



IN LOVING
memory of



GORDONNA TOEPKE

OCTOBER 8, 1938 — OCTOBER 4, 2025



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 Funeral and Cremation Service

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 **Buehler-Larson**
 Funeral and Cremation Service



Gordonna Fay Toepke, husband, dad, grandpa and great grandpa passed away peacefully on October 4, 2025 at the age of 86 at Elm Crest Manor in New Salem.

Gordonna was born October 8, 1938 in Bismarck, ND, the middle son of Earl and Dorothy (Backsen) Toepke. He attended school in New Salem, was in the band, played football, acted in class plays, and was the Senior Class president (a role he kept all his life, taking charge of planning class reunions). He graduated from New Salem High School in 1956.

He served in the US Army from 1956-1958. He was stationed in Fulda, Germany and put in charge of the motor pool. He used his time off to travel all over Europe. He felt it was an honor to serve. In 2018, he went on an Honor Flight and enjoyed seeing the sites of Washington, DC and meeting others who had served in the military.

Returning from military service, Gordonna attended Dickinson State Teachers College for one quarter. He met Jeanette who was attending Bismarck Hospital School of Nursing, so he decided to move back to New Salem to court her. Gordonna and Jeanette Klein were married November 20, 1960 in New Salem. They were married 55 years before Jeanette passed away March 10, 2015.

Gordonna worked at his father's Chevrolet garage as a mechanic and salesman for 39 years, learning the trade from his father. He raced cars and competed in demolition derbies. He and his brother Durwood later became co-owners. In 1997, they retired and closed the business.

In retirement, he drove the West River Transit bus, taking people to appointments, concerts and special events. He and Jeanette made a good team as she kept track of drop-offs and pick-ups while he drove. He was also a driver for Elm Crest Manor and the New Salem Ambulance Squad.

Gordonna loved his hometown of New Salem and was very active in the community. He participated in Jaycees, the volunteer Fire Department, served on the City Council and the City Zoning Board, and was co-chair of the Merchants' Appreciation Feed for many years. He was a lifelong member of the Sportsmen's Club, in charge of the Annual Fishing Derby and the Soil & Water Conservation poster contest for many years. He enjoyed working with the ND Game & Fish, helping to stock fish in local lakes and raising pheasants for release in the area.

Gordonna had a playful spirit and enjoyed mentoring young people. He often took neighborhood children fishing, hunting, biking and horseback riding. He taught Hunter's Education with the ND Game & Fish for 35+

years and was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

He also led canoe camp for the UCC Conference. For 20 years he took groups of youth to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota. He loved to teach youth about the wilderness and how to "rough it."

Gordonna was a member of Peace UCC and then Salem UCC churches. He served on the Church Council, as church treasurer, and was active in the life of his local church and in the wider United Church of Christ Conference. One summer he and Jeanette managed the UCC camp Pilgrim Park on Lake Metigoshe. He loved that summer!

Gordonna was happiest when he was outdoors, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, going on trail rides, working in his garden. He took pride in entering his garden produce in the Morton County Fair. He could fix and build almost anything, making his own horse trailers, building the family home and several sheds. He and Jeanette liked to travel, taking several cruises, driving their pick-up camper to Alaska, and taking trips with their children. Camping was a favorite activity of the family, starting with a tent he and Jeanette sewed themselves, then a bus that Gordonna made into a camper, and finally a 5th wheel camper. He was a faithful fan of the Holsteins and attended most sporting events and concerts.

Gordonna never met a stranger and could strike up a conversation with anyone. His smile and enthusiasm were contagious. He brightened a room when he entered it. He was a great dad, provider, teacher, and encourager to his five daughters. No matter what, his girls could count on their dad.

Gordonna is survived by four daughters and their families: Tamara (Marty) Toepke-Floyd, Jamestown and their children, Andrea (Nick) Crannell and Tyler (Laurie) Toepke; Brenda (Jerry) Rekow, Ellendale and their children, Brandon(Savanna) Rekow and Bridget (Jason) Bennett; Colette Kilber, Otsego, MN and her children, Nicole (Dan Teske) and Heather; and Melisa (Scott) Peterson, Fargo. Bringing him much joy in his later years, he leaves behind his great grandchildren, Carter & Cashton Rekow; Landry, Lindley, & Levi Bennett; and Micah & Bryson Crannell. He also leaves behind his two brothers, Durwood and Dennis (Sandy) Toepke; three sisters-in-law, Lois Stafford (Aldon Sprenger), Diane Klein, and Lori (Ron) Sticka; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife Jeanette, his daughter Sherry, sister-in-law Beryl Toepke, and brothers-in-law James Klein and Lawrence Stafford.

