



Van Curtis Elsbernd

October 29, 2024

Van Curtis Elsbernd was born on February 14, 1951 in Williston, North Dakota to Lois Elsbernd and went home to his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ on October 29, 2024 at Hospice Inpatient Care Center.

Van grew up in Crosby spending summers working on the family farm and winters fighting off the harsh cold in North Dakota. Van met the love of his life, Wanna when they were 15 in high school. After high school, Van and Wannie headed to Bottineau to attend college where a year later in 1970, they got married. Van finished his degree, a Bachelor of Science in Forestry, in Missoula, MT and moved to Dickenson, ND to start his career in the Forest Service. Van and Wannie had two girls, Angie and Tessa, and moved to various places around the U.S. Van worked for the Forest Service for 33 years and after retirement he continued working as a consultant helping ranchers. He loved working and worked until his very last day.

Van was dedicated to providing for his family and loving his grandchildren. He loved giving his time and volunteered for 17 years at Fort Collins High School coaching track. His other hobbies included hunting, fishing, buying guns, building guns and reloading bullets. He loved watching his grandkids play soccer and golf and watching football on Sundays. Van loved making people laugh and fought cancer for six years with a smile on his face.

He was preceded in death by his mother Lois, father Earl, brother Russel, and brother David.

Van is survived by his wife Wanna, daughter Angie, daughter Tessa, son-in-law Chris, brother Steve, sister Pam, grandchildren Evan, Hannah, Payton, Raegan, Colten, and Broxton.

A memorial service will be held in Van's honor on November 11, at 11:00am at Timberline Church in Fort Collins. In lieu of flowers please make donations to Pathways Inpatient Care Center of Northern Colorado, (<https://pathways-care.org/give-now/>) 317 Carpenter Rd. (<https://pathways-care.org/ways-to-give/>)

Previous Events

Memorial Service

NOV 11. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (MT)

Timberline Church - Fort Collins Main Campus
2908 S Timberline Road
Fort Collins, CO 80525

Tribute Wall

“ Dearest Van:

I cannot think that you are gone from us. I know where you are, and I know we'll meet again by and by. I started to send you an update Friday, but I realized there would be no one to read it. It's okay.

Those of us who remain will carry on, and it will never be the same: It'll be better because we had you to mentor, support, and teach us. Your knowledge of range science and administration and your ability to manage people in intense conflicts was legendary.

We met again by various paths after we both retired and started businesses. You asked to buy in to mine as a partner and you were a wonderful mentor. The best part was traveling with you and interacting with clients. You ordered two eggs over hard with dry toast every morning. Your stories of the hunt and your epic battles with the Forest Service were legendary. Many an executive who found themselves on the wrong side of the WO had you to thank for finding a soft landing and a life after the Outfit.

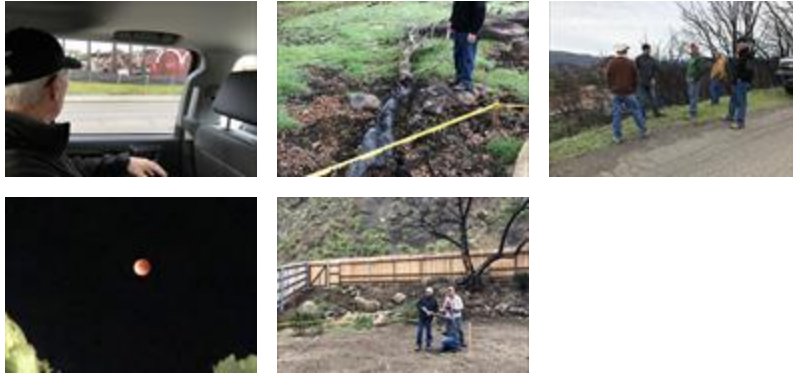
You were generous to an astonishing degree. You told me one afternoon you were building me a rifle, a Remington 7mm Mag with all the bells. When you gave me the rifle, I knew it would be the best precision weapon I would ever own. You never asked for a dime and threw in 50 rounds of custom ammo. Your reward was watching our faces as it dawned on us what you were doing. Your kids and grandkids have several of those custom rifles. You gave good advice and took advice in turn.

Audrey is delighted with the Great Plains bottle collection you gave her. You told me about Wilson Boots in Montana, and I bought two pairs. You drove your trucks until they got really old, like two years, then you bought them for fleet vehicles for your growing family. You raised your grandson. You were utterly faithful and loyal to your family and friends.

I apologize for this short letter. You know how I feel, and we were not shy about sharing our feelings with each other. It was amazing knowing you and it will be more amazing when we meet again through the Veil. Please keep a seat close for me.

*With great affection, I remain,
Very Truly Yours,*

Frank
Franklin Otis Carroll



Frank Carroll - November 10, 2024 at 08:11 PM

KS

“*Van was a classmate of mine at Crosby High School. The smile he always had on his face was a testament to his kindness, goodness and super sense of humor. My heartfelt condolences to Wannie, also a classmate of mine, and to their extended family. I am just so very sorry for your loss. God bless.*”

Kathi Sand Schacher - November 09, 2024 at 01:03 PM

GO

“ Van and I started our careers in the FS together and met up in Watford City, ND. He was the range Conservationist and I was the Forester. Van met Mary & I at the edge of town when we pulled in with our trailer and all our worldly goods. Van's first question to me was what is that green tank on top of the freezer in the back of your truck. I told him it was my oil tank that we heated our trailer with. He then told me you won't be able to us that here, because oil won't flow in the winter here. We use natural gas. Van and Wannie welcomed us to the trailer court we shared and we found out shortly what the Forest Service family was all about.

Working with Van every day, being the new kid on the block was a lot of fun. He was always willing to help me out, and share his knowledge, which in later years probably helped me save my job. He taught me that if you screw up, make sure you do not call him to help, because along with his help came the camera to record your mishap for posterity to be used at your going away party.

He and I kept up with each other over the years and then wound up on the same Forest in Colorado. Van and Wannie ended up buying a house about 3 blocks away from Mary and I and we renewed our friendship. Both of us liked to heat with wood when we could. After a couple of years gathering wood a pickup load at a time, or even in my 2 ton truck, we decided that an easier way might be to contract with a local logger to bring us a log truck load of smaller logs that we could then cut up and stack. So instead of spending all summer collecting firewood, we put up our winter supply in 2 weekends from our log pile, and we figured we probably saved a bunch of money on gas.

After Van and Wannie retired in Fort Collins we kept track of each others work and Van was able to help the ranchers we used to work with from the McKenzie County grazing association deal with the Forest Service. Van and I would commiserate over what the new FS was trying to do to subvert the original intent and law regarding management. We were both glad to have worked when we did

when the FS was a family. I will miss my talks with my adopted brother Van, but I know he is with Curt and I hope to eventually see them again!!

Gary & Mary Osier

Gary & Mary Osier - November 04, 2024 at 10:51 AM

CL

“ *Coach Van was loved by the athletes at FCHS and was a wonderful friend to all who knew him. His presence in life was a gift from God to those who knew him. Thanks for everything Van. You will be missed.*

Craig Luckasen

Craig Luckasen - November 03, 2024 at 08:15 AM