

Kenneth H. Sherper obituary



Kenneth Howard Sherper was born February 10, 1936, in Minneapolis, MN, and passed away November 5, 2023, at the age of 87 in Kalispell, MT. He led a wide-ranging and active life, while making significant contributions to the lives and well-being of people globally. Ken and his twin brother, Keith, were two of five children. They put themselves through college, earning bachelor's degrees in agriculture in 1957 and master's degrees in agricultural economics in 1961, both at The University of Minnesota. Their father died at a work accident in 1938, so they were forced to earn money for attending university with numerous jobs, including renting and farming 160 acres.

In January of 1961, when the Kennedy Administration initiated the Peace Corps, Ken and his brother Keith applied together and were in the first group sent to India in December 1961. They taught agricultural extension and modern methodologies, worked in villages to introduce improved crops and farming practices, and helped establish modern poultry production in the Punjab.

Ken met his future wife, Julieanna Morrell, at a hospital in New Delhi where she was working as a nurse. They became engaged and then married in England in 1964 after Ken traveled with his brother Keith around Africa and Europe. Ken and Julie then traveled to the U.S. arriving completely broke and unemployed, but in possession of a 1936 Rolls Royce Phantom III which Ken and Keith had purchased for pennies in India.



Back in Minnesota, Ken began working for the Farmer's Home Administration and this consolidated his world view that people in poverty everywhere in the world, whether they live in Kittson County, Minnesota, or the Punjab have something in common; they are innovative, persistent, and resourceful. This perspective set a foundation for Ken's future employment with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), where he worked from 1965 to 1994.

Ken and Julie had two children during his five-year assignment to Korea. Although Korea was their favorite post, Ken also had long-term assignments in Ethiopia, Lesotho, and Yemen. Ken obtained a PhD from Cornell University, where he did his dissertation on land reform in Korea. Later, as the USAID Director in Yemen, the education of women was pivotal to Ken's work as demonstrated with inroads made into family planning education for Yemeni women. Recognizing Ken's leadership capability, he was assigned to the position of USAID Counselor, the highest career position in the Agency. After retiring from USAID in 1994, he worked at the United Nations Development Programme in New York for four years, focusing his energies on expanding UNDP efforts to improve governance in developing countries.

Another post-retirement activity was to own and operate with his brother a family Christmas tree farm in Paeonian Springs, Virginia. Ken and his wife lived in their home in Clarke County, Virginia, for several years before finally moving to Whitefish, Montana, to be near their daughter, Dawn. Kenneth Sherper is survived by his brother Keith and his two daughters Lisa and Dawn.