



Kenneth Allan Hegge, 84, of Mentor, MN, passed away at his rural farmstead Wednesday morning, October 9, 2024, after struggling with cancer for many months.

Kenny was born on July 20, 1940 in Crookston, MN, the son of Orris Odin and Alice Erma (Thompson) Hegge. He grew up on his family farm in Oklee, MN where he attended primary school. After the family moved to Eldred, MN in 1951 Kenny attended the Eldred school for 3 years and then the Northwest School of Agriculture (now the University of Minnesota-Crookston), graduating from there at the age of 15 in 1955, which was not unusual back then. He then enrolled at Crookston's Central High School, was active in 4-H, and went on to graduate with the Class of 1958. On August 4th of that same year he enlisted in the US Air Force and received his basic training at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, TX. With further advanced schooling at Gunter AFB in Alabama, Ken graduated as a Dental Laboratory Specialist, and was assigned to McChord AFB near Tacoma, WA. He worked in the Dental Lab where he proudly made false teeth, including his own front tooth when he got in a car accident, until

his honorable discharge on June 29, 1962. He returned to Minnesota and attended Bemidji State College, and while making the Dean's List most every quarter earned his Bachelor's Degree in 1965. Because he had great memories being stationed in the Pacific Northwest, he then moved to Portland, Oregon to begin working toward a Masters Degree. He interrupted those studies to accept a civil service position at Eilsen AFB with duty in Clear, Alaska in 1967. That same year he married Chris Vanek in Vancouver, WA. In 1968 they moved back to Portland where Kenny worked as a research chemist with the University of Oregon Medical School while completing his Master's degree in Chemistry in 1971. Their son, Steven, was born in Portland, OR in 1968. In 1971 the family relocated to Menahga, MN where Kenny taught at the high school for a year. In 1972 Ken began working as a chemist for American Crystal Sugar at their plant in Drayton, ND, and daughter Rachael was born nearby in Karlstad, MN. A few years later Kenny transferred to East Grand Forks and finally came back home to hold the same position at Crookston's American Crystal Sugar factory. In 1975 Kenny purchased a homestead near Mentor, MN where he began a beef cow-calf farm while continuing to work at American Crystal. In 1982 Kenny married Kay Henre of Crookston. To their union Sara, Lydia, and Ethan were born. Over the years, in addition to beef cattle the Mentor farm was also host to Kay's Morgan horse breeding farm, 4-H project dairy goats and Jersey cows, angry turkeys, obnoxious Guinea hens, many barn cats, farm dogs, and a nasty pet raccoon. Kenny continued working in his dual chemist and cattle farming roles until retiring from American Crystal in 2012 and cattle in 2019.

Kenny's life was never boring and he was best described by his kids as an intellectual cowboy who loved farm animals and wildlife, an accident-prone semi-hippie, who liked driving diesel VW's, had a ridiculous sneeze, and vowed never, ever to shave his beard or cut his hair. He loved downhill skiing, visiting the Museum of Man and Nature in Winnipeg along with other museums, and trips to State and National Parks including those in the Dakotas and Midwest. He enjoyed doing home and farm building projects and welding in his barn with his brother and brother-in-law, and woodworking. He loved Western and American art and enjoyed drawing and painting. He was an avid reader, favorites being Time and National Geographic Magazine, Steinbeck novels, and books on Military History. He loved watching PBS programs, where he was hooked on "All Creatures Great and Small." He fervently believed in worldwide conservation issues including climate change and stopping deforestation, and was a longtime member of Greenpeace.

Kenny is lovingly survived by 3 daughters: Rachael (David) Lester of Libertyville, IL, Sara Hegge of San Antonio, TX, and Lydia Hegge of Mentor, MN; 6 grandchildren: Lindsay Boslar, Ariana Narvaez, Christopher Goodrich, Myanna Lester, Amelia Lester, and Alexander Hegge; sister, Carol (Roger) Beiswenger of Fisher, MN; and nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends. Kenny was preceded in death by his parents, Orris and Alice Hegge; 2 sons, Steven and Ethan Hegge; siblings: Donald Hegge, Betty (Larry) Overgaard, and Dennis and David Hegge; and niece, Heather Beiswenger

Treasured be the memory of Kenneth Allan Hegge to all who shared in his life.



"How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land... we do not own the freshness of the air or the sparkle of the water... every part of the Earth is sacred..." -Chief Seattle

IN LOVING MEMORY

Kenneth Allan Hegge

July 29, 1940 - October 9, 2024

The Celebration of Kenny's Life

Wednesday, October 16, 2024 at 11:00 a.m.
Stenshoel-Houske Funeral Home
Crookston, Minnesota
Celebrant Trey Everett, officiating

Prelude

"Clair de Lune"
George French, pianist

Special Recorded Music

"Sundown"
Gordon Lightfoot
"Homeward Bound"
Simon and Garfunkel
"Wishing You Were Here"
Chicago
"Knights in White Satin"
The Moody Blues

Urn Bearers

Rachael Lester - Sara Hegge - Lydia Hegge

Military Honors

Grand Forks AFB Funeral Honors Team
Crookston Veterans Council

Burial

First English Cemetery
Eldred, Minnesota

We would like to thank every one for your very kind expressions of sympathy and for being with us today, whether in body or spirit, as we Honor the Life of our Father, Grandfather, Brother, and Uncle.

With Grateful Hearts,

Rachael and David - Sara - Lydia

*Lindsay - Ariana - Christopher - Myanna - Amelia - Alexander
Carol and Roger - and Family*

