

**G**erald John Van Der Vliet was born on a farm northeast of Colton on October 6, 1931, to Evert and Wilhelmina (Van Hunnik) Van Der Vliet. He passed away peacefully at his home surrounded by his family on Saturday, May 9, 2026. He attended Washington Country School in Buffalo Township. After his schooling he worked for many area famers until he was drafted into the United States Army in 1952. Following his honorable discharge, he married his sweetheart, Ethel Berdyne Visser on September 7, 1954, at the Christian Reformed Church in Colton. They lived for six months with Ethel's parents until the Van Der Vliet farm was available in March. They lived on the farm for 40 years and raised their family. They moved into Colton in 1995, where Gerald lived until his death.

Gerald spent most of his life farming in the Colton area. He drove feed truck for Colton Feed Service, and he also drove bus for 20 years for Foreman Bus at Tri-Valley School where he picked up many of his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Gerald, along with Ethel, were custodians and door keepers at Taopi Hall for 23 years. Gerald also served his community on the Colton Cemetery Board and Colton Community Housing. He was a lifelong member of the Faith Community Church in Colton where he served as a deacon, and he enjoyed his old time gospel music.

Gerald and Ethel always took time for family vacations. Their favorite place to go was to the Black Hills of South Dakota. They made numerous trips there over the years and even made one last trip one year ago last June. But his favorite trip was when they drove to Alaska.

In retirement in Colton, they loved their yard at home where they would watch and feed the birds and enjoy nature. They also enjoyed going out for breakfast or noon lunches at the Chester Café. But most of all, Gerald's family was the most important thing in his life...especially his wife, Ethel. He always said he had the best wife (who also was a great farm wife). He always enjoyed coffee time after Sunday morning services where 25-30 of his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great great grandchildren would gather.

Survivors include his wife of 71 years, Ethel of Colton; children: Rod (Lois) Van Der Vliet, Colton, Rhonda DeJong, Hartford, Mark (Kay) Van Der Vliet, Colton, Paul (Pam) Van Der Vliet, Ward, Debbie (Brian) Helwig, Upton, Wyoming, and Dave (Kelli) Van Der Vliet, Colton, 21 grandchildren, 42 great grandchildren (and one on the way), and four great great grandchildren (and one on the way); he was also survived by his sister-in-law, Bernice Wrage, Dell Rapids, and two bonus grandchildren, Quinn and Maverick Bunde; and many nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, in-laws Weep and Alice Visser, two grandchildren, Justin Jay and Camie Jo Van Der Vliet, a great granddaughter, Emma L. Jellis; brother, Harold (Betty) Van Der Vliet and sisters, Tena (Hank) Burgers and Marie (Frank J.) Reurink.

The family would like to give special thanks to Avera Home Hospice Care team for all the love and kindness shown to Gerald and his family.

# *In Memory Of* **Gerald Van Der Vliet**

October 6, 1931 † May 9, 2026

## **Funeral Service**

10:30 AM

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Faith Community Church

Colton, South Dakota

Pastor Sam Gesch, Officiating

Wanda Vanda Vooren, Organist

## **Solo**

“One Day At A Time”

Wanda Vanda Vooren

## **Congregational Hymns**

“When the Roll is Called Up Yonder”

“Does Jesus Care?”

“Old Rugged Cross”

“How Great Thou Art”

## **Honorary Pallbearers**

Gerald's Granddaughters, Great Grandchildren,  
and Great Great Grandchildren

## **Pallbearers**

Ryan Van Der Vliet

Randy DeJong

Clint Van Der Vliet

Jeff Helwig

Shane Van Der Vliet

Levi Van Der Vliet

Clay Van Der Vliet

Danny Helwig

John Cody

## **Interment**

Colton Cemetery

Colton, South Dakota

## **Military Honors**

SD Army National Guard



## **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

*The family of Gerald Van Der Vliet thanks you for your presence and support. They invite you to refreshments and fellowship at Taopi Hall following the committal service.*



# *A Life Remembered*

## **Gerald Van Der Vliet**

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