

*Thank you for your many kindnesses
evidenced in thought, word and
deed, and for your attendance.*

The family of Ray Waldner



In Loving Memory



Edward Ray Waldner

November 26, 1944

—
June 1, 2026

Prayer Service

Saturday, June 6, 2026

5:30 PM

Kuhler Funeral Home
Huron, South Dakota

Officiant

Rev. Steve Behrens

Music

If Tomorrow Never Comes
by Garth Brooks

*Please join Ray's family for a
time of fellowship following
the prayer service this evening.*

*They are gathering at
715 Beach Avenue NE, Huron.*

Kuhler
Funeral Home

1360 Dakota Avenue South
Huron, South Dakota 57350
605-352-4234
www.kuhlerfuneralhome.com



Edward Ray Waldner was born on November 26, 1944, to Edward T. and Velma (Wipf) Waldner in Huron, South Dakota. He spent his early childhood in Frankfort, South Dakota, until the age of six, when his family moved to the farmstead

located six miles east of Hitchcock. Ray attended Saugstad School and Marshall School before continuing his education at Hitchcock School, where he graduated in 1963.

Following graduation, Ray proudly served his country in the United States Navy and was honorably discharged in 1964.

On January 10, 1970, Ray was united in marriage to Rita Mae Rathjen. Together they built a life rooted in family, hard work, and service to their community. They were blessed with three children: Eileen “Dode” Waldner, Jeannie Shultz, and Jeffrey “Bunk” Waldner.



Ray dedicated much of his life to serving the Hitchcock community. He served as Supervisor of Pleasant View Township, Commander of Hitchcock Legion Post 84, and was a member of the Hitchcock Town Board for 38 years, including 15 years as Mayor of Hitchcock before retiring in 2019 due to health concerns. He was a member of Hitchcock Methodist Church, served 30 years with the Hitchcock Fire Department, was a 52-year member of the Huron Elks, and a member of the 40/8 organization in Watertown.

Ray also enjoyed participating in various area softball teams throughout the years and cherished the friendships and memories made along the way.

Ray was known for his love of hunting, fishing, morning pinochle games, buying and selling antiques, and his extensive knowledge as an avid gun collector. In 1998, they proudly opened his personal antique collection to the public and greatly enjoyed sharing stories, history, and conversation with visitors. Every item in his collection held a story, and Ray took great pride in preserving and sharing those memories with others.

Over the years, Ray worked for Jim Burke burying telephone cable throughout South Dakota. Ray and Rita also owned and operated the Hitchcock Café from 1979 to 1985. He later served as an Asgrow Seed corn dealer for 20 years while continuing to farm the land where he was raised.

Grateful to have shared in Ray’s life are his loving wife, Rita of Hitchcock; his children, Eileen “Dode” Waldner and Rod

Kretchmer of Huron, Jeannie (Darin) Shultz of Sioux Falls and Jeffrey “Bunk” (Angela) Waldner of Hitchcock; his grandchildren, Nate (Sarah Tschetter) Peterson, Jordy (Cassidy) Peterson, Shanae (Brady) LaMont, Dawson Sharp, Elexis Shultz, and Avarie, Breckan and Grady Waldner; his great-grandchildren, Walker LaMont and Jett Peterson; his sister, Sandra Blume of Redfield; along with many other cherished extended family members and friends.

Ray was preceded in death by his parents, Eddie T. and Velma Waldner; his grandparents; and his brother-in-law, Herb Blume.

Ray will be remembered for his dedication to family and community, his love of conversation and storytelling, and the countless lives he touched throughout the years.

Ray passed away surrounded by loved ones on Monday, June 1, 2026, at Huron Regional Medical Center, at the age of 81 years, 6 months and 5 days.

