

In sickness, in health, Ray Bostrom was full of spirit

■ Longtime GF
businessman
dies at 70

By **Chuck Klosterman**
Herald Staff Writer

If musician-businessman Raymond Bostrom's life had been a musical, critics would have called it a triumph of the human spirit. Bostrom saw success, compassion and tragedy over his seven-decade lifespan, and the only thing that never changed was his unquenchable desire to better himself and help others.

Raymond A. Bostrom died at home Saturday. He was 70.

The son of Edwin and Hazel Bostrom, he was born Aug. 7, 1923, attended Grand Forks Central High School and spent two

years in the U.S. Navy. He returned to Grand Forks in 1944 and picked up his degree from UND. He soon took command of the family business with the Grand Forks Coca-Cola Bottling Company, serving as president of the North Dakota and South Dakota Bottlers Association.

But success in the world of business was not enough for Bostrom. He also pursued his love of music, playing in the Grand Forks city band. Fellow band member and former East Grand Forks music instructor Wallace Selmanson remembers Bostrom as a peerless musician.

"He was the best bass player Grand Forks had ever seen," Selmanson said. "He was always just on time for every performance with his tuba."

Bostrom also was incredibly active in the community. A lifelong sports fan, he was chosen president of the YMCA Family Center in 1974 as well as being elected to the UND Athletic Hall of Fame (he also had a tryout with the NFL's Baltimore Colts). He coordinated workshops to fight drug abuse through the Kiwanis Club and played a critical role in the local Salvation Army effort. In 1973 he was awarded the Sertoma Club Service to Mankind Award, and in 1976, he was elected president of the Grand Forks County Historical Society.

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SERVICES

■ **Services:** 1 p.m. Tuesday in First Presbyterian Church, Grand Forks.

■ **Visitation:** 5 to 7 p.m. Monday in Amundson Funeral Home, and one hour before services in the church.

■ **Burial:** Memorial Park Cemetery.

The civic leader was also a big supporter of the Grand Forks arts scene. Longtime Fire Hall Theater actor Bill Gard felt that Bostrom's enthusiasm and generosity was an essential element in keeping drama alive in the community.

"Originally, we didn't even have a theater, and he loaned us his Coke trucks to get our stuff from place to place," Gard said. "I've never seen so much energy. He could just step into a situation and take over."

But none of those activities and pursuits could have prepared Bostrom for the shackling disorder that would overcome his body in 1987. When he and his wife, Shirley, returned from the Coca-Cola centennial celebration in Atlanta, Bostrom suddenly felt ill. He had a urinary tract infection, which led to prostate surgery. He slowly grew sicker and sicker, eventually becoming debilitated by a bizarre neuromuscular illness that left him unable to move or control his speech.

It would have been easy for Bostrom to simply give up on life when his body seemed to give up on him. But he pushed onward and began the rehabilitation process as soon as possible.

"We never even considered a nursing home," Shirley Bostrom said in a 1992 interview. "They sent him home to die. They gave him two months at most. But I never believed it. Ray has always been a very determined person."

Although Ray Bostrom's body never returned to the man of his youth, his spirit never left. His legacy in Grand Forks will last even longer.

He is survived by his wife; son, Bo, and daughters, Barbara (Mrs. Paul) Nistler and Susan Bostrom, all of Grand Forks; brother, Don-