



## Bruce Kurtz

March 2, 1952 - June 26, 2026

Bruce Kurtz, a father, storyteller, and community clothier, died on June 26, 2026, in Storm Lake, Iowa. He was 74.

His death followed an advanced lung cancer diagnosis in January of 2026 and an emergency surgery the following month to repair two aortic aneurysms. Unable to physically endure intense cancer treatment, he entered a care facility in March.

A celebration of life in honor of Bruce will be held in Storm Lake at a future date.

Bruce Allen Kurtz was born March 2, 1952, in Luverne, Minn., the first child of Bernard and Marlene (Kruger) Kurtz. He was baptized and confirmed at Bethany Lutheran Church and grew up on a farm four miles south of town. He graduated from Luverne High School in 1970, and although Bruce had not lived in Luverne for many decades, a love for his hometown never faded.

The theatre was one of Bruce's favorite places, having acted in, directed, and supported hundreds of stage productions in his life. He was a founding member of the Green Earth Players theatre troupe in Luverne and a long-time member of the Calumet Players in Pipestone, Minn.

His first performance—"The Fighting Littles"—came during his junior year at LHS. He was in the 1972 cast when Green Earth performed "Tongues of Stone" at the Blue Mounds quarry, a play written by his friend Frederick Manfred, Jr. "The Diary of Anne Frank," "Purple Hearts," and "Ten Nights in a Barroom" were personal favorites he simultaneously performed in and directed through the years.

Bruce said his "one at-bat in the majors" was playing Biff Loman in "Death of a Salesman" at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, Minn., with Walter Mondale in the audience. The final show he directed was "Miracle on 34th Street" at Luverne's historic Palace Theatre during the 2017 holiday season.

"I miss being up on the stage," he said in late April with tears in his eyes. "It was one of the few places where I really felt alive. I don't know why, and I can't explain it. It just was."

Bruce and Joan Wawers were married in November 1982 and had three children together: Jacob, Nicholas, and Veronica. The family resided in Pipestone until relocating to Storm Lake in 1998. Bruce and Joan separated in 2006.

For most of his life, Bruce worked in the men's clothing trade. He was employed at Creeger's and Cook's clothing stores in Luverne in the 1970s and 80s, and later operated his own stores.

Bruce was one of the best-dressed men in Storm Lake as the owner and sole employee of B&K Mercantile on Lake Avenue. He sold suits to bankers and lawyers, outfitted thousands of young men with prom and wedding tuxedos, and ensured farmers had a shirt and tie for an unexpected funeral.

When he wasn't working, you could find Bruce casting a line for walleyes and

bass. Carp and bullheads were always tossed on shore for the raccoons. And although he lived along the shores of Storm Lake in his final years, his favorite fishing spot was still in Starbuck, Minn., on Lake Minnewaska.

Bruce was incredibly proud of his children and grandchildren. He was a hippie who listened to vinyl and drank brandy. He wore a cat's-eye ring and corduroy pants and always carried a pocketknife. He was a lefty with enviable penmanship. He loved live music and theatre, but hated musicals. He rarely missed a broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion."

He was a DFLer who shook Hubert Humphrey's hand, supported Paul Wellstone, and caucused for Barack Obama. He believed his two cents were worth \$20 and that any grudge worth having was worth holding. He was a regular at Byron's. And he was (maybe) the fifth-best player among a group that gathered to shoot snooker in backrooms.

Bruce also loved the Minnesota Vikings, no matter how many times they hurt him.

He saw the team's first game ever played—a preseason matchup against the Cowboys in Sioux Falls, S.D. He cheered for the Purple People Eaters at the Met, high-fived strangers at the Dome, and was emotional the first time he saw the Legacy Brick bearing his name at the Bank. He reminded us every summer that training camp should be in Mankato and lamented every winter that home games are indoors.

The biggest test of his loyalty came late in the 1998 season. After losing to the Falcons in overtime of the NFC Championship (as an 11-point favorite), Bruce took off his favorite Vikings sweatshirt, walked out of the house, got into his Oldsmobile, and was not seen for the next six hours. We'll never know where

he went or what he did to get the poison out.

Experiencing intense pain from a severe infection that ultimately killed him, Bruce offered these words from an emergency room bed: “Too bad I won’t see them win it all this season.”

Bruce is survived by his children, Jacob (Amee) Kurtz of Storm Lake, Nicholas (Amanda) Kurtz of Los Angeles, Calif., and Veronica (Austin) Kurtz of Des Moines, Iowa; grandchildren Crosby (10), Gabriel (8), and Elizabeth (5); brothers Gary Kurtz and Mark (Cindy) Kurtz, and sisters Brenda Stickling and Vicki (Stan) Steensma, all of Luverne; and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, sister Paula Kurtz, sister-in-law Tami Kurtz, and brother-in-law Perry Stickling.

Bruce’s final request was for his ashes to be spread at the Blue Mounds quarry.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Bruce Kurtz.*



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2 hours ago



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Bruce Kurtz.

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