



Dennis E. Van Alst MD

February 25, 1933 - April 21, 2025

Dennis E. Van Alst, MD passed away April 19, 2025 in Kalamazoo MI at the age of 92, after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. He faced its progression with grace, strength, positivity and a steadfast determination to continue enjoying life's pleasures.

Dr. Van Alst was a private and gentle soul who found satisfaction and purpose as a family doctor in Cadillac, Michigan. He perceived his profession as both a privilege and a calling and practiced medicine with passion and optimism for 34 years, the longest tenure of any physician at Medical Arts, providing care for some families through five generations. His patients valued his wisdom, compassion and thoughtful care. His co-workers and colleagues appreciated his constancy, humility and the genuine "thank you" he offered at the end of each day. On retirement at age 62, he asserted that his plan was to "cultivate, cogitate and circumnavigate", but he returned to assist in surgery until the remarkable age of 82.

Beyond his medical practice, he proudly served in the U.S. Air Force and was involved in his community offering quiet yet impactful service. He could be found, neatly dressed, in committee meetings or, more often in surgical scrubs and a headband, picking up litter along the streets in the city he loved. He was a humble man who never sought recognition for his efforts as he believed that success was earned through hard work, self-discipline, dedication and

persistence, values he handed down to his family.

Dennis was a soft-spoken man who seldom raised his voice, but was known for his wit and the puns he so enjoyed. Fortuitously, his sense of humor remained until the end. He found joy in lively family celebrations and hands-on participation building and renovating homes for himself, his children and grandchildren. He loved to travel, read, play his black shiny piano and ask questions. Visitors to his home knew they would be part of inquisitive discussions that often included more information than most were prepared to absorb. He was a logophile and a grammarian who encouraged us to know and correctly use common and unusual language, often highlighting a “word for the day”. In his 92 years he taught much to those who listened.

The community has lost a dutiful man who was committed to his profession. His family has lost a man of unwavering love, honesty and great faith. His memory will live on in the hearts of his family whom he loved beyond measure: his devoted wife of 51 years, Becky; his cherished children: Ann (Steve Heller) Neyer, Ed (Julie) Van Alst, Andy (Carrie Van Natter) Van Alst, Audrey (Barry Tufford) Van Alst, and Matt (Kathleen) Van Alst; his beloved grandchildren Natalie (Rick) Schild, Kurtis (Brooke) Van Alst, AJ Van Alst, Kassie (Ryan) Hearth, Lizzie (Skyler) Nelson, Marissa (Ryan) Pendrick, Holly Smith, Katie (Frank) Fisher, Ryan (Jaime) Boyer and his precious great-grandchildren, Margot and Eleanor Hearth, Archie Nelson and Kemper Pendrick. We will remember him as a man who lived his life with resilience, humor, and hope.

Everyday without fail, even after Parkinson’s had reduced his voice to a whisper, he wished us “good morning “ and “good night”. Dennis, Dad, Grandpa, Papa, we lovingly bid you our final “good night”.

The family invites you to honor his life and his faith during a memorial mass

11:00 AM, Friday, April 25, 2025 at St Ann Catholic Church in Cadillac with Rev. Fr. Michael Janowski as celebrant. Family may be visited one hour prior to the service at church. Interment will be at Maple Hill in Cadillac.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the Cadillac Area Community Foundation. An online guestbook is available at www.petersonfh.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Mass

APR **25**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Ann Catholic Church
800 W 13th St
Cadillac, MI 49601-9281
(231) 775-2471

Tribute Wall



“ *prayers sent.*

Ed Mckinley - April 26, 2025 at 09:28 AM



“ *Dear Van Alst family, I knew your dad for over 60 years. He was our family physician. He was a great doctor with great compassion and medical advice for all of us. He saved my life when I was 4 years old. He was the one who determined that I had natural immune deficiencies and put my on a shot. I am forever grateful to your dad. He also is the one who caught my dad's heart problems in 1977. So, in essence. he saved his life as well. God Bless you at this time of loss.*

Ken Zergoski - April 25, 2025 at 06:49 PM



“ *Dr VanAlst, Becky and Matt lived next door to us for about 10 years. Many fond memories of the time. They were great neighbors and physician to our family.*

mary bellows - April 25, 2025 at 10:48 AM



“ *Patti Jones purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Dennis E. Van Alst MD.*



Patti Jones - April 24, 2025 at 09:53 AM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Dennis E. Van Alst MD.*



April 23, 2025 at 02:25 PM



“ *Dr VanAlst was our family Dr for years, he was a wonderful man and took good care of our family for years, he delivered me and 20 years later my son. My sympathies to your family.*

Daphne Sundell - April 22, 2025 at 06:48 PM



Thank you for sharing. Dennis always felt that the joy of being a family Dr was the opportunity to deliver the babies of babies he had delivered years earlier.

Becky VanAlst - April 22, 2025 at 08:01 PM



“ *Dr. Van Alst was a great family doctor to me and my wife many years while living in Cadillac. I will always remember my visits to his office.*

Marland Ream - April 22, 2025 at 09:26 AM



“ *One kind, caring soul. He always had time for me, a person who I enjoyed chatting with. R.I.P. Dennis.*

Daniel Brooks - April 22, 2025 at 08:06 AM

PL

“ I remember Dennis as a quiet soul. For me, as a young child, he was very precise. He had a confident carriage and being. He seemed somewhat formal, which as a kid was a little scary. He stood like a service man would, proud to be in his own skin. I do remember him playing the piano with gusto as I look back. My mother and mother to Patsy and our dad, Dee Dee, Mike and I made a yearly excursion to Cadillac and we played with the Van Alst kids well into the darkness of summer evenings. My siblings and I hiked to the grocer at the end of the street , scouring the floor for loose change. We pilfered the dial phone, in its booth, for left behind dimes. Any profits were spent at the long-gone candy store, walking home slowly to savor our treats.

I remember having an early morning breakfast, some years ago and Dennis sharing stories about working in the Orthopedic area of the hospital. He wasn't so scary to talk to as a grownup. Some of my fondest memories are of those summers in Cadillac. The difficulty of losing anyone, especially a parent, will take time for healing. I am sending all my love and prayers. Pam (Ptaszek) Louis.

Pam (Ptaszek) Louis - April 21, 2025 at 05:23 PM

CC

“ Dennis was such a kind and sweet man. We loved seeing him sitting on his porch reading in the sun. We were so glad his wish to go to Florida came true... rest peacefully Dennis, we will listen for your piano playing in heaven.

cheryl cavanaugh - April 21, 2025 at 02:01 PM

DT

Many Many days of traveling together-- lots! Always soo much fun - exciting places - some 'interesting' experiences- be it on land or in the air- met each other traveling to many a far and FUN places. Send our love and many thoughts of us all being together -Thinking of all of you!
Donna & Tack (Takacs)

Donna Takacs - April 22, 2025 at 08:03 PM

KM

Dennis, you and I have many memories together. You assisted me in many surgical procedures during the years until I retired in 1995. And I see you continued long after I left. My condolences go out to Becky and your children. RIP Kenneth A Kleyn MDp

Kenneth Kleyn MD - April 23, 2025 at 01:41 PM

DF

Again our condolences to all - Dennis was special man - loved his family and a goood friend Willl be missed! Donna & Tack

Donna Takacs & Frank - April 30, 2025 at 08:02 PM