



## Dr. Joseph K. Kovach

February 1, 1929 - November 17, 2016

Dr. Joseph K. Kovach was born February 1, 1929, to Akos and Karolin Kovach in Gödöllő, Hungary. Surrounded by his family, he died peacefully on November 17, 2016, of Alzheimer's disease.

In 1944, he became separated from his family in the chaos of the final months of World War II. Only 15 years old and just trying to get home, he was caught in the advancing Russian front and spent the next 9 years as a prisoner of the GULAG labor camps in the Soviet Union. Following Stalin's death in 1953, he was released and returned to his family in Budapest, where he immediately went to work as a Russian-Hungarian simultaneous translator.

After fleeing for his life during the 1956 Hungarian revolution, he came to the United States in January 1957, rapidly learned English, and was admitted to Elmhurst College where he took a double course load and graduated with high honors in only two years. Four years later he earned a Ph.D. in Comparative and Biological Psychology at the University of Chicago, where he had also joined the Committee on Social Thought under the mentorship of the renowned classicist, David Grene.

As a career scientist in behavior genetics, he worked at the Menninger Foundation (1966-1993) where he was Director of the Research Department's Ethological Laboratory, Director of Research and Evaluation, member of the Management Committee of the Karl Menninger School of Psychiatry, Henry

March Pfeiffer Professor of Research and Education in Psychiatry, and later Professor Emeritus. The recipient of numerous grants and awards, he served on editorial boards of major professional journals and was a reviewer for NIH, NIMH and NSF. He was a member of several professional organizations, gave invited presentations at national and international conferences, and was the author of numerous scientific articles, two books, several book sections and book reviews.

In 1974, he earned his pilot's license and loved to fly his small airplane, with which he and his family explored his adopted homeland. He was particularly fond of the American Southwest where the family enjoyed camping and hiking. He had a passion for reading, especially Russian poetry, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, and classical literature.

He was married to Nancy Shand. They later divorced. He married Magdalene Schlingensiepen (nee Hamel) and they enjoyed more than 40 years together. She survives; along with his sons, Dr. Ian Kovach (Laurie), Rev. Tobias Schlingensiepen (Abby), Dr. Christopher Kovach (with Rachel Gold); and daughter Ilsabe O'Connell-Schlingensiepen (with James Curley); former children-in-law, Sarah Stafford, Ulrike Leonardi (Glen), Mitch O'Connell (Alyson), and Catherine Kovach; brothers, Gyula (Ildiko), Istvan (Zsuzsa), Levente; sister, Katalin; 11 grandchildren, six step-grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren; and many nephews and nieces. He was preceded in death by his parents and sisters Eva, Vera, and Maria.

For the special and loving care he received during the last few weeks of his life, his family extends their gratitude to the wonderful staff at Midland Hospice, to Michael Cox of First Congregational Church who helped by giving gentle, competent care, and to many others who gave him and his family so much love and support.

Memorial service for Dr. Kovach will be at 11 a.m. Saturday, December 3, 2016, at First Congregational Church, 1701 SW Collins Avenue, Topeka KS 66604.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to First Congregational Church, the Midland Center for Hope and Healing, 200 SW Frazier Circle, Topeka, KS 66606, or Amnesty International, 600 Pennsylvania Ave SE # 500, Washington, DC 20003.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

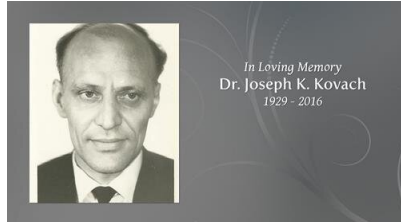
DEC 3. 11:00 AM (CT)

First Congregational Church  
1701 SW Collins Ave  
Topeka, KS

# Tribute Wall



“ *Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Joseph K. Kovach*



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**Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home** - December 01, 2016 at 05:46 PM



“ *Dr. Joseph K. Kovach*

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January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



Kathleen  
McCune

“ *Dr. Kovach hired me to type up his Request for funding to study his Coturnix Coturnix Japonica. With his unfailing determination and intelligence and the fact I clearly understood everything he said, albeit with his heavy accent, we made a winning ten year contract with the funds needed. Though I felt (as he did) that the best was left unstated, and time has proven this true, he nevertheless revealed what the World now knows through human ignorance and the lack of mental health over the last 55 years (at least as a part of insurance), that humans as quail, have an innate need to cling to their own kind. With knowledge comes study and our better selves, with ignorance we have what our World is today...still embattled and battling with one another. God Bless Dr. Kovach's soul and I will be anxious to once again give him hugs when I too cross over.*

*May God also comfort those of you fortunate enough to have shared Dr. Kovach's life more personally.*

*Kathleen Boston McCune  
Technical Writer/Analyst*

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**Kathleen McCune** - December 09, 2016 at 11:01 AM

JP

“ Nov 26, 2016

*To Magdalene and family,*

*Kathy Campbell and I would like to share our sympathy on the loss of Joseph. Words say very little at a time like this, but knowing people care, maybe helps. We hope so. Magdalene that is wonderful that you had 40 years together. We imagine you all have some wonderful memories.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jackie Campbell Petersen and Kathy Campbell*

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**Jackie Campbell Petersen** - November 26, 2016 at 04:24 PM