



# Robert S. Rodman

DEC 27, 1937 - OCT 6, 2025



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# Table of Contents

<b>Obituary</b> .....	Page 3
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## **Robert S. Rodman**

DEC 27, 1937 - OCT 6, 2025

**R**obert S. Rodman, 87, of Oshkosh, WI passed away peacefully on October 6, 2025. His life was filled with memorable adventures, achievements and meaningful relationships. He had a passion for teaching and whether in the classroom or in the wilderness, he loved guiding others toward discovery. His legacy endures in the countless lives he touched and the trails he blazed so that others may have richer lives.

Bob was born in Escanaba, MI on December 27, 1937, to Stephen and Rena (LaFave) Rodman. Bob graduated from Holy Name High School in 1955 then enrolled at Western Michigan University in 1956 only to transfer to Northland College in January 1957 because his good friend Mike Goymerac persuaded him to join Northland's inaugural hockey team. Pausing his college education, Bob enlisted in the US Army in 1958 with a sense of military duty to his country. Upon graduating first in his class for cryptology, Bob eventually stationed in Seoul, South Korea. Bob's natural sense of adventure and ease of making friends led him to spend more time off-base than on it. He obtained a blackbelt in the Korean martial art of Tae Kwon Do on his own time and enjoyed becoming close friends with many local South Korean families all of which enriched his experience serving overseas. Upon completing his military service, Bob returned to Northland College, graduating in 1963 with a Bachelors Degree in History and a minor in Physical Ed. Along with his academic studies, Bob played four years of collegiate hockey and baseball, and one season of football. He was admitted to Northland Colleges' Athletic Hall of Fame in 2003.

During Bob's freshman year at Northland, he met his future wife, Wendy C. Fredrick of Ashland, WI, who told him after their fourth date that she was going to marry him. They married in August 1961 and would be married for 62 years until Wendy passed away in 2023. After graduating from college, Bob began a career he was destined for, that of a schoolteacher, and began teaching in Wautoma, WI in 1963 before moving his growing family to Oshkosh, WI for one of the first ever graduate assistantships at UW-Oshkosh's History Department in 1965. Bob was hired by the Oshkosh Public School System in 1967 and began teaching ninth grade Social Studies at the then brand-new Perry Tipler Junior High (now Middle) School. While teaching, Bob would study in the



## Obituary

**Robert S. Rodman**

DEC 27, 1937 - OCT 6, 2025

evenings to earn his Master of Science -Teaching degree at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 1970. He dedicated 27 years teaching hundreds of eighth graders at Perry Tipler and served as the longtime head coach of their 7th grade girls' volleyball and 8th grade girls basketball programs, winning numerous championships in both sports. His success led to being offered and accepting the Varsity girls' volleyball coaching position at Oshkosh North High School.

It was during Bob's years at Perry Tipler that his dedication and passion to introduce students to outside school activities began. On his own initiative he began organizing various excursions not offered before. Soon after the Seattle Pilots relocated to Milwaukee, Bob began taking multiple busloads of middle school students to the Milwaukee Zoo followed by a Brewer game, and did so for 20 years straight. He also partnered with his longtime teaching colleague and dear friend, Jim Richards, and organized annual field trips to Washington, D.C. with over 50 students per trip to tour the nation's capital and surrounding historical sites. Try doing that today with only two chaperones! True to being a "UP'er" Bob introduced many students to downhill skiing by leading ski trips over twenty times to Upper Peninsula, MI ski resorts Whitecap Mountain and Blackjack Mountain. He became an avid road bicyclist and during his summer recess took students on numerous long-distance bike trips to the Porcupine Mountains or around Lake Superior. Many of his trips ranged from 500 to 1300 miles and involved camping in strangers' yards and outracing farm dogs. But Bob's real passion was backpacking, and he enjoyed leading groups of students, along with his great friend and former student himself, John Schuttenhelm. Starting in 1980 and continuing into the late 1990s, Bob led students on over 50 backpacking adventures, many of them for their very first time. Bob enjoyed hiking the Porcupine Mountains and Lake Superior National Seashore, but his real "happy place" was Isle Royale National Park. These trips would often include middle-and high-schoolers who he intuitively knew could endure the inevitable blisters, wet gear, and sore muscles for the pride of accomplishing daily goals, challenging terrain, a sense of teamwork and the excitement of making new friends. Many would proclaim that their first backpacking trip with "Mr. R" was life changing. Many eventually found their own passion for Isle Royale, continuing to this day, hiking among the moose, wolves, foxes, and loons and enjoying Lake Superiors gorgeous sunrises, sunsets and the mystical solitude of Isle Royale trails.

In addition to his passion for teaching and organizing outside student activities, Bob in his younger years pursued his personal passion playing hockey as an award-winning defenseman with the Fond du Lac Bears in the Michigan/Wisconsin Senior League and twice played in national senior tournaments. He was the founder and president of the Oshkosh Youth Hockey Association in the early 1970s and coached various youth hockey teams in Oshkosh, Fond du Lac



## Obituary

**Robert S. Rodman**

DEC 27, 1937 - OCT 6, 2025

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and Neenah. He played competitive softball for many years with Jackies Beauties at the Sawyer Street softball field. Later, he donated his time and experience to various volunteer activities at the Oshkosh YMCA, Red Cross and the Habitat for Humanity building homes in Oshkosh and served on their Board of Directors.

Bob and Wendy raised three sons, and while he was preceded in death by Wendy, he is survived by their sons Scott (Trisha) Rodman, Michael Rodman and Jeffrey Rodman; five grandchildren: Bridgette, Maddi, Dylan, Saji and Ishan, and several dear, close and caring friends including John & Susan Shuttenhelm, Emily Benedict and Lisa Dorschner - who brought so much joy and care to Bob's life particularly at the end. One can only be so fortunate to have friends like them. A special thank you to the amazing staff at Park View Health Center and Aurora Hospice care.



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Robert by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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