

William "Billy" G. Parker, 64, lost his fight with cancer Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2010 with his mother, his brother and his family and friends by his side, at home, the way he wanted. By any measure, it was a remarkable fight, by a remarkable fighter. It has been a nine-year battle against an enemy which would have overwhelmed anyone else a long time ago. But Bill never gave an inch. He fought, and endured, and went on. But that's Bill. He fought to save lives all his life. What he put himself through in the past few years with experimental treatment and surgery will continue to be his legacy, saving more lives into the future. He advanced the science, using his body as the lab. He was born in Lewiston, Maine, Dec. 19, 1945, the son of John T. and Beatrice (Ricker) Parker. On Dec. 13, 1977, he married Christine Leach, who predeceased him in January 2008. He was predeceased by his father, John Parker, in May, 1996, and a nephew, John T. Parker, in September 1986. He is survived by his mother, Betty Parker of Canterbury Inn, St. Johnsbury; a daughter, Meloney Parker of Massachusetts, whom he dearly loved; and a brother, Michael Parker and wife Judy of North Danville; nieces and nephews; and a legion of friends, co-workers and neighbors. He always wanted to be a firefighter. His mom tells of him riding the fire trucks as a teenager during summers in Maine helping the department burn off farm fields. The family moved to St. Johnsbury in 1959, and he graduated in 1964 from St. Johnsbury Academy, where he was elected to student council and many other student clubs. While he was still in school, he went to work for the St. Johnsbury Fire Department. He was drafted, and served his nation in the U.S. Army, in Vietnam from 1965-67. When he was done serving his country, he came back to the fire department to continue to serve his community. He started as a call fireman, rose to assistant chief, and upon retirement in 1996 became acting chief of SJFD. He spent 30 years working for us, to keep us and our homes and businesses safe. No one counted the number of lives he saved. In 1981, when the gas plant on South Main Street caught fire and the big gas tanks were getting hot, Billy Parker climbed to the top of the tank, and turned the valves that shut the gas off. In doing so, he prevented an explosion that could have leveled half of St. Johnsbury. He was proud of the certificate of recognition and gratitude signed by the board of selectmen and the certificate of thanks from the St. Johnsbury Kiwanis Club, recognizing his heroism. And on his

off days, Bill managed the paint department at Mayo's Decorating. The walls of many of the houses in St. J, inside and out, bear the colors he mixed. But 30 years of public service wasn't enough for him. He wanted to do more. The 24/7 bug was in his veins, and he started working the ambulance crew, at CALEX. Still he wanted to do more, so at age 50-plus he went back to school, and graduated with high honors as a paramedic from New Hampshire Technical Institute, as then the oldest person graduated in that field. At NHTI he was president of the Paramedic Student Organization, and a peer tutor, while he was working for both CALEX and Littleton Hospital. He received the Cheryl Kellogg award, the David Turner Award, and the Leadership team award at NHTI. He was a nationally registered paramedic, a member of the American Legion, the Kiwanis Club of St. Johnsbury, and a member of the EMS board of directors. For 10 years, he administered the Santa Fund. He was a member of Phi Kappa Theta National Honor Society. He worked for CALEX, for Lyndon Rescue, for Littleton hospital, and for Upper Valley ambulance. Again, no one counted the number of lives he saved, the suffering he eased, and the pain he relieved. He didn't count them. He just went back in - to the fire, to the wreck, to the apartment where someone was hurt and in trouble and needed the expert kindness of a stranger. And more than once, off duty, he beat both the ambulance crew and the fire department to the aid of a fallen senior. Everyone who knew him knew that if you wanted someone covering your back, the best person you could have was Billy Parker. You could count on him. He was a strong supporter of the Relay for Life, and proudly participated every year. In lieu of flowers, it was his wish contributions be made to CALEX, or to the Gene McDonough Scholarship fund. A gathering of friends and family will be held in his honor on Saturday, Aug. 28, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Sayles Funeral Home. He will be buried with military honors Monday at 11 a.m. at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. His neighbor, NVRH Chaplain Lynn Burgess, will officiate. Fire department and ambulance groups are encouraged to attend, as well as others who wish.