



Kenneth C. Lewis

August 26, 1942 - July 11, 2025

Kenneth Clyde Lewis passed away on July 11, 2025, in the moment that his wife Sheila and his daughters, Amy and Sarah stepped away from his side. Ken's health declined significantly over a decade, then most rapidly over the last three years, compounded by struggles with diabetes, stroke, long-term complications from prostate cancer, and dementia. His final two years were spent in memory care, most recently at Harmony at Harts Run.

The pleasures of his final years included fellowship with his close friends in recovery, listening to and playing live music, and reading about life, death and dying. He delighted in the stories and noble shenanigans of his teenage grandkids Aspen and Gabriel German and Sacha Mullen. His declining health couldn't keep him from his longtime joy of running. Determined, he jogged, hands clasping his walker, scoffing at the risk of falls and chortling at the freedom.

Ken was born in 1942 in New Castle, PA, to mother Anna (Ayers) & father,

country preacher

Reverend Clyde Lewis. His parents' ministry included nurturing scores of boys at a Children's

Home, alongside Ken and his younger brother Bill. Camping with his family, and then as a scout,

Ken developed a love for the woods which he later shared with his own children, and lives on in his grandchildren.

After serving in the US Army in Germany in the early 60's, Ken returned to the States and

relocated to Chicago. There he met Pamela (Wilson) at the bank where they worked, drawn to

each other's interests in the antiwar and hippie movements. In 1970, married and eight months

pregnant with their first daughter Amy Kara, Pam and Ken moved to San Francisco in a

Volkswagen Beetle, pulling a packed Uhaul over the Rockies, a year late for the Summer of

Love. Inspired by the back to the land movement, they soon headed back to rural Western

Pennsylvania, where their second daughter, Sarah Kelby, was born. While their experiments in

communal living went awry and his dreams of working with his hands led to disillusionment and

fighting for a union at a rural sawmill, Ken's drinking ended the marriage in 1974. He

immediately entered treatment and got sober.

In early recovery, Ken met and married Cleeta Bair. Cleeta schooled him in second-wave

feminism with well-timed (male chauvinist) pig snorts when he wandered off-course in conversation. He cooked up and served Bisquick pancakes with peaches on his weekend visits with his young daughters, and made a mean spaghetti with Prego sauce for dinner. Butter pecan ice cream was forever a favorite, though he broke his kids' trust when he promised them a swimming pool of Breyer's, then couldn't come through. Ken and Clea divorced in the early nineties, though Clea remained close with his brother Bill and reconnected with Ken's daughters near the end of her life.

In his 50's, Ken fell in love with Sheila Finch. They married in a simple garden ceremony in 2000, attended by his daughters and hers, Robin & Shannon Mullen. They enjoyed folk music concerts, art, and travel; shared a pescatarian diet and fiercely liberal politics. She elevated his wardrobe: no more 5k race t-shirts for nights out. Their mutual love of learning and experiencing new things kept them busy until his health declined. Her steadfast care for him in his final years anchored him in love as his world became more confusing.

Proudly fifty years sober when he died, Ken found his calling in supporting others in recovery. He ran a half-way house, started a drop-in center, and received a Masters in Education from the

University of Pittsburgh, licensing in Professional Counseling. As a psychotherapist, he worked for many years at Gateway Rehabilitation Center in Aliquippa, PA, then began private practice in Pittsburgh. Ken completed four years of post-graduate training in Gestalt therapy at the esteemed Gestalt Institute of Cleveland. He was an early adopter of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy in Pittsburgh. His Healing Shame therapy group met for over ten years, an intimate and powerful opportunity to be witnessed and held in community. In the last years of his practice he explored neurofeedback, providing this leading-edge care to his clients working through the painful effects of addiction, trauma, and shame. The beginning of the COVID pandemic ended his psychotherapy career; he found he didn't have the heart to sustain a practice online.

Soft-spoken in his later years, having spent decades facing and healing his own shame, becoming ever more accountable, Ken was known for his deep compassion. Sporting his self-designed Ask Me About Shame t-shirt, he reveled in connecting at the depths of human experience. Many a beloved client, sponsee, friend, and family member found themselves in a new way in his presence. "All shame ever needed was understanding, acceptance, and compassion."-Ken Lewis

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy honor the time Ken spent picnicking and marking special occasions in local parks, <https://pittsburghparks.org/tribute-gifts/>

A celebration of life is scheduled for 5:30-8:00 pm, August 26th, 2025, which would have been Ken's 83rd birthday. Those wishing to attend will appreciate photos, stories, and music at The Funhouse at Mr. Smalls, located at 400 Lincoln Ave, 2nd floor, Millvale, PA 15209. Accessible parking and entrance available. Email info@mrs-smalls.com with venue questions, and rememberingkenlewis@gmail.com for other details.

Tribute Wall

DA

“ Ken restored my life and showed me the path to kindness and love of self and others. He is with me everyday. I love Ken Lewis and prat that his family know the depths of healing Ken did for so many of us in recovery

David - August 04, 2025 at 06:42 PM

SS

“ My deepest condolences to Amy and all of Ken's family. And thank you for the beautiful obituary which reminded me of the very wonderful aspects of Ken. Although I didn't see him in his later years, I knew him from working with him at Gateway for quite a few years. He and I would often go for a run together on our lunch hour and I got to know him well on those runs. Then later, we shared office space in our private practices for several years. I always valued his gentleness, his directness, his commitment to recovery and helping others with recovery, and of course his quirky sense of humor. Sadly, I will be out of town and unable to attend his memorial service. I'm sure it will be a sad but wonderful celebration of Ken.
Susan Small

Susan Small - July 29, 2025 at 07:52 PM

KE

“ So sorry and sad to hear of this. Ken helped me heal my shame. “The shame doctor.” I bought in to what Ken had to say about shame, and I still do. He understood, he accepted, and he provided me with the compassion I needed to heal the pain and hurt I carried inside. I once left an appt and meant to send a message to someone else and said “I love Ken,” but I accidentally sent it to him. He smiled. I have many books he recommended. In all the hours I spent with Ken I only saw him mad once. It was with someone else in group, and I got why he was mad. It made sense to me. You will be missed dearly, but never, ever forgotten. Thank you and love you Ken.

Keith L

keith - July 25, 2025 at 02:43 PM

CP

“ Sending deepest condolences. As an incredibly close friend of Amy, I always told her that her dad Ken was my inspiration for dressing both hip and professional at the same time, a look which Ken mastered!

Carol Pena - July 19, 2025 at 03:24 PM

SM

“ Peace be with you, Ken and with your family and friends

Sheila Molyneaux - July 18, 2025 at 05:39 PM

NH

“ *What a beautiful story of a life lived fully and compassionately. My condolences to the whole family and to all who benefitted from Ken’s compassionate care. Sheila, your devoted care of Ken during his long illness was exemplary. My heart is with you all.*
With love,
Nancy Hoffman

Nancy Hoffman - July 18, 2025 at 10:40 AM

KH

“ *I am so very sorry for your loss. Ken was the most gentle man I’ve ever met. He had a profound impact on me during some difficult years. I will be forever grateful for the kindness and compassion that he showed me. He was a lifeline to so many, and a household name. May he rest in peace.*
“Right here, right now...”

With love,
Kristen Hall



kristen hall - July 18, 2025 at 01:42 AM