

Grafton loses valued community member

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GRAFTON — A fixture in the community for more than 30 years, Reverend Gordon Ficko died last week at the age of 93.

Born in Ladysmith, QC., Ficko came to Grafton in the 1970s for a posting at St. Andrew's United Church. It was his last active charge as a minister, and he opted to buy his own home in Grafton, which provided him in retirement with a home and a community and a place to pursue his ideal of the Christian life.

Before that, however, he and his wife Helen raised sons David, Don, Greg and Jim in four-year stints in a number of places. Son David recalled how he and his brother were allowed to name their younger brother and, when their parents brought him home, greeted the baby with cries of, "Welcome home, Elvis Presley Ficko!"

Ficko served at St. Andrew's for a number of years and, in retirement, went on to serve at the Alderville United Church.

"He was here when we celebrated its 150th anniversary. We have pictures of him and his wife in an old horse-drawn carriage in the parade," Chief James Marsden said.

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Ficko lost his wife not long after they celebrated their 50th anniversary, but he still had much to keep him busy.

He remained active at St. Andrew's for example. He was a choir member at one time, and always seemed to be on at least one committee.

"He totally gave himself to the community. I don't think many of us know all the lives he touched," St. Andrew's minister

David Lander declared.

It was obvious to Lander that he strived to do what Jesus would have done, living a life that not many could. From dropping off a quart of berries on someone's porch anonymously to taking people who had nowhere else to go into his home, Ficko worked quietly and never sought recognition.

"Even though most of us are very concerned about justice and helping one another, he took it to the nth degree," Lander said.

He was a very devoted member of Amnesty-International, for example, earning a plaque from that organization recognizing his service.

He was also a member of the Grafton Horticultural Society, reflecting his love of gardening.

He even used that pursuit to contribute to the community, often donating proceeds from the berries he sold to St. Andrew's.

In his last years, after he sold his house and moved to a smaller one on County Road 2, he set up a little vegetable stand on the highway (if he couldn't be there, he set out the vegetables for purchasers to pick up and pay for on the honour system).

"He was a bit of a miracle in that, for 93, he defied his age. He was still pretty sharp generally, and physically — he was still cutting wood, which I don't think many of us expect to do at that age," Lander said.

Ficko is survived by sons David, Don and Greg, as well as grandchildren Aaron, Brennan, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Alina and Cody. He is also survived by brother Kenneth and sister Verna Clarkson.

His memorial service will take place Thursday at 11 a.m. at St. Andrew's in Grafton, with visitation tonight from 7 to 9 p.m. at MacCoubrey's Funeral Home in Cobourg.

In lieu of flowers, those wishing to make a memorial donation are invited to support Amnesty International.



FIRE BREAKS OUT IN RENO HOUSE



PETE FISHER Northumberland Today

The Cramahe Township Fire Department was on the scene of a fire in a house that was under renovations early Tuesday morning. The call came in around 8 a.m. and upon arrival, flames were coming from the residence located at 220 on County Road 31 in Lakeport. The Brighton Fire Department was called in to assist. The house was heavily damaged by smoke and Fire Chief Brandon Northrup said it appears the origin of the fire was electrical.

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