



Robert Hayden Herndon

May 4, 1936 - April 8, 2025

Robert "Bob" Hayden Herndon, age 88, of Porterville, California, went home to be with the Lord on April 8, 2025, in Tulare, California. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, teacher, mechanic, pastor, and friend, Bob's life was a testament to faith, service, ingenuity, and unshakable love for family and community.

Born on May 4, 1936, in Cadiz, Kentucky, Bob was the eldest of eight children born to Robert Vernon Herndon and Mary Francis Herndon. His childhood was shaped by hard work and deep-rooted family values. As a young boy, he worked alongside his uncle Hayden crafting whiskey barrels for Jack Daniels and plowed tobacco fields with mule teams on his grandfather Jesse Sholer's farm. Even then, he was known for his remarkable ability to build and fix just about anything—a gift that would guide his life's path.

After his father's return from serving as a Military Police officer in the U.S. Air Force, the family relocated to San Antonio, Texas. There, Bob piloted riverboats on the scenic San Antonio River—an early sign of the strong leadership and steady hand that would define him throughout life.

At just 17, Bob enlisted in the U.S. Army and served honorably during the Korean War at Camp Casey near Seoul, Korea, later being stationed at Schofield Barracks in Honolulu, Hawaii. Upon his return to San Antonio in

1957, Bob's life changed forever when he met Juanita "Nita Jo" Ruth Reynolds through his sister Kay and brother-in-law Joe Acord. The two were married just three months later in Seguin, Texas, beginning a lifelong partnership rooted in love, faith, and deep admiration.

Bob and Nita made their home in California, first in Englewood and later in Torrance, where Bob worked as a mechanic before founding his own business, Herndon Auto Repair. It was during this time that he felt a higher calling. In 1965, during a service at Torrance Baptist Temple, Bob shared with the congregation that the Lord had called him to preach. That same year, his life was blessed with the birth of his son, Robert Hayden Herndon II.

He pursued theological studies at Pacific Coast Bible Baptist College and was eventually ordained as the Lead Pastor of MacFarland Bible Baptist Church in MacFarland, California. In 1973, the Herndon family moved to Porterville, California, where Bob balanced his roles as both Lead Pastor of Porterville Bible Baptist Church and manager of the auto body shop at Mearl Stone Chevrolet in Tulare.

Eventually, Bob retired from formal church leadership but never stopped serving. He reopened Herndon Auto Repair-this time in a shop he personally built on the property behind his home-continuing to lend a helping hand to neighbors and friends with the same passion and integrity he brought to the pulpit.

That same year, Bob encouraged Nita-whose musical talent had been a blessing to countless worship services during his years as a pastor-to begin writing her own songs and record an album. That vision became a reality with the release of *You Can't Outfox a Fox*, a project Bob was incredibly proud of, not just for its musical craftsmanship, but for the powerful message it conveyed.

While continuing to run his auto repair shop, Bob helped Nita form the E-Z River Band and went on to establish Herndon Music Co. and Wild Rose Records. He stepped in as the band's manager, taking care of bookings, copyrights, licensing, promotions, and all the music equipment-doing everything he could to support Nita's journey and ensuring that her music could reach the world.

In 1992, Bob began a new chapter as an Auto Body Instructor at Woodlake High School. There, he mentored students-many of whom others had given up on. Through his steady guidance, Bob taught far more than auto repair; he taught dignity, work ethic, and self-worth. His impact extended across multiple schools in the region until his retirement in 2015.

Bob found joy in life's simple pleasures-taking drives through the country, coffee stops at corner stores, and quiet moments with his beloved Nita. Even after his diagnosis of dementia in 2023, Bob's spirit remained undiminished. He leaned on Nita, who understood his heart and words even when he couldn't find them himself. Their love continued to shine as a beautiful example of commitment and grace.

Bob was a mastermind in the truest sense-gifted, inventive, and full of humor. His laugh was infectious, his jokes unforgettable, and his presence a blessing to everyone who knew him. His legacy lives on in the lives he touched, the students he guided, the congregation he shepherded, and the family he adored.

Bob is preceded in death by his parents, Robert Vernon and Mary Francis Herndon; his brothers Jerry, Don, and Jamie; his sisters Kay and Sandra; and his beloved son, Robert Hayden Herndon II.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 66 years, Juanita "Nita Jo" Ruth Herndon; his grandsons Robert Michael Herndon, Marc Von Herndon, and Quinten Alexander Herndon; his daughters by choice, Tammy Craig, Mary Robie, and Tameka Quintana; his brother, Nick Herndon; his sister, Joy Herndon; sisters-in-law, Glenda Herndon and Patty Herndon; his niece, Rose Bonnell; and a multitude of beloved cousins, nieces, nephews, and lifelong friends whose names are too numerous to list, but whose memories and impact will never be forgotten.

A remarkable and incredible man-Bob Herndon will be deeply missed but never forgotten. His legacy of faith, steadfastness, and determination will continue to inspire all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Memorial services will be held 2:00 PM Friday, May 2nd, 2025 at Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel, 127 E. Caldwell Ave., Visalia.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.

Previous Events

Memorial

MAY 2. 2:00 PM (PT)

Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel
127 E. Caldwell Ave.
Visalia, CA 93277

Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Robert Hayden Herndon*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - May 02, 2025 at 11:22 AM



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Webcast in memory of Robert Hayden Herndon*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - May 01, 2025 at 12:09 PM

SA

I only had the blessing of knowing Bob and Nita for a brief time in my life but through working with their son Robert in the last year of his earthly life I realized the depth of their humanity, their solid faith, and their eternal lights that will forever shine over the many realms of creation, and will forever shower their friends and families with Divinely attributes and blessings. I offer this prayer for exaltation of both Roberts, the father and the son who left their footprints on the lives of all who encountered them in their life journeys:

O my God! O my God! Verily, thy servant, humble before the majesty of Thy divine supremacy, lowly at the door of Thy oneness, hath believed in Thee and in Thy verses, hath testified to Thy word, hath been enkindled with the fire of Thy love, hath been immersed in the depths of the ocean of Thy knowledge, hath been attracted by Thy breezes, hath relied upon Thee, hath turned his face to Thee, hath offered his supplications to Thee, and hath been assured of Thy pardon and forgiveness. He hath abandoned this mortal life and hath flown to the kingdom of immortality, yearning for the favor of meeting Thee.

O Lord, glorify his station, shelter him under the pavilion of Thy supreme mercy, cause him to enter Thy glorious paradise, and perpetuate his existence in Thine exalted rose garden, that he may plunge into the sea of light in the world of mysteries.

Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Powerful, the Forgiver and the Bestower.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í Scriptures

Soheila Azizi - May 02, 2025 at 05:04 PM

SH

“*Sending prayers and love to Aunt Nita and the family. May God bless you and bring you peace, comfort, and healing. My sister, Vicky Dalton, said everything I was thinking as I watched the tribute video. We love you, Uncle Billy! - Susan (Herndon) Hager (Jerry's youngest) and kids, Gavin and Sophy*



Susan Hager - May 02, 2025 at 10:11 PM

VD

“ Vicky Dalton sent a virtual gift in memory of Robert Herndon



Vicky Dalton - May 02, 2025 at 06:52 PM

VD

“ Our hearts and prayers go out to Nita and Uncle Billy's (as we in Kentucky referred to him) family and friends. We did not get the honor of knowing him in our adult life, but enjoyed many stories from Grandpa Herndon and Uncles Donald, Jamie and Nick about their childhood. The service was beautiful and touching. Nita's songs were heartfelt and loving. We loved seeing the beautiful slide show and could not help but see the resemblance to my Daddy, Jerry Herndon. All the brothers shared that mischievous smile and wonderful sense of humor. May God bless the family and provide them with comfort and strength. And thank you God for letting us be a part of this wonderful Herndon family.
Love, Vicky (Herndon) Dalton, Trent Dalton and Thomas Dalton
(one of Jerry's girls)

Vicky Dalton - May 02, 2025 at 06:50 PM

RB

“ Dearest Aunt Nita & daughters-in-law & grandsons Robbie, Marc & Quentin, & family & friends, our hearts are with you in this tender transition & memorial service which was so touching & so very beautiful. I sent msgs to family in KY, MT, & Mom & I watched it together here in Utah. We send our love & look forward to coming to you as soon as we can work it out. Please know we dearly wanted to be there. With love & prayers & blessings for comfort & peace, love always, Rose Herndon Bonnell & Patty Allen Herndon

Rose Bonnell - May 02, 2025 at 06:14 PM

DW

“ *Delia Weiss purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Robert Hayden Herndon.*



Delia Weiss - May 02, 2025 at 05:01 PM

DW

“ *Delia Weiss planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert Hayden Herndon.*

Delia Weiss - May 02, 2025 at 05:01 PM

MM

“ *Bob and Nita Jo were such faithful friends to our family over many years. Sending sympathy from the Lincoln Martin family.*

Mary Martin - April 30, 2025 at 01:01 PM

NH

“ *My remarkable husband there are no words too many memories to even try to find one that would do justice to this amazing man he has my heart and always will and will always be missed he had a very large presence and it's hard for me to not imagine that he isn't coming home but I have been blessed going in and coming out and did okay in the middle by having the privilege of being married to him for 66 years I have been blessed*

Nita Jo Herndon - April 28, 2025 at 07:33 PM



I am so privileged to have been a part of the Herndon family, Bob Herndon (papa) was an amazing person, From the day I married their son in 1985 and threw our divorce till the day he passed he always treated me like I was a part of. Especially the last 3 years we became so very close and I will never forget him and the bond we had. Very proud to still call myself a Herndon and I love ya papa . Tammy Herndon (the roid)

Tamara Herndon - April 29, 2025 at 07:37 PM

DD

Praying for you, Nita and your family during this most difficult loss of your beloved husband, Bob. May God give you peace that passeth all understanding. He was a great pastor and friend. I love you both in Christ Jesus. Delores

Delores Davis - April 29, 2025 at 09:45 PM

JP

I also had the privilege to know Bob as our Pastor of Bible Baptist Church in Porterville. He was a walking book of knowledge and knew everything about everything! I always will remember Bob my father adored Bob. My family attended the Baptist Church in McFarland and that's where my Dad made a life long friend. When our Bible Baptist Church was in between Minister's my Dad and a couple more Deacon's went to McFarland and persuaded Brother Bob to come preach at our church and he did and everybody loved him and his wife and little Robert Jr. Our church grew leaps and bounds and Bob had a great testimony and his life stories were endless and always had a moral to them. My Dad had picked Bob many many years ago.. he was 1 of 2 pastors that did my Dad's funeral. One was Baptist and the other a Nazarene so it was a Nazarene memorial. I know my Dad was waiting for Bob as soon as he heard Bob was on his way. Grandma Joanna was probably there as well. There were probably thousands waiting to see Brother Bob. He loved and honored his beautiful wife who also adored him. As a child growing up listening to his Sermons, listening to his testimony, and seeing with our own eyes his love for his congregation his students and his co-workers and watching how he treated his Queen made him a King in our eyes. God Bless you Nita and your beautiful grandsons and granddaughters and extended family. He will live in our hearts forever.

Judy Parker - April 30, 2025 at 04:24 AM

QH

i didn't have a very good relationship with my dads dad but when we where together we had fun same goes for my dad it was a blessing with them both around. sincerely the youngest Quinten herndon

quinten herndon - August 28, 2025 at 07:33 AM