

Kenneth Ficek – BS 1973 Pharmacy

Kenneth Anthony Ficek, 77, of Bismarck, ND, died March 26, 2025, due to esophageal cancer. He was born on December 13, 1947, to Anton Vincent Ficek and Elizabeth Ficek née Gulka, in Dickinson, ND.

Ken was enrolled in several elementary schools and graduated from St. Patrick's Elementary in Dickinson. He was a proud member of the Class of 1965, the first graduating class from Trinity High School in Dickinson. In his senior year he was elected the first, and to date the only, King of the Mardi Gras.

He attended Dickinson State College and North Dakota State University, pursuing a degree in pharmacy. His education was interrupted by the Vietnam War. Ken was drafted into the Army and served as a pharmacist at large bases in Vietnam, including Bien Hoa and Long Binh. Upon completing his service he returned to NDSU to complete his degree.

He married Patricia Perman in 1973, and had two sons from the marriage, Mark and Brad. The marriage ended in divorce.

In 1976 he started his own pharmacy in Dickinson which he called the Minuteman Pharmacy. After selling the business he began a long career with White Drug, mostly in Bismarck. After his retirement, he continued to work as a pharmacist for the North Dakota State Penitentiary because he liked the people he was working with. He received a Lifetime Pharmacist Certificate for his almost 50 years of service. Ken had a lifelong passion for music. He brought The Beatles into our house, along with The Rolling Stones, The Boxtops, The Mamas and Papas, Simon and Garfunkel, and many other artists. In high school and college, he promoted many dances with regional bands that often played at the Community Building in Dickinson. In Bismarck he started Fat Cat Music and was the DJ for countless weddings, parties, and school dances. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of artists, especially those from the sixties which came in handy when he regularly competed in bar trivia contests. He embraced the newest technologies and had a collection of over 22,000 specially curated songs for his library.

Life for Ken was one big party. If he wasn't at a party, he was planning and looking forward to the next one. He loved his Friday dinners with his sister Peg and brother-in-law, Dennis Nelson. He also loved taking his pontoon out with them on the Missouri.

Ken loved going to concerts and his home was filled with music from morning through the evenings. He loved sharing and exchanging new music with others. He had many friends who were part of his adventures, including Mark Hager and Danny McGurren, with whom he traveled to Prague, Vienna, London, Omaha Beach and other destinations in the U.S.

Up until his cancer diagnosis Ken was blessed with good health and looks that betrayed his age. His nephews once asked their dad, Ken's brother Gary, with shock and incredulity, whether it was really true that Ken was his older brother. Yes, Ken was almost nine years older than Gary, but they would often flummox restaurant servers by asking them to guess who was older.

Ken was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his sons, Mark Ficek, Bismarck, and Brad Ficek, Fort Collins, CO; his siblings, Peg (Dennis) Nelson, Bismarck, Gary (Rhonda) Ficek, Fargo, and Keith

Ficek, Dickinson; nephews and a niece who all thought the world of Ken: Jeffrey Robinson, Atlanta, GA, Sarah (Aaron) Bunnell, Mandan, Tyler (Shaila) Nelson, Oakland, CA, Tony (Corrine) Ficek, Fargo, Danny (Katie) Ficek, Lynnwood, WA, Andy Ficek, New York City, NY; great nieces and nephews, Brayden, Treyton, Hayley, Kiran, Rian, Nolan, Norah, Elsie, Samson, Cody, and Julia, whom he doted on. He is also survived by many relatives and friends who will greatly miss him and recall good times and good music with him.

A Celebration of Life will be held in the spring.

Interment will be held at the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery, Mandan, ND in the spring.