ, and spent the last 7 years of his life offering dance, Tai Chi, meditation, and poetry classes, and counseling to his community, where he is deeply beloved. We believe that each of us have experienced and been touched by Kenneth’s unconditional acceptance, humor, kindness and love. He will be deeply missed.

Kenneth was a lifelong teacher and student of life. Throughout his life his aspiration was to mentor each person to find the path that reveals their unique calling. He would always say, “In each person’s heart they know what it is that they want to share and will find the greatest happiness when they share their innate talent.”

Kenneth always recognized the uniqueness of each of his children and encouraged us to follow our heart’s unfolding path. In one of his last conversations he said, “I draw and dance to express what is inside me. Please draw and dance what is uniquely yours to express.” We carry this spirit of creative contribution in his honor.

Kenneth Harper, the second of three children, was born at home in 1921 in Pocahontas, IL, to Myra Harper and Thomas Edward Harper. He received a Bachelor’s degree from Asbury College, a Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky and his Ph.D from the University of Kentucky.

Kenneth died peacefully in his sleep at 2:21am on Friday, March 15th, in Phoenix, AZ of natural causes. He was 91. During the last week of his life he was surrounded and cared for by his children, their spouses, and his grandchildren.


On behalf of our whole family, your students and friends we say, “Kenneth, we are profoundly grateful for each precious moment we shared with you in this life. Thank you for being such a thoughtful, creative, funny, loving deep being. We love you.”