



Richard Lee Hays

May 6, 1947 - February 17, 2026

Richard (Dick) Lee Hays, 78, of Waterloo, Nebraska passed away on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at home surrounded by his loving family.

Born on May 6, 1947 in Ottumwa, Iowa, Richard was the beloved son of Charles and Minnie Hays. He grew up on a poultry farm alongside his brother Bob and sister Connie, where he developed a lifelong appreciation for family and simple living. As a youngster, he showed livestock in 4H. The family moved to Waterloo during his high school years, where he participated in football, basketball, and track, setting a long standing high hurdle record. Dick graduated from Waterloo High School in 1965.

Dick proudly served his country in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War as an Aviation Structural Mechanic with Attack Squadron 55, the "Warhorses". He was stationed aboard the aircraft carriers USS Bon Homme Richard, USS Independence, and USS Hancock. He served honorably, supporting carrier-based operations in the Western Pacific, and was honorably discharged after faithfully serving his nation. His Navy years remain a lasting source of pride for his family and a testament to a life of service.

On November 12, 1971 in Columbus, Ne, Dick married the love of his life, Janice Kunneman. Together they made their home in Waterloo, Ne where they built a life centered on faith, hard work, and family. They were blessed

with three children Kristi, Eric, and Jesse, whom Dick loved deeply and was immensely proud of. He treasured being a husband and father, leading by example with quiet guidance and unconditional love.

Following his military service, Dick began a long and steady career marked by dedication and integrity. He worked for the State of Nebraska and later continued his career with Robinson Seed Company, where he built lasting relationships and took great pride in his work. Dick was also a devoted member of the Waterloo Fire Department, serving his community for 23 years. Throughout his time with the department, he held many roles, including Fire Chief.

Dick loved the outdoors, especially hunting and fishing and some of his most treasured memories were made in a field, on the water, or at the cabin with his brother, brothers-in-law, and eventually his children and grandchildren. Whether he came home with a stringer full of fish or simply a new story to tell, those days outdoors were among his happiest.

A storyteller at heart, Dick never met a stranger. Whether gathered around a picnic table or sitting with a cold beer at the end of a long day, he had a way of turning ordinary moments into unforgettable stories. He could tell you exactly where he was, who he was with and the type of bait he was using-sometimes with more detail than the fish probably remembered. His laughter was familiar, his presence steady, and his words always worth listening to.

Above all, he was a family man. His greatest joy was the people he loved, especially his children and grandchildren. He led by example through dedication, loyalty, humor and strength. He was a hardworking man who took pride in providing for his family. If something needed fixing, hauling, or figuring out, he was the one you called- and he always showed up. He will be remembered for his generous heart, strong work ethic, love for westerns, and

the countless stories that will continue to be told in his honor.

Dick is survived by his loving wife of 54 years, Janice; his children, Kristi Mosser (Shon), Eric Hays (Corissa), and Jesse Hays; his grandchildren Chasen, Skylar, Riley, Caden, Spencer, Eli, and Maya. He is also survived by his brother Robert Hays and sister Connie Kahlandt (Warren), many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents Charles and Minnie Hays.

A visitation will be held from 1:00-2:00 on Tuesday, February 24, 2026 with a funeral service to follow at 2:00 at Reichmuth Funeral Home- 21901 W. Maple Rd. Social gathering to follow the service at R Bar-310 3rd Street in Waterloo, Ne.

The family wishes to thank the Waterloo Fire and Rescue for their care and support in Dick's final moments.

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB **24.** 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Reichmuth Funeral Home - Omaha / Elkhorn
21901 W. Maple Rd.
P.O. Box 711
Elkhorn, NE 68022
402-289-2222
services@reichmuthfuneralhomes.com
<https://www.reichmuthfuneralhomes.com/>

Funeral Service

FEB **24.** 2:00 PM (CT)

Reichmuth Funeral Home - Omaha / Elkhorn
21901 W. Maple Rd.
P.O. Box 711
Elkhorn, NE 68022
402-289-2222
services@reichmuthfuneralhomes.com
<https://www.reichmuthfuneralhomes.com/>

Tribute Wall

BC

“ Bob and Chris purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



Bob and Chris - February 24 at 11:30 AM

JE

“ Jenny E. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard Lee Hays.

Jenny E. - February 23 at 08:44 PM

DE

“ Dave, Krissy, Kortlan, Brendan, & Elisa planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard Lee Hays.

Dave, Krissy, Kortlan, Brendan, & Elisa - February 23 at 06:32 PM

DE

“ Dave, Krissy, Kortlan, Brendan, & Elisa purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



Dave, Krissy, Kortlan, Brendan, & Elisa - February 23 at 06:32 PM

DS

“ DC West Middle School purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



DC West Middle School - February 23 at 05:17 PM

TD

“ Thank you for your Naval Service Dick.



T. D. - February 22 at 09:53 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



February 22 at 09:03 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Richard Lee Hays.

February 22 at 09:03 PM

CE

“ My sympathy to all the family!

Connie Eggen - February 22 at 07:32 PM

SC

“ So many memories with Uncle Dick - from weekends at the cabin, to Christmas and Thanksgiving holiday gatherings. But some of my fondest memories of Uncle Dick are from the days I spent staying with him and Aunt Jan while working in Omaha over the summer. Each morning he'd be up early making coffee for me, and every evening after a long shift he'd be asking what cold adult beverage I wanted to have with him while we chatted about the day, and sometimes watched River Monsters together. He will be forever fondly remembered. Wishing I was not so far away and that I could be there for my family during this time. Love you all. Love you, Uncle Dick. Cheers to you.

Sara (Kunneman) Carlson - February 22 at 06:08 PM

TF

“ The McGinness Family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



The McGinness Family - February 22 at 05:33 PM

JG

“ Janice, Brad, Troy and Renae Graber purchased the Vivid Recollections for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



Janice, Brad, Troy and Renae Graber - February 22 at 05:25 PM

JG

“ Janice, Brad, Troy and Renae Graber planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard Lee Hays.

Janice, Brad, Troy and Renae Graber - February 22 at 05:25 PM

DE

“ Sending love and sympathies.



Debby - February 22 at 01:59 PM

DE

A wonderful reunion lunch. ❤️

Debby - February 22 at 02:00 PM

AG

“ Anita, Tracy, Crystal and Angela Graber purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



Anita, Tracy, Crystal and Angela Graber - February 22 at 10:59 AM

LU

“ Love, Jodee, Malley, Jenna & Serena Uglan
purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the
family of Richard Lee Hays.



Love, Jodee, Malley, Jenna & Serena Uglan - February 22 at
10:47 AM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the
family of Richard Lee Hays.



February 21 at 03:09 PM

TF

“ The Renter Family purchased the Simply Elegant
Spathiphyllum for the family of Richard Lee Hays.



The Renter Family - February 21 at 11:12 AM

TF

“ The Renter Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard Lee Hays.

The Renter Family - February 21 at 11:12 AM

TW

“ *Tom Whalen purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Richard Lee Hays.*



Tom Whalen - February 21 at 10:30 AM

LK

“ *Love, The Saffords, Marc, Aimee and kids purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Richard Lee Hays.*



Love, The Saffords, Marc, Aimee and kids - February 19 at 09:38 PM