



Kenneth Wayne Houk

February 13, 1949 - October 14, 2018

Kenneth Wayne Houk of Memphis, best friend and beloved husband, mischievous son and brother, fun-loving and faithful friend, and man of many dogs, cats, horses, assorted wildlife and, particularly, turtles – his totem -- died peacefully at his Midtown home amid loving family, collies and kits on Sunday morning, October 14, 2018. He was 69.

Kenny Houk built a full and contented life on love, creativity, physical skill and dedication to life's priceless gifts. In many hearts, his spirit lives on.

To family, he was 'Trigger,' nicknamed by his dad; to high school pals, 'Hawkeye,' for his keen eyesight. To most, he was simply Kenny, whose integrity and strength of body and will were surpassed only by his uncanny ability to absorb and converse on a world of topics.

He read widely, contemplated philosophical thought and, in the end, found God in his own way. Kenny enjoyed playful banter and serious debate, could be clearly contrary, then chuckle when caught. He had a quirky smile and wry, often irreverent humor, and exhibited keen insights and considerable knowledge of nearly everything.

He felt passionate about music, from Beethoven and Wagner to Howlin' Wolf and Mick Jagger. In earlier years, he sang and played blues harp and folk guitar – Peter, Paul and Mary were favorites. He treasured having performed "The Rose" at his sister's wedding.

Jack-of-many-trades – from journalist to welder, architectural draftsman and certified National Hardwood Lumber Association inspector – Kenny realized his true destiny as a humble master of furniture design who breathed life into wood.

From recognition of the tree's beauty and environmental importance to the smell of shavings from hand-planed lumber, he had an intimate relationship with trees. He could identify hundreds of species and their origins, and name many trees in Japanese. He pursued art and architecture, and believed, as Frank Lloyd Wright said, in working wood

“to emancipate its qualities, in simple ways.”

Born in Decatur, Indiana, on Sunday, February 13, 1949, at 8:18 a.m. to Ruth Madeleine Youse and Robert Charles Houk, Kenny and family relocated to Whitehaven in 1959. He attended Graceland Elementary, graduated Hillcrest High School (1967) and University of Memphis (1971, BA-Journalism). He wed Anita Marie Lapham on January 3, 1975 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Germantown, TN.

As Memphis College of Art shop supervisor (2000-2016), he instructed and inspired art students and woodworking aficionados. In April 2015, he was diagnosed with cancer but kept it quiet. Immediately upon retirement, Kenny -- like Superman, a close friend insists -- went toe to toe with aggressive multiple myeloma. With courage and grace, he chose each step in his arduous medical journey, less out of hope for himself than out of love for his wife.

Kenny cherished friends and delighted in chats and snacks on the front porch of the bungalow that afforded him innumerable projects and incalculable comfort.

“He lived an honorable life,” writes younger sister Rose Elizabeth Houk (Michael Collier), “showed unbounded generosity and loved (Anita) with all his being. I will forever see his ironic smile and believe he is amid a bevy of creatures and big, beautiful trees, shining in the light.”

He is survived also by elder siblings Ellen Sue Houk Ahr (Dennis) and Philip Lee Houk (Donna); by nieces, nephews and many Indiana relatives. He was predeceased by his parents.

A Mass of Resurrection, with Msgr. Valentine Handwerker presiding, will be celebrated at 2 p.m., November 10, 2018, St. Patrick Catholic Church (277 S. Fourth St., Memphis); reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to medical organizations that directly helped Kenny Houk: Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center (vicc.org/giving); Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS.org/donate; 888-557-7177; 404 BNA Dr., Bldg. 200, Suite 102, Nashville, TN 37217); Patient Advocacy Foundation (patientadvocate.org/get-involved/donate). Or, please consider Overton Park Conservancy (overtonpark.org/give) or a charity of your choice.

Events

NOV **Funeral Mass** 02:00PM

10

St. Patrick Catholic Church

277 S. 4th Street, Memphis, TN, US, 38126

Comments



“ When Sherri and I moved to our home across from Rhodes College, some 20 years ago now, we quickly noticed the magnificent collies that would trot down the sidewalk, completely on their own (often followed by an equally independent-minded cat). Within a few days, we were greeted by the super-friendly owners of these friendly dogs, Kenny and Anita, and we learned that the Houks were the real heart of the neighborhood -- talented people, warm and welcoming, always willing to go the extra mile for anybody, always giving a wave or a greeting from their porch. They were the exact kind of people you hoped your neighbors would be. We are so sorry for the loss of Kenny. -- Love and condolences from Michael and Sherri Finger.

Michael Finger - November 10, 2018 at 01:33 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 31, 2018 at 07:19 PM



“ The story of How Kenny and Anita met:
<https://www.pressreader.com/usa/the-commercial-appeal/20070617/283094179700247>



Anita Houk - October 30, 2018 at 07:15 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 27, 2018 at 10:44 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 27, 2018 at 10:40 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 27, 2018 at 10:38 PM



“ Hearing that Kenny has passed on is sad and unexpected news. My thoughts are with his loved ones. During my time at Memphis College of Art, I knew him to be quick with a smile, kind, patient, and always ready to help. I'm sorry he didn't get to experience the fabulous retirement with his wife that I know he'd looked forward to for such a long time.

Beverly Speakes - October 27, 2018 at 12:14 AM



“ Zofia Schmidt lit a candle in memory of Kenneth Wayne Houk



Zofia Schmidt - October 26, 2018 at 02:30 PM



“ "Although Your work on earth is done,

Your life in heaven has just begun.

Your struggles here were hard and long,

But they are over now; You're finally Home..."

(L. Casstevens)

Zofia Schmidt - October 26, 2018 at 02:37 PM



“ Kenny was the tough, detailed, patient and kind meticulous woodshop supervisor that I needed in my time at mca. Filled with physical woodworking tips and tricks, but also the friendship and care he showed me every single day I'll never forget. Often he and I would be the only ones in the shop for hours at a time- intermittently interrupted by a student finishing a last minute project, that would walk in with open toed shoes or some other workshop no-no, the eye roll and quiet looks we exchanged in those moments always made me giggle. Kenny will always have a dear place in my heart, he impacted my life in a major way, and I know he touched many more hearts along the way.

My greatest sympathies to his wife, who I haven't met, but from the way Kenny would share little story's about y'all, I could feel his love for you, and I could see it in his smile. My thoughts are with everyone who loved him today.

Hannah Rohrbacher - October 26, 2018 at 10:54 AM



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ANITA HOUK - October 25, 2018 at 07:33 PM



“ I am sorry to hear of Kenny's death. I will be praying for the family. Please accept my heartfelt condolences.

Cathy Young Crawford

Cathy Young Crawford - October 25, 2018 at 07:10 PM



“ I was so surprised and saddened to hear of Kenny's passing. I thought he had left MCA early to enjoy some well-deserved retirement time with his dear wife - He spoke of her so often at work! My sincerest sympathies to her, his family and his friends.

Leandra



Leandra Urrutia - October 25, 2018 at 01:37 AM



“ Leandra, Kenny so admired and respected you. Thank you for this tribute. / Anita

ANITA - October 25, 2018 at 11:08 PM



“ My heart goes out to you dear Anita and your family on the passing of your husband. There are no words to express my sorrow for your loss, may you find comfort in the loving memories you shared while he was alive. Accept my sincere condolences”.
Chef Edward

Edward Nowakowski - October 24, 2018 at 09:44 PM



“ Thank you, Chef. You have been so kind and generous to us. / Anita

ANITA - October 25, 2018 at 11:09 PM



“ ANITA HOUK is following this tribute.

ANITA HOUK - October 24, 2018 at 08:59 PM



“ To my “Little brother” who we all loved so much: We will always miss you and your wonderful mind and character, and most of all, your mischievous smile and humor. We find comfort in knowing you are with the angels. – “Big sister”Susie and husband, Dennis

Ellen Ahr - October 24, 2018 at 05:25 PM



“ Thank you, Ellen. We hope to see you and Dennis whenever it is good for y0u.

ANITA - October 25, 2018 at 11:10 PM



“ Dear Anita, Kenny was a gentleman, a bright light. I am so sorry for your loss and for all our loss. Much love, Christine Todd

Christine Todd - October 27, 2018 at 09:09 AM



“ Christine, thank you! We still have those socks!

ANITA - October 27, 2018 at 10:14 PM



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tom lee - October 24, 2018 at 09:13 AM



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ANITA HOUK - October 24, 2018 at 08:34 AM



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ANITA HOUK - October 24, 2018 at 08:33 AM



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ANITA HOUK - October 24, 2018 at 08:31 AM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 08:30 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 08:22 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 07:40 PM



“ Anita, so sorry for your loss. I remember when Kenny used to teach a very popular woodworking class for us at MCA. Such fond memories of him. Thanks for sharing this photo.

~ Cece Palazola

Cece Palazola - October 24, 2018 at 01:22 PM



“ Thank You. You and your family were very special to Kenny, the love of my life.

ANITA - October 25, 2018 at 11:12 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 06:19 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 06:09 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 06:06 PM



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ANITA HOUK - October 23, 2018 at 06:05 PM



“ He is missed.

kathryn deshpane - October 17, 2018 at 10:20 AM



“ Kenny was a gentleman with many accomplishments - a loving husband, kind and gentle animal lover, and an artist with impeccable mastery of wood working and drawing. - K. Deshpande & J.Katze

kathryn deshpande - October 17, 2018 at 10:18 AM



“ The Houk family is in my thoughts and prayers, especially Mrs. Anita. So glad to know Kenny, even if for just a brief time. Love and blessings.

Anne-Marie - October 23, 2018 at 03:17 PM



“ Cowboy, beatnik, carpenter, blues harp master and a lot more...

How we will miss you Hawkeye (high school nickname) !! He

helped form an appreciation for music for his circle of friends

for which we are indeed indebted.

To Anita, Rose, Ellen and Phil, each of you have a monster

hole in your heart that seems impossible to fill. Please know

y'all are far from alone . My life was all the richer for having

Kenny in it, so here's to ya Hawkeye, I raise my glass to you

and yours !! May that next ride, poem, song, wood craft

project all be to your liking !!!

phil prewett - October 24, 2018 at 02:11 PM



“ Oh, Phil. We LOVE you. THANK YOU

ANITA - October 25, 2018 at 11:14 PM



“ Kenny was always a real gentleman and a scholar. He could sit and talk about almost any subject. He was always helpful and at the same time grateful for help that was given to him. He helped our family greatly when they needed his assistance.

He was a good friend to us whom we will miss terribly.

Our thoughts and prayers are live for Anita in learning to live without her greatest love and for Kenny finding his reward with his Lord.

Bob & Zofia Schmidt - October 26, 2018 at 01:59 PM



“ Bob and Zosia, THANK YOU. He was a good man.

ANITA - October 27, 2018 at 11:18 PM



“ To my dear brother Kenny, So many memories of our lives together come pouring back -- running away from home when we were little tykes, you and your doggies, the 7th grade spelling bee, you as Conrad Birdie in the high school play, you on the guitar wailing with

Howlin Wolf, your dreams of being a cowboy and always marching to a different drummer. And most of all, I treasure getting to spend precious, but too little, time with you in the last few years in Memphis. Those memories will be with me all my days, and your kindness and care.

Love goes with you on this next journey, your baby sis Rosey

Rose Houk - November 06, 2018 at 01:50 PM