



Robert John Davis

December 5, 1937 - December 5, 1937

On November 1, 2023 in Santa Barbara, California, Robert John Davis passed away surrounded by loved ones.

Bob (Robert) is survived by his wife, Yolanda, his three daughters, Linda, Mary Ann, Teresa, step-son, Ron Gonzales, 12 grand-kids and 19 great-grand-kids, his siblings Mary Notarian, Joe Davis, Elizabeth Ward, and Nancy and (Tom) Slater. He is preceded in death by parents, Robert W. Davis and Nancy P. Davis-Jette.

Bob took great pride in his Italian heritage and was an incredible cook. Give Bob a recipe and he would turn it into a gourmet meal, however, he was known for his pastas, stews, and Thanksgiving Turkeys. For most of Bob's life, he owned a horse. Riding was a favorite pastime, second to motorcycles and race cars. Throughout his life, Bob traveled the world for both business and pleasure. Everywhere he went, Bob gathered new friends. From country diplomats to the local baker, Bob's easy humor and warm smile pulled people to his side.

Born in Washington D.C. on December 5th, 1937, Bob spent most of his early years on a farm. As a teenager, he started tinkering with motors. By the time he could drive, Bob's mechanical skills turned to modifying engines for speed. He often tested these customized motors by outrunning the local police.

After graduating Delone Catholic High School in Pennsylvania, Bob furthered his education at Indiana Tech. From there, he began his career at Vista Volkswagen. Eventually, Bob started a transmission service in Goleta known as European Auto Systems. This led to a career opportunity with Mini Cars in transit vehicles and automotive safety testing. As a result, Bob became an integral part in providing the first diesel and electric buses built for Denver's downtown pedestrian mall. With his wife, Yolanda, Bob started Bus Manufacturing USA, Inc. to promote new transit designs. Due to the narrow streets in the hills of Santa Barbara, MTD contracted Bob to build a small fleet of shorter, more tapered buses. Shortly after, MTD contracted Bob to produce a line of electric-battery operated trolleys which ran along State Street with the mindset of promoting clean air and tourism.

Bob's innovative reputation in mass transit gained him a project for Georgetown University, which was funded by the Department of Energy, resulting in the country's first fuel-cell powered buses. After sixteen years in alternative automotive design, Bob decided to retire; however, he found himself sought after by other vehicle manufacturers for consulting purposes, leaving retirement a distant goal.

Bob was a man of many talents, but the love and joy he brought to this world is the greatest gift he left to us. For those fortunate enough to have known Bob, raise a glass in his honor. Salute.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Bob Davis was my brother in law (my Cuando Bro. - another story) and he was a blast. Living in Denver, my time with him was not enough, but when we were together, good times and lots of laughter were the order of the day. I can testify that he indeed was a good cook, and he was the one who introduced me to tri-tip, a cut of meat which for some reason was hard to come by in Denver until recent years. I will always remember sitting on the curb with him shouting "viva la fiesta !" at the parades in Santa Barbara. I will always remember going with him to Cold Springs, the old stage coach station - turned "rustic" bar a few miles above his house. Most of all, I will remember when we, spur of the moment, took one his buses he was building for Santa Barbara out for a test drive on the streets around town. That would seem rather unremarkable, except that the "bus" was nothing more than four tires, a battery, a steering wheel, and an aluminum ribbed skeletal frame. Oh the looks we got !!!! May God bless you, Bob.*

Bob Mizke - November 15, 2023 at 10:05 PM