

## Ken's Eulogy – Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006

- this one's for you big guy...

Opening – good morning everyone and thank you all for coming today – it's great to see so many of our friends again... I am deeply moved by the number of family and friends Ken has here today...

### *Introduction*

– for those of you who don't know me, my name is Paul Brunton and I've been a long time friend of the Stiles family. I met Ken back in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade @ Woodrow Wilson Jr High and we've been best buddies ever since. I know I don't look it, but that was over 40 years ago....

John and Kendall have spoken to you today about Ken's later years, so I will try to give you some insights about his younger days, starting with what I like to call the "wild years" of the mid-1960's and early '70's, so here we go.

Being in our mid-teen's and without any of the electronic distractions of today, of course we had to be creative.

I remember once we headed off into the mountains by his house to build a fort (to play War). BB guns, shovels and picks in hand, we found a spot by some trees for cover and dug our trench – then found some fallen branches and bushes to camouflage the fort. Well we had worked hard, it was hot and we had been drinking a lot of water so of course "nature called" and Ken went off into the bushes a short ways away to relieve himself. When he came back we played war for awhile and started back down the hill to his house... about ½ way down the road, Ken started itching his mid-section area, first a little, then a lot. You guessed it, he exposed himself to poison oak and had the biggest rash from his belly button to his knees. Needless to say that's the last time we went up to the fort!

We got into the usual mischief that teenagers do – I'd spend the night over every once in awhile and we'd sneak out at night while his parents Jackie and Marvin were asleep, and one time Ken "borrowed" his Mom's car to take us on a little joy ride, of course he was only 15 and had no license.

We both worked at the Phillips 66 service station on Verdugo and Los Encinos just down the street from his house, when gas was about .27 cents a gallon – ... we had a little competition going whenever a car hit the bell tube out at the gas pumps to see who could get there quicker, not that we wanted to necessarily work harder, just wanted to be first to the drivers side car window to see if there was a cute girl – if you were first then you had the privilege of vacuuming the car,,, while the girl was still in it! Ah yes, good times, good times...

As a lot of you know, Ken was a natural at car mechanics – he could take things apart and put 'em back together with ease. Over the years he's had many cars and loved to work on them and drive them all.

I remember in High school -

'66 VW bug – he would turn the windshield washer nozzles outward and we'd cruise the Jr High and squirt the kids standing on the sidewalk who were waiting for their ride (used to get a lot of single digit waves that way). He also had the uncanny driving skill to scare the crap out of me when we'd come down the Glorietta hill at a high rate of speed, catch the green light and make a sharp left turn at the signal at Verdugo – he'd get the VW up on 3 wheels as we made the turn, and bring it down on all 4's just before the right turn on to Los Encinos – of course all this was to impress our boss at the service station. And, because the VW was solid green, Ken was given the nickname "Frog" by our boss at the station (Bill Bremer) – that nickname stuck with him ever since.

Then there was the '58 Olds – a big tank, and I think Ken had some “low-rider” blood in him because he was the very first person in Glendale who could make the front end of a car dance. We'd be heading down a road and he would yank on the steering wheel from left to right and then let go... the car would start dancing because the steering wheel just kept oscillating back and forth like one of those perpetual motion gadgets. Of course that was before seat belts so it only took about a hundred feet or so before I was being tossed about like a rag doll.

But, I think his favorite was the 69 Plymouth Road Runner – red, big engine, great trans and fast. Ken would drive us down to the “lot” on Friday and Saturday nights and we'd go street racing over on Air Way by the Glendale Steam Plant with all of our buddies. Never got caught, but we were stupid and just lucky!

Ken also loved to ride his dirt bike, a Hodaka 90 Super Rat. We'd go out at least 2 or 3 times a month, get up in the wee hours of the morning, head out to Pearblossom or Indian Dunes and ride all day, then head back home.

Lots of mischief over those years, but you'll have to ask me about the rest of those stories later, since you know... we're in church...

As we got older (I think we were 18), of course a big transition came, Ken settled down a bit, and yes, I did too. I had a girlfriend, who had a girlfriend, who I introduced to Ken, since after all, he was my best friend. That girl turned out to be Erin McQuaid. Ken and Erin hit it off right away and after he got a job with the City in May of 1972, they got married in July just after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Even though he was married, Ken would still make time to ride dirt bikes with me, work on cars and just hang out.

About 3 ½ years later I was honored to have Ken as my Best Man and Erin as Mary Ann's Matron of Honor on the day we got married. Over the next 30 years the Stiles' and the Brunton's were just about inseparable.

We had great times playing volleyball with our friends at Glendale College, camping at the beach above Ventura, and in the mountains and lakes, 4WD Jeepin' on the dunes at Pismo and into the snow in the Mtns above Ojai. Ken taught me how to single ski behind his father-in-law Jack's boat. We fished the Colorado river together, BBQ'd together, drank a few cold ones together and just enjoyed each other's company.

We spent a lot of time at the River in those days at a little campground called Cat Tail Cove on the Arizona side of Lake Havasu – one time I had my boat out with Ken skiing behind and I went into a little cove where he could get some flat water – mistake – ended up running over some shallow rocks and crunching my outdrive. I was so worried about Ken skiing back there possibly hitting the same rocks be he just simply glided over them up to the back of my boat... stuck his hands down the outdrive and said in his funny little voice “hey man, you got a little problem back here!”. Ken had a great laugh and a quick wit. Did you ever get to hear his John Wayne voice? He could mimic a lot of people.. funneee!

Ken was also known to me as “Mr. Fixit” – he helped me remodel just about every room in my 2 houses over the years and when he asked me, I was honored to return the favor by helping him add a 2-story addition onto his old house in Sunland. There wasn't anything he couldn't do or figure out.

Along came kids in the 1980's and Ken became the beaming father of 2 beautiful girls. He was a dedicated and doting father. He was very proud of his girls accomplishments in softball, water polo and swim.

He was also a great 2<sup>nd</sup> father to my girls, “Uncle Kenny” as he is known around our house, always teasing them and showing genuine kindness.

We took several cruises while the kids were young – the Bahamas on the big Red boat with our Dunsmore school friends, Mexico and Alaska. But our favorite cruise was our 1<sup>st</sup> cruise. We sailed to the south Caribbean on board a big Princess ship – great weather, excellent food and drinks, and breathtaking island scenery. We stopped in Barbados and went into town to see the sights. After a few hours the 4 of us made our way back to port, got out of the taxi at the dock and started walking back up to the ship. Well, it was sunny and hot that day, and a bit windy. Ken was wearing the Panama straw hat that he had purchased before we sailed back in Puerto Rico. A big gust of wind came up out of nowhere and his new hat blew off onto the ground, so he started chasing it but he couldn’t stop it before the hat fell over the edge of the dock and into the water about 20 feet down. After we stopped laughing, he looked around and saw a native Barbados guy (Barbadian?) fishing about 10 yards away, so Ken went over to him and through some hand signals and body gyrations he tried to get the guy to fish his new hat out of the water. The guy finally caught on to what Ken wanted (after Ken took out some cash) and after about 4 attempts, he fished out Ken’s hat and swung it up on the dock. Ken paid for his hat one more time as he forked out the reward to the guy who was very kind, gesturing and laughing... Ken loved that hat!

But, if I had to sum up Ken’s life in one word, that word would be “courage”. Courage is defined as “the quality of mind enabling one to face danger or hardship resolutely; bravery, courageousness, fearlessness, fortitude, gallantry, gameness, heart, intrepidity, spunk, nerve, spirit, and valor”.

Ken was the most courageous man I knew. It was 12 years ago when the Stiles' and the Brunton's were yet on another trip, this time to Vegas to see the Starlight Express at Ceasar's. We each drove our own Astro vans with my oldest daughter Melanie riding in Ken's car with Shelley and Erin, and Jessie rode in our van with MA and Amy. It was before we had cell phones (still pretty expensive) so we just tried to maintain visual sight of each other as we weaved in and out of traffic.

Somehow, we lost each other around the 57 south to 10 east interchange. For the next 4 hours we didn't know where they were and they didn't know where we were. We drove out to the 15 junction and still didn't see them, so we waited a bit, then drove back to the 57 interchange, but still couldn't find them.

When we finally arrived in Vegas we went straight to the hotel and got in line to buy tickets to the show. Still no sign of the Stiles. When we got up to the window we asked about our friends and she said "oh, you're the Bruntons!" and gave us a note. Our worst fear was realized – the note said to call Erin over at the hospital. The girl in the ticket booth let us use her phone, we called and Erin answered and immediately said "everything's OK, but get over here". We flew over to the hospital and met Erin who told us what happened.

Ken had a seizure while driving up the 15 fwy, going pretty fast trying to catch us because he thought we were ahead of him. Of course we were way behind him. Ken showed great courage that day because while he was having the seizure he was still able to slow down and somehow pull off to the shoulder without anyone getting hurt. Erin was trying to turn off the van and tend to Ken, so Shelley and Melanie jumped out of the van and starting flagging down anyone who would stop. One gentleman did, and he thank God he had a cell phone – the ambulance arrived a short time later and transported him to the Vegas hospital.

A few weeks later Ken found out he had had a Grand Mal Seizure due to a small slow growing cancerous tumor in his brain.

He went through his 1<sup>st</sup> surgery with flying colors and was back on his feet within a week. Ken could easily have gone into depression, but he wouldn't let a little thing like a brain tumor beat him. He went back to work and continued to stay very active.

He played softball on our various coed teams (RNL, Hip Hop and Black & Blue) for several years. We enjoyed more cruises, dinners and family parties together. Ken & Erin have had many parties at their house, and Ken was the super host, because he had the unique quality to always make you feel welcomed.

There were 2 more surgeries scattered over the next 10 years, again no problems or after effects.

About 5 years ago, Ken took up a passion for the game of golf. He was so into it, his enthusiasm was infectious. Like many others here today, he helped me get involved in the game about 4 years ago. He was a generous man – he gave me a set of clubs, a bag, a rolling cart, balls and accessories just to get me started. We played many rounds at Verdugo Hills in those early days, before venturing out onto the big courses.

He introduced me to his golfing friends Kevin, Lloyd, and more recently to Alan, Arnie and Carol. I was privileged to play many a round with him and all the time he was a gentleman – never getting too angry (at least visibly) and always generous when it came time to buy a drink from the cart girl, or after the 18<sup>th</sup> hole. You know, now that I think about it, maybe he just wanted to get closer to the cart girl!

On Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup> last year, Ken played his last round of golf with his good friends Alan, Arnie and Carol. It was at the Woodley Lakes course out by the Sepulveda dam. Alan tells me Ken hit several booming drives that day and had a pretty decent game.

On Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> Ken went into the hospital for his 4<sup>th</sup> surgery on the same tumor in 12 years. By Wednesday, he was out and back home resting in his chair. We visited Ken that evening and you'd think he'd just had a tooth filled instead of brain surgery – totally with it, talking and joking. But a day later, complications set in and after a couple of visits to the emergency room, Ken ended up back in the hospital for the next 70 days, most of those in Intensive Care. Ken had contracted an infection called ventriculitis – nasty stuff. He battled and battled, and it was a roller coaster ride for Erin and the girls. Many close friends and family came to visit him in the hospital over the past 2 months and each time he would try to show some sort of recognition – a smile, a wink, or a squeeze of the hand.

After a heroic and courageous battle he eventually succumbed and passed away peacefully 13 days ago on Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 4:00PM.

So, to honor Ken and to keep our memories of him alive I would like to invite all of his golfing buddies to the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Ken Stiles memorial golf game, to be held on his birthday June 4<sup>th</sup>. This will not be a tournament, just a friendly and informal game of golf to remember him by. And, even better, Erin wants us over for a big BBQ after golf. Please visit Kendall's web site for further details, or talk to me after the service.

Speaking of Erin, she wants me to be sure to Thank everyone for all of your heartfelt prayers and support to her and the girls over these past weeks. You've been a tremendous comfort. She has felt your prayers and she says Ken did too.

In closing, I want to thank Erin, Shelley and Jessie and all of you for letting me speak today.

To lighten up the mood a bit, I will leave you with the following golf joke. I know Ken would like this one... it starts out like this:

One afternoon, the police were called to an apartment and found a woman standing over a lifeless man while was holding a bloody 5-iron.

The detective asked " Ma'am , is that your husband?"

"Yes" said the woman.

Detective: "Did you hit him with that golf club?"

"Yes, yes I did" the woman began to sob, dropped the club and put her hand over her face.

"How many times did you hit him?" asked the detective.

She responded, "I don't know 5, 6 or 7 times...(pause) just put me down for a 5."

Ken was a truly great friend, loving father and devoted husband. God bless you Ken, we'll never forget you. Thank you everyone...

Your friend forever,

Paul