



# Kenneth Henry Holko

DEC 17, 2025



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# Kenneth Henry Holko

DEC 17, 2025

**K**enneth Henry Holko, a loving husband, devoted father, beloved grandfather, and pioneering metallurgical engineer, researcher, and inventor whose work advanced aerospace technology, national defense, transportation innovation, and modern orthopedic surgery, passed away peacefully at his home in San Diego, California. He was 80 years old.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1944 to Milan Holko and Stephany Florczyk, Ken grew up in Brooklyn, Ohio, where his early curiosity and determination began to take shape. He was inducted into the Brooklyn High School Hall of Fame in 1993, a testament to the remarkable career that would follow.

Ken attended the University of Cincinnati for two years, where he was a member of the wrestling team, before transferring to The Ohio State University. He graduated in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science in Welding Engineering—an achievement made even more meaningful because it was there that he met the love of his life, Susan. They were married in 1971.

His career began in the 1970s at NASA's Lewis Research Center (now the Glenn Research Center) in Cleveland, where he specialized in solid state and diffusion welding of advanced aerospace alloys. His early research contributed to NASA's understanding of high temperature materials and joining techniques essential for next generation propulsion systems.

In 1972, Ken and Susan moved to San Diego, where he began work at Rohr Industries for two years, followed by five years at General Atomics. At General Atomics, he helped develop welding processes for high temperature, gas cooled nuclear reactors, further establishing his reputation as a gifted problem solver in advanced materials engineering.

In the mid-1980s, Ken founded Hitech Metallurgical Company in San Diego, where he led groundbreaking work in high temperature brazing and joining technologies. After 17 successful years, he sold the company and continued consulting until his retirement in 2020. During his



## Obituary

**Kenneth Henry Holko**

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career, he was also selected to join IMECA (Independent Metallurgical Engineers of California), an honor reserved for highly respected experts in the field.

Ken's professional achievements were extensive. He held multiple U.S. patents and authored numerous technical reports for NASA and the American Welding Society. His expertise in diffusion welding—particularly his methods for achieving parent metal strength joints without vacuum furnaces—remains a significant contribution to the field. His metallurgical work in medical devices also played a central role in major licensing and intellectual property cases involving leading medical manufacturers.

Outside of his engineering career, Ken was a gifted jewelry maker who found joy in working with his hands in a more artistic way. His pieces—carefully crafted, often experimental, and always unique—reflected the same precision, creativity, and curiosity that defined his life's work. He was also an avid tennis player who loved the sport's blend of strategy, movement, and competition.

Ken believed deeply in supporting education and his local community. He was one of the founding members of the Clairemont High School Foundation, an organization that continues to thrive today, providing resources and opportunities for students and teachers. His early leadership helped establish the foundation that has had a lasting impact on generations of students.

Beyond his many accomplishments, Ken will be remembered for his generosity in mentoring young engineers, his boundless curiosity, and his unwavering dedication to solving problems others deemed impossible. He approached every challenge with creativity, precision, and a deep sense of purpose.

Ken was preceded in death by his parents, Milan and Stephany; his sister and her husband, Annette and Bob Stetina; and his nephew Tom Stetina. He is survived by his wife, Susan; his children, Brett (Joanna), Benjamin (Erin), and Sarah (Justin); his grandchildren, Brooke and Vivienne Holko, Jacob and Ryan Holko, Warner and Emma Valeron, and his nephew Michael Stetina, along with all who were inspired by his brilliance, kindness, and steady presence.

A viewing will be held on January 10th from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Clairemont Mortuary, located at 4266 Mt. Abernathy Ave., San Diego, CA 92117. A memorial service will be held on January 31st at 10:00 a.m. at St. Mark's United Methodist Church located at 3502 Clairemont



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Drive, San Diego, CA 92117, followed by a reception at the Holko Family Residence. In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to the Clairemont High School Foundation


<https://www.paypal.com/ncp/payment/DQ2JFHV7LV292>

reflecting Ken's lifelong commitment to science, innovation, and education.




**Memorial Service**

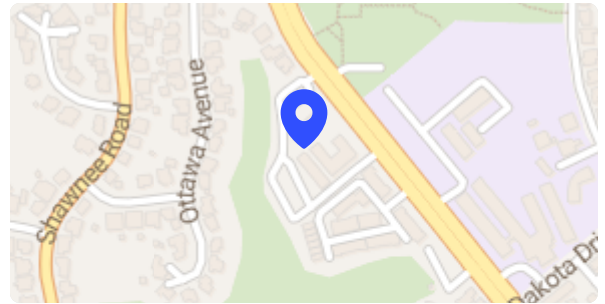
 **Saturday**, January 31, 2026

 10:00 AM PT

 **St Marks United Methodist Church, San Diego**

3502 Clairemont Dr, San Diego CA 92117

 Reception to follow at the Holko Family Residence





## Tribute Wall

**Kenneth Henry Holko**



**Anonymous** sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the Holko family.



January 16 at 11:43 AM



**Michael Neff** posted:

Ken's smile was a radiant light in our lives. He was always warm, welcoming, and engaging. We remember having so much fun singing with Ken and Sue around the Imeca campfires, visiting their home in San Diego, and Ken's generosity gifting his beautiful jewelry, which Maureen will always treasure. Once when we were visiting the aquarium with our grandchildren, we ran into Ken and Sue visiting with their family! What a chance encounter, serendipitous, and memorable in its occurrence, like it was meant to be. We are so lucky to have known Ken during his life.

January 3 at 4:21 PM



**Arun And Shalini Kumar** sent a Strength & Solace Spray to the Holko family.



December 30 at 10:57 AM



**Arun And Shalini Kumar** planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Kenneth.



December 30 at 10:57 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Kenneth by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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