



Dr. L. Kendall Nelsen

April 12, 1943 - February 27, 2018

Dr. L. Kendall Nelsen, beloved husband, father, friend, and pediatrician to so many Napa children passed away peacefully in his home with his family by his side on February 27, 2018.

Ken was born in Eureka, CA, on April 12, 1943. He was the middle child with two brothers, Roy and Dwight. He was a kind, humble, gentle soul as a little boy and maintained this temperament his whole life, even as a 6'4" man with a deep voice and size 16 shoes. He knew he wanted to be a doctor since the sixth grade and worked his way through school while his mother raised them. Ken's childhood was not always easy, but he first went to Disneyland as a teenager after it opened and has said that he fell in love with the park because it felt care-free, magical, and he could always be a child at heart. He also loved his numerous pets throughout his life, the serenity of the redwoods, old movies, stamp collecting, history, and genealogy. Ken chose pediatrics during medical school at UC Irvine committing to dedicate his life to children. His foundation was his wife, Carol, whom he met during his residency at Oakland

Children's

Hospital. Carol was a Registered Nurse and had also chosen to dedicate her life to children,

working in pediatrics. It was a love story that brought them to their first apartment in Napa in

1971 and would eventually bloom into a large family which began with Beth, then Sean, Aaron,

Owen, Alyssa, and finally, Michael. Every child that came into their lives seemed to expand their

hearts even further and extended to all children in the world. The two had just celebrated their

47th anniversary a week prior to his death with lunch at Don Giovanni's, Ken's favorite local

restaurant. At the time of his transition, he was the proud grandfather of nine grandchildren:

Madison, Logan, Audrey, Koen, Gray, Declan, Vivien, Elowen, and baby Stella. He also held a

lot of love for the wonderful partners his children had chosen to build their families: Christina

(Beth), Katie (Sean), Amber (Aaron), and Karla (Michael). Two additional family members

celebrated every holiday with the Nelsens, Marty Devitt and her son, Robert M. Devitt III, and

often joined them on their trips to Disneyland. His loyal and loving Great Pyrenees, Matilda, will

remain in Carol's care.

Some would say Dr. Nelsen was Napa's "favorite pediatrician," where he dedicated his life to his

practice of forty years. In his early days, he was one of three private pediatricians in town and

worked tirelessly, with a never ending generosity of his time, love, and

expertise for the care of sick children, as well as mentoring other new doctors. He always said he wanted to work until he was 70 and he made it, retiring July 1, 2013, to both the disappointment and blessings of many. A huge man was not without a huge heart, ditching the white coat and later adopting the Disney ties, in order to seem less scary to the kids he was treating. He never refused to treat anyone in need; insurance and immigration were not of importance to him when a child came to see him. Several local foster parents miss his house calls, as he did everything he could to ease the burden of loading up a van full of kids to get to his office. Dr. Nelsen saw the best in everyone and his patients remember his advice of, "keep your room clean and listen to your parents."

The Nelsen family recognizes this is a huge loss not only for them, but for the Napa community.

If you wish to honor his memory, be kind to others and remember a little patience goes a long way. Monetary donations can be sent to the charity of your choice. Services will be held at St.

John's Lutheran on April 7, 2018, at 10am. Memories and notes of sympathy may be shared at claffeyandrota.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. L. Kendall Nelsen*

September 29, 2022 at 04:54 PM



“ *Dr. L. Kendall Nelsen*

September 29, 2022 at 02:55 PM



“ *Hello Carol and children,
Dr. Nelsen was our children's pediatrician and what a wonderful doctor he was. He always took the time to ask me if I had any questions when I would bring them in for their well baby checks. He'd lean against the counter and act like he had all the time in the world. And he never made me feel like I was asking a dumb question. He was kind, professional and a real person, speaking of the challenges he faced with your children as well.
In addition, I worked with him professionally at times in the ER. He again was kind and considerate to the staff and showed great clinical judgement.
I've been a nurse for 41 years now and let me say that they don't make doctors like him anymore. I mourn the loss of such a talented, caring man and thank my lucky stars that my family benefited from his care. He is irreplaceable.
We are so sorry we missed his service.
Christine and Bill McClure*

Christine McClure - April 17, 2018 at 12:51 PM

MS

“ Uno de los mejores pediatras gracias a el mi hijo siguió adelante ahora después de años de doctores y terapias es un niño normal gracias por su atencion paciencia y conocí mientos. Dios lo reciba y le de paz eterna mil gracias por todo lo que hizo por nosotros un abrazo para toda su familia paz y consuelo

Monica sotelo - March 16, 2018 at 02:06 PM

JF

“ Dr. Nelson was my children' s first doctor. I remember being a nervous first time mom and the way his calm and patient nature always seem to put me at ease.

Jessica Fuentes - March 15, 2018 at 12:35 AM



“ *What can I say about Dr Nelsen....I met his wife Carol a couple of years before I even had a baby! I was selling Avon and she just 'happened' to open her door with a brand new baby girl in her arms! At that moment we became friends! I just fell in love with her baby and hated selling Avon so we talked of life..babies..and of course her husband. A year or so our daughter was born and I still remember Ken holding my fresh baby in his tender giant hands..and again when our 2nd daughter was born. Such love and gentleness with the wee ones and as they became wild little girls! He encouraged our journey into the adoption world several years later and as we waited for our 2nd son to arrive with a bilateral cleft lip and pallet he was ever so encouraging. I remember him coming to sit with me in the hospital the LONG night after Daniel's first surgery..Carol that brought me so much comfort...thanks for sharing him that way! Daniel is now married with a little boy of his own. I can hardly express the thankfulness I have for him. Our lives took us out of Napa and our Dr. Ken. Our kids grew up and we kept on adding more! Now 7 kids and 10 grands (so far) we are so blessed to have had those early years with Ken. Blessings Carol and family..*

Margaret and Ned Brown

Margaret Brown - March 14, 2018 at 04:29 PM

GS

“ *I truly believe if it weren't for him I would not be here. He found my leukemia and acquired the resources and training to allow me to remain in Napa for my treatments. I am forever grateful. There will never be another Doctor quite the same. Blessed to have been cared for by him.*

Gabrielle Smith



Gabrielle Smith - March 14, 2018 at 01:36 AM

SR

“ *Dr Nelsen was such a gentle giant. He was my daughter's pediatrician when she was a baby in 1971. I was only 19 but I trusted him thoroughly. He was an amazing man and he will be missed. God Bless you Dr Nelsen and also to your family.*

Thank you

Sherry Rose - March 13, 2018 at 10:56 PM

PH

“ *My condolences to Dr. Nelsen's family. He was a wonderful kind and caring doctor. He delivered all three of my children and my grandson. My daughter had chronic asthma and he would meet me at the back door of his office on Trancas and see her even late at night or weekends. when my son died, he sent a handwritten note. He was just a great doctor and his passing leaves a void in the community. My kids still talk about him and how they wished he was still practicing. Truly a wonderful asset to the community. there will never be another doctor like him. He will be missed but he leaves a legacy of kindness and compassion that will be hard for others to achieve.*

pam healer - March 13, 2018 at 01:42 AM

DG

“ I would like to thank you, Carol, for being such an awesome wife and mother... Kendell could not have been the amazing doctor, that touched so many of our lives, in our community, if he had, had to worry about home and hearth. I am one of the privileged many that got to work with him for 25 years in the NICU at the Queen and stole him from you in the evening and middle of the night to come in and take care of a sick baby. I could see the love and care that the two of you gave your children when Alyssa would sit at the desk, on weekends, waiting for her daddy to finish rounds on his patients. And, I will always have a smile on my face and in my heart, thinking of the post disneyland visit discussions and laughter we would share about the disney tie of the day. He absolutely was a beautiful, gentle, giving, kind soul. I pray that the memories are sweet and abundant and the sorrow is minimal as you and your family adjust to once again sharing him, with Heaven...Hugs and prayers, Dianna Graham

dianna graham - March 12, 2018 at 10:21 PM

CH

“ Dr. Nelsen was my pediatrician and also my daughter's. He was a kind, patient man and always took the time to make sure you understood what was wrong and how it could be healed. He will be greatly missed.

Cheri - March 12, 2018 at 06:36 PM

NN

“ This man saved my life. When I was 3, I had epiglottitis, and he recognized it at 4:30am *over the phone* in 1980. I will always remember his kindness and gentleness. He is one of the amazing people who inspired me to become a healthcare provider today. I am forever grateful for his care, and I am deeply saddened to hear he is gone.

Nicole Nasser - March 12, 2018 at 05:55 PM

GF

“ *The structure and science of pediatric care has been transformed in the past 40 years. Only the dedication and professionalism of a pediatrician like Kendall Nelson has remained unchanging. His service to community and children have been a benchmark at which today's 'health care providers' may aspire.*

As a pediatrician consulting for the COUNTY OF NAPA HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY-PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION CCS (California Children's Service)MEDICAL CONSULTANT, I observed the great number of families and children with chronic disabilities who relied on Dr. Nelsen to oversee the collaborative expert health care which they and their families required. As their local pediatrician he was the "face" and "place" of access those quality health services.

Families and Community have missed him and his staff since he retired. Now may he rest in peace, welcomed to a loving community reflecting that attitude which motivated his dedicated life's work.

George Monteverdi, MD, FAAP

George Monteverdi, MD, FAAP - March 12, 2018 at 04:59 PM

MA


“ *Dr. Nelsen was such a gentle giant and my 3 kids loved him as did my husband and myself. My oldest (39) was just reminiscing about him the other day and how he always wore those sweater vests and he had those big feet! He was always so sweet and kind and was so reassuring to the parents when the kids were hospitalized or terribly sick. He cared for so many and was such a gift to our community. I'm forever thankful and love to you and your family Carol Jake and Maryann Ariansen*


Maryann Ariansen - March 12, 2018 at 04:17 PM

P(

I'm sorry to say I had not heard of Dr Nielsen's passing until just now. He was pediatrician to both of my children, now in their mid thirties. Reading the other memories of his vests, his ties, his big feet... yes, he could have been very intimidating to children but my kids sensed his gentle demeanor and from the start were always calmed by his presence. What a wonderful physician and man. His loss is great. I have thought about him many times over the years and will always appreciate that I had the good fortune to have had him as my partner in caring for my children. God bless you and keep you.... You made a compassionate and important mark on so many lives....

Paula French (Wash) - December 27, 2022 at 11:10 AM


Lindsay
Laybourne

“ So grateful for this amazing man's care for my young son until his retirement. He had built up such an amazing practice that he was recommended by my friends as their pediatrician. Grateful that he started the crazy navigational path of our life with TSC and kept things fun all the while. So grateful for this man. He will be missed 

Lindsay Laybourne - March 12, 2018 at 03:06 AM

KF

One of a kind. I dont think there will be another like him. His passion was medicine and children, not dollars. His quiet and kind demeanor not only calmed an anxious child but also the anxious parent. The kids are well and happy in Heaven - and I am sure your right in the middle of them. Well done Dr.

Karen Foglesong - March 13, 2018 at 05:22 PM

MB

Dearest Carol, Regret I couldn't be with you as you and your family celebrated Ken's life Saturday. Always remember your laughter and gentleness and Ken's quiet and caring ways. My hope is that we can reconnect soon to share past memories and to make some new ones. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Ken was an amazing, caring person, but then again, so are you; a true match made in heaven. God bless you and keep you well. Sincerely, Myrna Baldwin, Napa

Myrna Baldwin - April 07, 2018 at 04:47 PM

SJ

“ I remember like it was yesterday when Doctor Nelson used to say to me “keep your room clean and listen to your parents” I am now 51 and so sad.

Doctor Nelson was truly a genuine caring unconditional guy who was always there.

My two boys were also patients of Doctor Nelson so there were a lot of years I was able to get to know him.

Goodby Doctor Nelson Napa lost a great man and a brilliant doctor. Thank you for all you did for me, and my family. Love you, Suzanne Javorina

suzanne Javorina - March 12, 2018 at 12:35 AM

D(

“ Carol, I’m so sorry to hear the sad news that Ken passed away. I have many warm and loving memories of you and your family when we were connected at Napa Valley Christian Preschool. I remember and deeply appreciate the time he helped Eric through pneumonia and asthma when he was in second grade. Dr Nelson left the hospital and came back with a happy meal for Eric to help reduce Eric’s anxiety level about all the tubes Iv’s and tent. Eric and I send our condolences to the family.

Donna (Boals) and Eric Retzlaff.

Donna Boals (Retzlaff) - March 11, 2018 at 03:06 PM

CB

“ Our family is so saddened to learn of Dr. Nelson's passing. He was the best pediatrician in Napa and a wonderful caring person. We were so lucky to have such a wonderful man treat our children. I am sad that for all of his years working so hard for our families, that he passed so shortly after his retirement.

The Boyett Family

cindy boyett - March 11, 2018 at 02:43 PM

MJ

“ *RIP Dr. Nelson, you were a wonderful doctor to both my children and granddaughters. We enjoyed running into you and your family at Disneyland a few times too !!!*

Mary Jones - March 11, 2018 at 02:20 PM

DH

“ *Dr Nelson had the most gentle spirit. He was kind and patient to a new mother. The care he provided my children was wonderful. Sending my prayers to his family. Much love, Debbie, Ryan and Kameryn*

Debra Harrison - March 11, 2018 at 01:08 PM