

In Memoriam

Robert Van Houten

December 25, 1943 - September 1, 2026

Robert "Bob" Charles Van Houten, 82, of Summerset, South Dakota, passed away on September 1, 2026. Born in Sioux Falls on Christmas Day in 1943 to Ellsworth Dennis Van Houten and Clara Ovida Velure (1916–1944), Bob was lovingly raised by Erma (Van Houten) Harmon (1919–1984), the mother who cherished him as her own.

Bob's lifelong dedication to hard work began at a remarkably young age. He had a paper route at age 9, and by age 10, he was already operating heavy equipment. For decades, he poured that same tireless passion into his career. Alongside his close cousin and business partner, Steve Van Houten, he owned and operated Rapid Construction from 1972 until his final days, remaining deeply devoted to the industry he loved—collecting not just Caterpillar toys, but the big ones, too.

Outside of work, Bob lived a full and vibrant life. He loved a good conversation, sharing a laugh, fishing, rock hunting, biking, horseback riding, ice skating, and was even a phenomenal bowler. Whether he was enjoying a home-cooked meal or losing himself in a classic Western—especially those starring his favorite actor, Clint Eastwood—he appreciated the simple, good things in life.

Above all else, Bob treasured his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and his family. He was a truly wonderful father who always made time to listen, talk, and guide his children with patience and love. He delighted in spending time with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, always carrying a playful twinkle in his eye and ready with a sweet candy surprise or a clever trick.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, William (Bill) Van Houten; and his two nephews, Nathan Sayre (1974–1992) and Matthew Van Houten (1979–2009).

Surviving Family Members & Loved Ones: Sister: Debra Van Houten (Lewis Worcester, died 2009): Nieces & Nephews: Clarity Sayre (Ryan Barrett) and her daughter Kiah Sayre, Jillian Sayre (Jim Brown) and their son, Linus Brown-Sayre, Alexis (Matt) Aust and their sons, Asher and Rowan Aust, Cicily Corder (daughter of Nathan Sayre): Close Cousin & Business Partner Steve (Sheri) Van Houten: Children & Their Families: Robert (Sally) Crane and their children Joshua, Amy, and Nick Crane, Renee (Jonah Rice) Crane, Holly Edwards and her son Joshua (Katy) Edwards—who held a rare and cherished place as Robert's grandson, son, and lifelong best friend—along with their children Avery, McKenzie, and Landon Edwards, Dana Wachendorf and her daughters: Mandy (Chris) Fuhs and her son Noah Rasmussen, and Katelyn (Garrett) Amirehteshami Nicole (Chris) Drew and their sons Dillon and Jesse Drew: and Beloved Friend & Mother of Holly, Dana, and Nicole: Lola (Andy) Duda.

God bless all the many friends and family who played a part in his 82 years of wonderful memories. He was deeply loved and will be deeply missed.

Visitation will be held Saturday, September 19, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at Crossroads Wesleyan Church in Rapid City, with services to begin at 11:00 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Burial will take place at Fairburn Cemetery later that day. <https://www.osheimschmidt.com/obituaries/robert-van-houten>

