



Obituary for Ken Koe

April 15, 1925 - October 7, 2015
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts | Age 90

Ken Koe's story is an American dream. Born April 15, 1925 in Astoria, Oregon he was a son of Chinese immigrants who left their country in efforts to find a better life. His parents, Benjamin and Monta Jean had little but did their best to provide their children with opportunities and education. Ken died peacefully, Wednesday, October 7, 2015 in his daughter's home in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. He was 90.

He graduated from Lincoln High School in Portland and on the eve of his graduation he learned that he was the recipient of a full scholarship to Reed College. His solid education at Reed enabled him to further studies and earn his Master of Science degree in chemistry from University of Washington in 1948 and his PhD from California Institute of Technology in 1952. After he completed his PhD and two years post doc, he took a job as a chemist at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas and taught organic chemistry at San Antonio College. Then in 1955 he and his wife, Jo Ann, moved to New York City where he started a position as a Research Scientist with Pfizer Research Laboratories in Brooklyn. While at Pfizer he authored and co-authored 14 U.S. Patents and 150 technical articles and abstracts. The highlight of his career came with the discovery of the antidepressant Zoloft which is a world class drug that has helped millions of people who struggle with depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic and social anxiety issues as well as OCD in children.

In 2008 he received the Vollum Award for Distinguished Accomplishment in Science and Research from his Alma Mater Reed College. His career came full circle in 1995 when he retired after 40 years with Pfizer and it afforded more time to do other things that in which he had a strong passion. He was active in his town of Ledyard, Connecticut as a member of the Ledyard Planning Commission and the town's Democratic Town Committee. His love for music was evident as he was a member of Chancel Choir at the United Methodist Church of Gales Ferry and the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus as well as serving on the Board of Trustees of the Thames Valley Music School at Connecticut College.

Ken's wife, Jo Ann (Lew) died in 1995 and he is also predeceased by his brother, Richard Koe.

He leaves his daughters, Kristin M. Koe and her husband, Gregory K. Steinberg of Shrewsbury and Karen E. Koe of Long Beach, California; his grandchildren, Joshua, Jacob and Rebecca

Steinberg, Ethan and Joanna Rucker; his sister, Virginia Wong of Oakland, California; many extended relatives.

Family and friends will honor and remember Ken's life by gathering on Saturday, October 17th at 1:00 pm at the United Methodist Church of Gales Ferry, 10 Chapman Lane, Gales Ferry, Connecticut. There are no calling hours.

Those who wish to honor his memory may donate to either the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus, 289 State Street, New London, CT 06320 or to the Ledyard InterChurch Emergency Assistance Fund, P.O. Box 291, Gales Ferry, CT 06335-0291.