



Alan G. Ratliff

August 16, 1946 - October 13, 2025

Alan Gene Ratliff, 79, of Lennox, South Dakota passed from this life on October 13, 2025. Alan was born on August 16, 1946, to Dean and Helen (Batien) Ratliff in Huron, South Dakota. He spent his early childhood on a farm near Carpenter before the family moved to Watertown in 1952, where he grew up. As a boy, Alan loved baseball, playing the drums, and his paper route. He graduated from Watertown High School in 1964 and went on to earn a degree in Mathematics with a minor in Physical Education from Northern State University. He later completed master's degrees in Guidance and Counseling and Secondary School Administration from the University of South Dakota.

During his first years of teaching, two major events happened in Alan's life. First and foremost, Alan understood for the first time what it meant to believe in the Lord Jesus and he placed his trust in Jesus to save him from his sins and made Him his Savior. This decision became even more important to him when he learned he was to be drafted into the army. He arrived in Vietnam the day before Thanksgiving in 1970. He served there for 13 months in the USARV Open Mess System where he worked in the supply yard.

Upon his discharge, he returned home to Watertown where he met the love of his life, Brenda VanWesten. Alan and Brenda were married on November 17, 1973. They were blessed with four children: Timothy, Rebecca, Wendy, and Heidi.

After a brief period of training to be missionaries with New Tribes Mission, Alan and Brenda made their home in Lennox, SD. At the high school, Alan taught math of all levels, computer science, coached shot put and discus, driver's ed, and led counseling groups. He eventually moved into the Athletic Director position for nine years and was Assistant Principal for thirteen years. Though he took early retirement in 2003, his love for teaching continued through long-term substitute and contract positions, including at McCrossan's Boys Ranch and in Watertown, until he fully retired in 2019.

Alan deeply loved the Lord and his family, which was evident in the ways he was involved in his kids' and grandkids' activities, his faithfulness to pray for them daily, and the years of service in his church. He loved camping, boating, and roadtrips with his wife to see the grandkids. He found joy in being generous and in talking with anyone he came into contact with. His students loved having him for a teacher because of his perfect mix of humor and seriousness.

In retirement, Alan discovered a passion for woodworking, crafting beautiful gifts for family and friends. Even as health challenges arose in his later years, he remained steadfast in reading Scripture and praying for others.

Grateful for having shared his life are his wife of 51 years, Brenda; his children: Tim (Tonya) Ratliff, Crescent, IA; Becky (Nathan) Hunter, Elk River, MN; Wendy (Chad) Hellenga, Sioux Falls, SD; and Heidi (Will) DeWitt, Freeport, FL; his twelve grandchildren: Elijah, Aliyah and Isaiah Ratliff; Daniel and Samuel Hunter; Dalton Hellenga; Morgan, Carter, Camden, Adalyn, Emmett, and Elliot DeWitt; his mother-in-law Delsie VanWesten; brother Lyle Ratliff and sister Lila (Greg) Williamson, brothers-in-law Dale (Shelli) VanWesten and Don Cooper, and many nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Dean and Helen Ratliff, brother Robert Ratliff, and father-in-law Hilbert VanWesten.

Memorial donations may be directed to the family and will go toward mission work Alan supported during his life.

Cemetery Details

Lennox Cemetery

Lennox, SD

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **24.** 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Ebenezer Presbyterian Church
305 W. 1st Avenue
Lennox, SD 57039

Funeral Service

OCT **25.** 10:00 AM (CT)

Ebenezer Presbyterian Church
305 W. 1st Avenue
Lennox, SD 57039

Livestream of Alan's service may be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgbWA3J1a8o933AxlzM3Qbg>

Tribute Wall



“ *Jarman Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Alan G. Ratliff*



Jarman Family Funeral Home - October 27, 2025 at 07:23 PM

R'

“ *A truly great teacher that touched many lives, always embracing change and the future. I remember him asking me what advice I would give to students going into college, years after I graduated and ran into him at a school event. He always made me feel like I was important and mattered, and I really enjoyed his classes. Still remember so much he taught me. I regret not running into him one more time. He will be missed.*

Randy Bies LHS '80 - October 29, 2025 at 02:32 AM

HO

“ *I was able to not only know Mr. Ratliff as my teacher, but also as my boss at the pool. I still remember having to "save" him from the bottom of the deep end, and he fought me the whole way up and kept pulling me under as that was "real life". Hugs and prayers to all of you.*

Heather Oltmanns - October 25, 2025 at 10:17 AM

NH

“ I was asking Alan for Becky's hand in marriage at a Denny's early February 2000, because that's what you do at Denny's. :) And Alan said, yes, you can marry my daughter. He asked then if we had a date picked out. I said May 26. He was like, whoa! You need to push that date back to give her more time. I agreed and later told him the date we agreed to push it back to. It was June 2nd. He didn't like that we didn't push it back enough, but we were ready by March to be married. He relented.

Nathan Hunter - October 18, 2025 at 07:51 PM

DE

“ I am thankful for the years of fellowship that I enjoyed with Alan. Alan was a good friend and I always enjoyed our discussions. We talked about many things but our best discussions concerned the Bible and spiritual matters. While many remember Alan as a great teacher, I remember him as one who always wanted to learn more about the meaning of the Word of God and its application to life. A great quality.

My sympathy and prayers to Brenda and family,

Dennis Eide

Dennis Eide - October 18, 2025 at 08:42 AM

EA

“ I remember loaning my Commodore 64 to him when I was in college. He loved it and his kids liked the games, but his wife had a different opinion of the machine. He would visit me when I sold computers for over 10 years at the office store. We talked about many things. I have remained friends with very few of my teachers, but he was definitely an influence on my way of thinking.

Erik Arlton - October 17, 2025 at 11:02 PM

BS

“ Before I got to High School, this man would every morning on my way to the elementary school stop and shake my hand and say good morning on that sidewalk next to the triangle. Later that man would be a teacher at LHS and boss during the summer at the pool. Now nearing 30 years in education, I have borrowed one of his "phrases." Any time one of my students say "um" I quickly follow with "brella." If you know you know. Absolutely one of the best.

Bob Stewart - October 16, 2025 at 03:08 PM

JK

Best teacher ever. High school geometry which included a joke of the day and regular chalk board erasers thrown at students who were ready for class to begin. Took a sincere interest in each student he taught. He also calmly interrupted a high school student car race that had gone on for quite a few laps around the old Lennox track. Had a great sense of humor and a very devoted spiritual side. A life well lived now with his Lord. Jay Klusmann

Jay Klusmann - October 16, 2025 at 08:17 PM

DF

“ Like many, my favorite teacher. Always treated everyone with kindness and respect. After high school when I'd see him he was always genuine and took time to catch up.
Great man.

Dave F - October 16, 2025 at 03:00 PM

EC

“*Finest teacher, I had in my life. Was very much a mentor to me in high school as well. Heaven became a better place today and earth just became a little bit worse for the loss of this man. But Alan, you ever earned your eternal rest... God bless you both for your faith, and for the fact that you achieved something that many people could only dream of: you made a difference in the lives of people... many people.*

Eric Christianson - October 16, 2025 at 02:37 PM

ER

“*Mr Ratliff served as a true role model for many during his long career in Lennox. As a Veteran, community leader, and educator he helped shape multiple generations through his humility and sincerity. He will be missed. Evan M. Renz, LHS '79*

EVAN M RENZ - October 16, 2025 at 08:52 AM

SF

“*I appreciated the opportunity to teach with Alan in Lennox. He was a steady and thoughtful presence in the school, respected by students and staff alike. Alan made a quiet but lasting impact. My condolences to Brenda, Tim, Becky, Wendy, Heidi, and their families.*

Scott Fossum - October 15, 2025 at 10:30 PM

JM

“*Connections with Alan from both Waubay and Lennox. Love him and his entire family. What a warm person he was. God bless the Ratliff family!*

John Mogen - October 15, 2025 at 09:37 PM

KK

“ My college roommate for three years and a great friend for 60 years you will be missed there are no words that can come vet how much I will see you again when I get called.

keith kramp - October 15, 2025 at 09:23 PM

BL

“ Certainly, and truly an outstanding teacher. Rest in peace sir and God Bless
Regards Brian Lind

Brian Lind - October 15, 2025 at 09:22 PM

BE

“ Alan had a great sense of humor and was always fun in a small or large group. Our family especially enjoyed his rendition of Rindercella. He holds a special place in our memory!

Bonnie Eide - October 15, 2025 at 05:56 PM

KB

“ One of my favorite co-workers at Lennox High School- he cared so much about staff and students! You will be missed

Krista Bruggeman - October 15, 2025 at 12:59 PM

TB

Mr. Ratliff was my computer science teacher, and I'll always remember his wonderful sense of humor and the positive connection he had with his students. He and my dad shared a love for '50s music, and I'll never forget the two of them trading their cassette tapes. He was truly a great man.

Tami Blasius - October 16, 2025 at 09:00 PM

PP

“ One of my most memorable and favorite teachers. RIP, Mr. Ratliff.
Lifting the family in prayers.

Pam Plimpton - October 14, 2025 at 10:04 PM

VI

“ We lift you up in prayer during this difficult time. Our sympathies
Brenda and family.
Love Ken and Vicky

Vicky - October 14, 2025 at 09:48 PM

DS

“ Alan always treated people with dignity and respect. He will missed.
The family has my heart felt sympathy.

David Scott - October 14, 2025 at 06:11 PM