



In Loving Memory of

Melvin James Petrak

March 6, 1952 ~ August 9, 2025

Scripture Services

St. James Catholic Church, Chamberlain, SD
7:00 p.m., Wednesday, August 13, 2025
Deacon Jim Bregel ~ Officiating

Funeral Service

St. James Catholic Church
Chamberlain, SD
10:00 a.m., Thursday, August 14, 2025

Officiating

Father Christianus Hendrik SCJ
Deacon Maurice Barrett

Music

Mel Hargens ~ Pianist
Matt Schroeder ~ Cantor
St. James Choir

Casketbearers

DN Mesa
Chris Hopkins
Matt Bunker
Brandon Overweg

Tiernan Creamer
Dylan Hopkins
Tre' Antelope
Chase Hopkins

Interment

Riverview Cemetery
Chamberlain, SD

Family invites everyone for lunch and fellowship in the church community center following the committal services.

Arrangements By: *Hickey Funeral Home, Chamberlain, SD*

Gone Riding

Don't cry for me, I still ride free,
With the wind upon my face,
Leather in black, the sun on my back,
A priceless gift of God's grace.

I'll never grow old, on these streets of gold,
Chasing a majestic sunset,
And I still recall, how I love you all,
Sweet memories I won't forget.

And when your road ends, we'll meet again,
Inside the Pearly Gates,
And we'll laugh awhile and go ride for miles,
But for now, Heaven can wait.

When you do get here, don't shed one tear,
And think that I'm in hiding,
Just search Heaven's shore, where engines roar,
And you'll find that I've gone riding.



Melvin “Mel” James Petrak, 73, of Chamberlain, South Dakota, passed away on August 9, 2025, at Avera Queen of Peace Hospital, surrounded by his family.

Mel was born on March 6, 1952, in Mitchell, South Dakota, to Anton and Viola (Kolb) Petrak. He grew up on a farm near Pukwana, attending Pretzer School near Chamberlain for grade school and graduating from

Chamberlain High School in 1970.

A lifelong lover of all things automotive, Mel began his career as a mechanic in May 1970 at Verschoor Motor/Cle-Kal’s Chevrolet. In 1981, he joined Don’s Ford, and in 2001, he fulfilled a dream by opening his own shop—Mel’s Service. For 17 years, he owned and operated the garage, fixing cars for anyone in need, until retiring from the business in 2018.

On October 3, 1987, Mel married Janet Hopkins at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church in Pukwana. They were blessed with two daughters, Jenna in 1989 and Harlie in 1997. Mel loved being a “girl dad” and never missed a chance to support his daughters, often driving across the state to cheer them on.

On April 22, 2000, Mel was baptized and confirmed into St. James Catholic Church in Chamberlain.

Mel spent much of his free time restoring old cars and helping friends with their street rods. He proudly owned a 1937 Ford 2-Door Sedan, taking it to numerous car shows and Rod Runs across the Midwest. He was an active member of the South Dakota Street Rod Association, even hosting car shows in Chamberlain for many years.

A motorcycle enthusiast, Mel had a special love for Harley-Davidsons and spent every August at the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally with his family.

Later in life, Mel worked at the Chamberlain Rest Area, handling groundskeeping, mowing, and cleaning—but most importantly, visiting with travelers and offering directions when needed.

After retiring in 2024, Mel enjoyed time with his beloved dog, Duke, often taking him for drives and relaxing at home watching the Game Show Network, the Western Channel, or Perry Mason. He was a dedicated Minnesota Vikings fan, faithfully cheering (and occasionally yelling) at the TV each season.

Mel loved being “Grandpa” to his two grandsons, Briggs and Liam, attending their t-ball and baseball games, taking them to feed the geese, and giving them scooter rides.

Mel is survived by his wife of 37 years, Janet of Chamberlain; daughters, Jenna (Brian) Reis of Plankinton and Harlie Petrak (Dustin Poss) of Pierre; grandsons, Briggs and Liam Reis; sister, Dianna Bondurant of Walla Walla, Washington; brother, Bob Petrak of Chamberlain; and mother-in-law, Florence Hopkins of Pukwana. He is also survived by brothers- and sisters-in-law Debi (Dustin) Kourt of Chamberlain, Rick (Penny) Hopkins of Pukwana, Chuck (Rochelle) Hopkins of Chamberlain, Bonnie (Ron) Luurs of Pukwana, Shelly (Larry) Overweg of Kimball, Rita (Brad) Karlen of Reliance, Danita Hopkins (Adam Deiterman) of Chamberlain, Paula (Gene) Creamer of Dorchester, NE, Ron (Dawn) Hopkins of Pukwana, and Tommy Hopkins of Chamberlain; many nieces, nephews, and cousins; and countless good friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Anton and Viola Petrak; sister, Barb Carrera; father-in-law, Everett Hopkins Jr.; brothers-in-law, Richard Bondurant, Jesus Carrera, Billy Ruiz, and Jim Bunker; nephews, Derek Hopkins and Ethen Hopkins; and several dear friends.

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