

FIRST WATCH

First Watch Co-Founder, Longtime CEO and Former Chairman Ken Pendery Passes Away at 70

March 5, 2024

Under Pendery's leadership, the breakfast & brunch brand grew successfully from one California restaurant to more than 520 nationwide

BRADENTON, Fla. – March 5, 2024 – His bold words are plastered on the walls of the Florida-based restaurant company's Home Office and serve as a constant reminder and permanent edict from the beloved hospitality leader: "Culture is integrity. It's honesty. It's respect."



First Watch announced today that co-founder and longtime leader Ken Pendery passed away on March 4, 2024, after a battle with Multiple System Atrophy, a rare neurological disorder. He was 70.

Pendery retired from the company's board of directors in 2022 after 38 years with the breakfast, brunch and lunch concept. During his extensive and influential tenure, he and co-founder John Sullivan moved the company's operations from California to the Gulf Coast of Florida in the mid-1980s.

Pendery assumed the role of CEO in the late '90s. During his time at the helm, First Watch grew from about 50 restaurants in 1998 to more than 330 in 2018, when he transitioned from CEO to executive chairman. After working together for 12 years, successor and current CEO and President Chris Tomasso continued the successful expansion to more than 450 restaurants by the time Pendery stepped down from the board of directors four years later. Today, First Watch operates more than 520 restaurants in 29 states.

"Ken's impact and influence is – and will forever be – felt throughout our organization," said Tomasso. "He was a mentor and dear friend, and the epitome of the 'You First' culture our company is built upon. Everyone who crossed his path is better for it. Our hearts go out to his family, and we will carry his memory fondly."

Regarded as a beloved leader and dear friend, Pendery cared deeply about the value of trust, humility, doing the right thing and having only the highest of standards. He instilled in each new leader their crucial and primary responsibility: company culture. Pendery was adamant that the behaviors of just one person can strengthen and embolden a culture or destroy it, and he found it his mission to protect the integrity of culture.

Today, Pendery's legacy lives on through First Watch's "5 Steps of Service," first written on the back of a napkin in 1987, and his 10 Commandments

(now "Commitments"). Beginning with "Welcome with warmth" and ending with "Act with infectious positivity," the tenets are actively trained and practiced in each restaurant.

Pendery is survived by his wife, Jenny; two children, Trey (Maureen) and Libby (Kevin); and four grandchildren, Woods, Nora, Sita and Red. A private service will take place later this month.

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