



Arizona Chili Icon Benjamin Michael 'Ben' Berry - 1943-2011

Benjamin Michael Berry, 67, of Sierra Vista, Arizona passed away on Monday, April 4, at University Medical Center in Tucson after a short illness.

Ben Berry was born Dec. 12, 1943, in Hamilton, Ohio. His family moved to Chicago where Ben attended elementary school and Mount Carmel Catholic High School. He also spent a year attending college in St. Cloud, Minn.

In 1962, Ben married Sharon White and they had three children. After operating his father's roofing business, and then serving eight years as a policeman in Chicago, the family moved to Hereford, Ariz. in 1978.

Ben received his real estate license in 1979 and later became a real estate broker working at Fort Realty, Jim Wardle Realty, and later self-employed as Ben Berry, Broker, specializing in property management. Ben married his wife, Trudy, in 1984, and they were the owners of Nick's Place from 1985 to 2005. He was very proud of originating such events as the Nicksville Christmas Parade, the Nicksville Mayor Election, the Ms. Nicksville Pageant and special pool tournaments.

Ben was a member of the High Desert Chili Pod and served as Great Pepper for several years. His pleasure was cooking chili, raising money for charity and scholarships, and enjoying the camaraderie of his many friends from all over the state and the country. Ben has also maintained his friendships with his Chicago friends over his lifetime and the "Bullheads, Unlimited" fishing club will miss his participation in the trips to Long Lake, Wis. every May and September.

A member of the Republican Party and active in politics, Ben ran for constable in Sierra Vista in 1994. He was also a strong supporter of his wife's career and a beneficial part of her campaign. Ben Berry was a loyal member of the Elk's Lodge #2065 and prided himself in his lifelong membership since the age of 21. Ben served as the chairman for the Sierra Vista Elk's Oktoberfest event for the past two years and enjoyed participating in the Elk's activities.

Ben is preceded in death by his father, Ben Berry; his mother, Margaret McGuire Berry; and brother William Berry. He is survived by his wife, Trudy; son, Ben (Cindy) of Hereford; son, Christopher of Phoenix; daughter, Colleen of Phoenix; and five grandchildren including Summer Berry of Hereford; sisters Jonna Torres of Longmont, Colo.; Gail Fitman of Evergreen Park, Ill.; Maureen Giacomini (Dino) of Sierra Vista, Peggy Berry of New Berlin, Wis.; brothers, Dan Berry (Darlene) of Sierra Vista and Brian Berry of Hereford; and many nephews, nieces, and cousins.

Ben has been cremated and funeral services will be held Friday, April 15, at 2:30 p.m. at the Windemere Hotel and Conference Center in Sierra Vista, Ariz. Donations can be made in Ben's honor to the High Desert Chili Pod Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 584, Sierra Vista, AZ 85636.