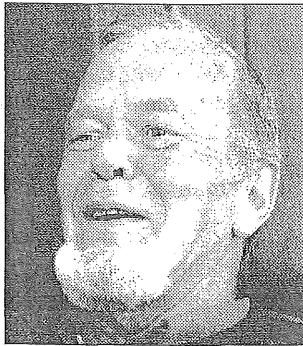


Winston Borden FARMER, WRITER, LOBBYIST, POLITICIAN

# Late in life, he kept the fire burning



**« HE TOOK ALL THAT WAS TERRIBLE AND DIFFICULT AND PLANTED IT INTO THE GROUND AND GREW IT INTO A LIFE THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL AND COVERED WITH COLOR. »**

By PAUL WALSH  
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Winston “Win” Borden, a state senator in the late 1970s from Brainerd and also every bit a farmer, lawyer and writer, died Monday.

Borden survived a battle with cancer last fall but succumbed to kidney and liver infections, said farming partner J.R. Duncan. Borden was 70.

Borden’s final years were spent farming organic vegetables, flowers and herbs near Merrifield, Minn., on land that has been in the family since the 1880s. He kept his political and contemplative fires burning late in life through a dialogue on his Facebook page with the old wood-fueled stove in the farm’s kitchen.

“Yesterday his mind was totally clear,” Duncan said Tuesday. “One of his sons, Chris, said yesterday, ‘Dad, can you recite the whole Gettysburg Address?’ He opened his eyes and said, ‘Of course.’ He said the whole the Gettysburg Address while his son Googled it on the Internet and read it along with him.”

Duncan said Borden recently finished two books and was working to have them published in the spring.

One, “Cancel My Funeral, I’m Staying,” draws on quotes from various writers about growing older, “loving and living and cherishing each

day that you have,” Duncan said.

The other, “Stovetop Cooking,” draws on his love of cooking on his mother’s old wood stove. In the book, he uses the stove as a storytelling device to kick around the political topics of the day and whatever else came to mind.

The farm’s Facebook page became the place where many in recent years were introduced to Borden. On Tuesday it was overwhelmed with people expressing their sorrow and sharing memories.

“I join many on Facebook today in celebrating the life, but mourning the loss, of Win Borden,” wrote Norm Coleman, the former St. Paul mayor and U.S. senator. “He cared enough about the world around him to open up his life — the good, the bad and the ugly. He took all that was terrible and difficult and planted it into the ground and grew it into a life that was beautiful and covered with color. You’ve planted well, Win Borden. The seeds you’ve sown will be harvested forever.”

Borden was a highly visible figure, first as a DFL state senator with a reputation as an environmentalist throughout the 1970s. After re-election in 1976, he became assistant majority leader.

He surprised many political observers when he resigned in December 1978 to become president of the Minnesota Association of Com-

merce and Industry, which later became the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

In 1990, Borden went into private practice as an attorney, was a lobbyist at the State Capitol and then switched to the fish farming business.

In 2004 he made headlines again, when he was convicted of failing to pay about \$300,000 in federal taxes. He served about a year in a federal prison camp. “The blame is wholly mine,” he said at the time, pointing to the fishing farm’s collapse and alcohol addiction as factors that led to his tax misdeeds. His farm’s website even listed the conviction in his bio.

“I hope others can learn from my problems so they don’t travel down the same troubled road I did,” he said.

Borden received his undergraduate degree from what is now St. Cloud State University in 1965. He then earned a master’s in public administration from the University of Minnesota, followed by a law degree from the U.

Services will be held 11 a.m. on Saturday at Ossipee Community Church in Merrifield. Visitation will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday at the Nelson-Doran Funeral Home in Brainerd and for one hour before services at the church Saturday. Survivors include his former wife, two sons and a daughter.

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