



Dennis Alan Mekemson

December 20, 1950 - November 10, 2021

Enjoy our memories of Dennis / Denny / Dad below. Please add one of your favorite stories of him for us all to enjoy on this website.

Dennis Alan Mekemson passed away on November 10, 2021, from Frontotemporal Dementia, at home with his loving family by his side in Libertyville, IL. Beloved husband of Sheryl Schrepfer-Mekemson, sweethearts from the age of 16, dedicated father to son Newell (Matthew) Mekemson and daughter Catherine Mekemson, both of San Diego, CA.

Preceded in death were his parents G. Earl and Pauline (Green) Mekemson formerly of Fort Madison IA, sister Kay Lynne Myers, Kansas City, MO, Stanton and Ernestine Schrepfer formerly of Fort Madison, IA. He is survived by his brother Dr. Robert (Laura) Mekemson of Exeter, CA and brother-in-law Charles Myers, Kansas City, MO.

He loved all his in-laws: notably, his Mother and Father in law, Ernestine and Stanton Schrepfer, formerly of Fort Madison, IA, who considered him a third son; Terry and Paulette (Davis) Schrepfer, Fort Madison IA, Sheila (Schrepfer) and Dana Rodenbaugh, Woodland Park, CO and Kurt and Lynn (Bauer) Schrepfer, Shawnee, KS, and his niece and nephews.

Dennis ("Mek') was a basketball and football player for Fort Madison

Bloodhounds. He was an avid guitar and banjo player, loved sailing, skiing, the beach in Carmel, California, and especially whale watching at Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, Cape Cod. Golfing was a favorite pastime and he loved playing with his Golden Retrievers.

Dennis was a 1972 graduate of University of Iowa with a triple major in business, insurance, and marketing. He dedicated 48 years to his career in insurance, specializing in reinsurance and treaty underwriting, most notably ending his career as senior Vice President of treaty underwriting at SCOR-RE, Chicago. After retirement, he served on the board for IFG Companies, NY. He made many friends world-wide and loved the insurance industry due to the people he met.

Sheryl's cherished memories of her beloved:

"Dennys' sense-of-humor and positive attitude could always pull me from the doldrums or exasperation with a hug or smile. We had moved back to Libertyville in 2011. Preparing to visit our kids, I was doing loads of laundry when Denny told me we had a flood in the basement! Boxes upon boxes were stacked down there from the move. As he brought each soaking, wet box to the garage, I was simply beside myself in tears. Denny shortly arrived with one of our artificial Christmas trees, marching towards me while singing, "we need a little a Christmas, RIGHT this very minute!" (from Broadway musical "Mame," 1966). I melted into his wrap-around hug."

"We ALWAYS held hands walking anywhere for the past 55 years."

Matthew Newell remembers his Dad:

“As my father’s son, I have so many good memories of my Dad, and it’s hard to narrow down to just a few – but I’d like to share a few that come to mind when I think about childhood and growing up.

My Dad is the one who taught me manners, class, and grace. I haven’t yet mastered the patience he had when we were kids, but I witnessed the small miracle of his patience all the time growing up. Never in my life did I hear him raise his voice when speaking to my mother.

My Dad was the one I would go to when I wanted to get something, or to do something, because I knew my mom would simply say, ‘No’ The regular response my Dad would give me, whether it was to get ice cream, or to have a sleepover, was, ‘we’ll see...’ Whenever my Dad said this, I knew it would ALWAYS turn into a ‘yes.’ There was NEVER a time that ‘we’ll see’ turned into a ‘no.’

I remember him reading to me before bedtime; both of my parents read to me from a very young age, but my Dad continued reading to me on the floor of my bedroom until at least the age of 11. I would look over his shoulder from my twin bed and follow along, as he would read a chapter from King Arthur’s Court. The story was in old English, and as he read, he would translate it so I could understand. He continued to give me piggyback rides up the stairs at bedtime until I was probably 12.

When I was in Boy Scouts, we would have a monthly camping trip on the weekends. My Dad always came along as a chaperone, yet remained very hands off so I could enjoy my fun. He enjoyed the outdoors, and it gave me so much comfort knowing he was there all weekend.

My Dad was always meticulously groomed and dressed. He would always wear a polo or collared shirt, no matter the temperature or occasion. It gives me great pride that we were able to preserve his dignity, hygiene and grooming in his own home. One of the last things I did with him was give him a fresh haircut outside on a crisp, sunny afternoon. He deserved to look his best, as he had always maintained for himself.

Dad, I know I made you proud, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to care for you. These are nursing skills I would have never had if it weren't for your support. I love you, Dad. We love you Dad, we always have, and always will. I cannot thank you enough for the life, love, memories, and wisdom you provided us. You will continue to live on through us, in so many ways. Thank you for continuing to watch over us, like a hawk."

Catherine remembers her dad:

"He was the best and most handsome man I know. He played guitar under my mom's windowsill when they were 16, and in marriage, would pick a single rose from the yard and leave a handwritten note by the coffee pot from her 'Mr. Mick-el-son' along with his famous smiley wearing a top hat.

He was known to run ahead of an elderly couple to make sure to get the door for them and would always make sure there were donuts in the kitchen the morning after a sleep-over. He would be the first one in a swimming pool so he could make a fountain with his hand and splash you until you joined him. I loved going to early Saturday movies and then sneaking in a second one only to be caught by the theater management and laughing on their way out. He was always so genuinely happy and had such a zest for adventure. He was a straight shooter in a business environment, was looked up to by many, and a real class act. I have met very few men that can hold a candle to my dad."

We couldn't have made it through the past several years without the support of many relatives, friends and neighbors. Sheila, his sister in law, provided administrative guidance with paperwork and legal organization. Eric and Sue with love, physical aid and medical assistance. Jackie and Rick for weekly goodies to Denny and construction of wheelchair ramps around our home. Anne and Paul, Jim and Hope, Fran, Eileen with home cooked food and soups, emotional support and continued prayers, and to many other caring neighbors and friends.

Dedicated Caregivers who became part of our family: Merzena, Monica, Laura who treated me and Denny with utmost care and sincere respect.

A Celebration of Life will be held 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 24, 2022 at St. Lawrence Episcopal Church, 125 W. Church Street, Libertyville, IL 60048 . Please contact family for details by sending your email or snail mail address.

For more information on Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), please see:

www.brain.northwestern.edu/dementia/ftd/signs or
theaftd.org

In lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution in Dennis' memory to:

Mesulam Center for Cognitive Neurology (specifically for FTD) at www.brain.northwestern.edu/about/giving.html

Please visit www.burnettdane.com for a full version of the obituary and to leave a memory.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

SEP **24.** 2:00 PM (CT)

St. Lawrence Episcopal Church
125 W. Church Street
Libertyville, IL 60048

Tribute Wall

MO

“ *The days I spent caring for Denny were very precious to me, I will always remember his big smile every morning when I walked into the room and his amazing kindness to everyone he met. He loved life and enjoyed singing with his beautiful & loving wife. It was my pleasure to care for such an incredible man.*

Monica (caregiver)



Monica - June 27, 2022 at 03:44 PM

RP

“ *To me, Dennis was basically a "fun guy". Very witty, always kind, and a joy to be around. More importantly, he was a level-headed, loving person, spouse, and father that totally adored Cheryl and the kids . He was generous with his time and always seemed to have a smile on his face!. I wish I had realized earlier that he and I shared a love for playing guitar - he would have been a blast to jam with! Cheryl generously gave me one of Denny's guitars which I hope brings me greater skill and has a stipulation to play it at Mass at our favorite church. He was one of a kind, a real gem, and someone his family and friends will truly miss.*

Rick & Jackie

Rick & Jackie Pyter - January 04, 2022 at 07:39 PM

T)

“ *We are sorry to read that Dennis passed away recently , a friendly neighbor that always had a wave as he walked by with Emma . Deepest sympathy to Sheryl and family .*

The Harrison Family (Ireland) - January 01, 2022 at 10:40 AM

LH

“ We will all miss Denny walking our dogs. Denny was always ready with a smile or kind word to share. He would beam when he would talk about plans with Sheryl for anniversary vacations. He was a great neighbor and the hood will not be the same without him. Every time we lose a member of Woodmere the hood forever has a vacancy that simply cannot be filled. Rest in peace, Denny, you will not be forgotten.

Linda Hennum - January 01, 2022 at 04:24 AM

LS

“ Denny was a true gentle man and gentleman. He always made everyone feel special and heard. It didn't matter if you CEO or janitor. He was very witty and brought such a sense of warmth and joy with him. Always a man that I sensed valued people and conversation, he really wanted to know you. I saw a deep genuine love for his his family and his furry four legged family members. Denny always made sure everyone had what they needed and made them feel seen and cared for, he touched many lives. He is and will be greatly missed, his legacy will carry on. Praying for Sheryl, Newell and Catherine in this season. Much love. ❤️ Lynn Schrepfer

Lynn Schrepfer - December 19, 2021 at 11:24 PM

JM

“ Denny was frequently walking Cassie and later Emma around the neighborhood and always had time to stop and chat .As an original resident of Libertyville's Woodmere subdivision from its development in 1972/1973 I filled him in on the original owner of the house Sheryl and he bought. The original owner, Bud, also worked in the insurance industry and also specialized in reinsurance both facultative and treaty business. Denny shared with me that he had known many AON employees that were victims of the 911 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in which the AON office was destroyed. I had also worked in a company that was eventually merged with AON so we could talk a little shop from time to time. When he shared with me his personal contact with the victims I could see real compassion and concern for the victims and their families. Denny always mentioned how proud he was of Matthew and Catherine.

After he retired, I pestered him into joining the senior mens bowling league at Fairhaven Lanes in Mundelein. After many invites, arm twisting, and my best persuasion I convinced him by putting him into a car pool to and from the Thursday gathering. Because he was new to this he used the bowling alley ball and rented his shoes. When he asked for size 14 they had one multicolored pair that looked to be brand new. He put them on and enjoyed his games. By the third week or so the manager gave him the shoes that he rented as a gift. Denny had mighty big shoes to fill and the proof that not many could.

John and Evelyn McWilliams

John McWilliams - December 15, 2021 at 12:29 PM

“ It was late spring, 1962, and my family had just moved to 1824 Ave. D. The next day was Saturday, perfect biking weather to explore my new neighborhood. I was barely in the saddle when I heard somebody hollering at me from across the street. It was Denny standing at the curb in front of a huge, maroon colored two story. This was the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

Three events stand out in my memory.

The creek near our homes, which runs north to south east of the public high school, seemed to beckon us frequently once summer came. One day we were playing "Indian scouts" and I ran ahead to reconnoiter around a bend. Before I knew it, I was up to my knees in quicksand, and struggling. I yelled just as he saw me, and, without a word, he grabbed a large, dead branch near him and was able to reach my hand. By now, I was up to my waist (you're not so smart at 12). He slowly pulled me out. We never told anyone.

But I thanked God that night for him, the first of many such times.

The creek offered up other temptations as well. If we couldn't abscond with two of Earl's

cigarettes, we'd find the appropriate-sized grapevine and make our own by just breaking off a piece and lighting it. And for our smoking "pleasure" we'd go into Denny's "clubhouse" which was situated over Earl's garage workbench and accessed via a short ladder leading to a small trapdoor. The space was about 3 feet square with just enough room below the rafters to sit, enjoy our smokes, and his brother's pilfered Playboys by candlelight. It's a miracle we didn't burn down the garage.

I can't really claim to be Denny and Sheryl's matchmaker, but I was instrumental in presenting the opportunity for their meeting. Denny had invited me to a U.M.Y.F. (United Methodist Youth Fellowship) dance at his church. He said there would be girls, and it would be fun. He was right! About a month later, I reciprocated. We attended a C.Y.O. (Catholic Youth Organization) dance at the Knights of Columbus Hall. I told him there would be girls and it would be fun. I was right! And there was Sheryl.

Denny was one in ten million. I'm grateful for our time together and I'll always cherish these and many other memories. I loved him and

I'll miss him. God bless his family.

Lee Hunold - December 14, 2021 at 05:26 PM

DA

“ *I'm happy to say I had the honor of being Dennis's barber for many years. It is so rare for men to come in for a hair cut and always speak so highly of their family and with such love. In my business these clients are so special and it's such a joy each and every time to to see them.*

Dennis would share old stories from the beginning of his wonderful life with Sheryl and walk me through his life with his son and daughter. He was so proud when his son graduated from nursing school. He knew his son found his passion and enjoyed caring for others. Dennis so hoped his daughter would find that Mr. Right who would love and care for her the way she was so deserving of. I do too.

Dennis shared vacations and family's special moments together. Family was everything to Dennis. I feel so honored that he shared and I got to know his family through such loving eyes. Wow, if every home could have a loving man like Dennis to lead them through life, what a wonderful world this could be.

Dennis you are missed and have been a blessing to know.

Dennise Annoreno - December 12, 2021 at 12:11 PM

TS

“ I have so many memories I could go all day. The Leisure Lake Cigar Club, all the family men, standing on the boat dock, near Trenton Missouri, on New Years Eve, waiting for midnight, listening to the lake ice cracking, a toddy in one hand and a cigar in the other - Riding in Denny's new red Sebring convertible, the top down going to get a Chicago Dog while listing loudly to Dianna Krall whom we had just discovered - Denny taking me to South Chicago to find out where my new Canadian National RR job was going to be - My Denny made sack lunch waiting for me each morning in the fridge as I scrambled to get on 94 from Libertyville to Homewood - A Italian dining experience with my wife, Denny and my sister Sheryl in which he and I tried not to show notice our gorgeous Czechoslovakian waitress - A walking tour of the complete Boston freedom trail - Denny arguing with a Sailor recruit so that he would let my wife and I tour old Ironsides after it had closed for the day, Denny got it accomplished - A walking tour of Manhattan after 9/11 with Sheryl and Denny as our tour guides, the crumbled globe in Battery Park, the hole in the ground - Drinking a Russian Christmas Stout in Libertyville at Micky Finns. Denny was and always will be a very special man. We will miss him.

Terry and Paulette Schrepfer

Terrence Schrepfer - December 11, 2021 at 02:55 PM



“ It was always a pleasure to chat with Dennis on his daily walks with their dog Emma. He was always in good spirits and was someone you would go out of your way to talk to. Wish we had moved to the neighborhood earlier. We will miss you.

Paul and Natalia

P - December 08, 2021 at 11:44 AM

“*My wife and I first met Denny when we moved next door to him nearly 10 years ago. For the first six months or so, we would exchange a wave, a handshake, or a casual greeting, as most neighbors do.*

One Friday evening, we had a brief conversation about rum and how much we both enjoyed it.

The next day, we got set to pursue our list of weekend chores, and with two kids, it is usually extensive, with groceries to shop for, a lawn to cut, laundry to do, among other things. We started out with groceries, and as we were unloading them from the car I noticed Denny in his doorway. He came out with a bottle and small glass in his hand and said that based on our conversation, he recalled a favorite rum he wanted me to try.

It was 11:00am in the morning and, personally, I didn't begin my drinking until after dinner time, but in the spirit of neighborliness, I could not ignore the friendly offer (after all one small drink couldn't hurt).

After a few minutes, Denny and I migrated to his patio and enjoyed a little bit more, and I soon realized that I had completely neglected any attempt to help my wife with the groceries (or any other chores we had listed out).

A short time after that, my wife came around the backyard looking for me. I was familiar with the look on her face and I knew that she had found her quarry, but before she could properly exercise her fury, Denny quickly disarmed her rightfully stern disposition.

A few hours later saw both my wife and me abandoning the chores entirely in lieu of relaxing conversation with Denny and Sheryl that touched on all topics. By this time, much more rum was poured, snacks were served, and music was played. We checked in on the kids occasionally as we worked through lunch, and then dinner, and then the final nightcap.

We finally finished the day and strolled back home with a deep feeling of contentment despite only crossing groceries off our list.

As I look back, I remember that day as one of the best, and with

Denny's encouragement, there were many more. How lucky were we!

I miss my friend and his smile. As an attempt to practice a tremendous life lesson, I aspire to mimic Denny's generosity and friendship.



Eric Podlogar - December 08, 2021 at 11:08 AM

FB

“ *Dennie and Sheryl moved into the house across the street and immediately started turning it to a beautiful home. Not just with the improvements to the house but with the love they showed to each other and their neighbors. Dennie will be missed by all who new this sweet and gentle man.*
Fran

frances M Brown - December 08, 2021 at 10:38 AM

VD

“ *Dennis was a very kind and polite man He was a true gentleman! I admired both Sheryl and Dennis. My deepest sympathy. Val Dunn*

Val Dunn - December 08, 2021 at 12:18 AM

BB

“Dennis was simply my very best lifetime friend. He was loyal, caring, respectful, helpful, and above all else he had a world class sense of humor. Great wit, fun to be with and had a bag full of one-liners. My favorite line of his is “You know, you never know”. (Only he and I know what that means)

My family moved to Fort Madison just before I entered the 8th grade. Dennis was the first person to reach out to me and help me fit in to a new world. He introduced me to the acoustic guitar and inspired me to play one for the next 56 years. We played basketball and football side by side as brothers throughout high school for the Bloodhounds.

We were college roommates at IOWA for two years where we played guitars, shared dreams, and had some serious fun. Dennis found us both jobs working in a sorority house kitchen and that is still my favorite job ever because I met my future wife, Marcy, there. Following college, we attended each other’s weddings, lived nearby in the Chicago area, and our wives became great friends as well. There were fun times at Ravinia concerts (Peter Paul and Mary anyone?) and several family vacations in Wisconsin.

Over the years, our contacts became less frequent but whenever we spoke, you could always count on hearing Dennis’ joyful voice and outlook.

There are not enough ways to say how thankful I am to have had a true friendship with Dennis. He was the same amazing person throughout his life that I knew when he was just a kid. He left a long trail of goodwill behind him and while I miss him, I have lots of wonderful memories to cherish of this great man.

Since his passing, I have thought a lot about what made Dennis and me friends for so long. Of all the people you meet in your life, why do so few remain in your world to the end? I have concluded that only Dennis and I know that answer. Because, “You know, you never know”.

Bob Burton - December 07, 2021 at 05:10 PM

HB

“ We will miss seeing Denny on his daily walks with the dogs around the neighborhood-- Cassie and then Emma -- around again when it came to Emma. Denny’s absolute charm was his duty and passion for his family, especially Sheryl. Denny, always the gentleman, always holding on to the response to “how are you,” always showing interest in and concern for his neighbors. Even when he was ill, a walk with Sheryl meant a close physical bond. Hands clasped. Denny, thank you for your grace and kindness. We will miss Denny’s ever present smile. God Bless Denny, Sheryl, Bud and Catherine. Love Jim and Hope Babowice

Hope and Jim Babowice - December 07, 2021 at 06:46 AM

SH

“ 6 files added to the album Remembering Denny



Sheila - December 03, 2021 at 08:16 PM

DR

“ With great love and affection we remember Denny... always happy, up for any mischief, and a model of generosity and positivity. He was a man and musician of the great folk era of America; relishing travel and all the people and places around him. He will be greatly missed.

In our hearts forever,

Dana Rodenbaugh

Dana Ridenbaugh - December 02, 2021 at 07:15 PM

SH

Dana, he always loved being with you in the mountains: the bear strolling by your deck, playing guitars, playing Farkle. Did he ever get to wear the winner's crown? He loved you.

Sheryl - December 03, 2021 at 02:15 PM

SR

“ Uncle Denny was always so warm and welcoming with his big smile and hug. He always made me feel good and was always interested in what I was up to. A genuine listener with a huge heart. His laugh was contagious. I always knew it was going to be a good time. I have nothing but good memories with Denny and will cherish them forever. All my love and peace to Aunt Sheryl, Newell and Catherine.

Sarah Rodenbaugh - December 02, 2021 at 12:04 AM

SH

Saraha Bearah, we always loved reading about your adventures. Thank you for your love and memory.

Sheryl - December 03, 2021 at 02:16 PM

CA

“ 9 files added to the tribute wall



Catherine - December 01, 2021 at 07:27 PM

CA

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Catherine - December 01, 2021 at 07:21 PM

CA

“ More fun photos of Dad and family.

Catherine - November 29, 2021 at 08:50 PM

MN

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Matthew Newell - November 29, 2021 at 08:33 PM

MN

“ 13 files added to the album Matthew Newell's Uploads



Matthew Newell - November 29, 2021 at 08:27 PM