



Rita McGovern

March 25, 1927 - September 18, 2020

In 1908 an immigrant train steamed into Glendive, MT and off stepped Mrs. Katherine Reynolds and her ten children. Katherine had come from Dubuque, Iowa in search of a better life for her family. West of Glendive, out on the Pleasant View Flats, she homesteaded with her children on prairie lands. Each kid was hoping to “prove up” on their designated acreage. Although the view was pleasant, the arid, oftentimes dry land made making a living farming a challenge. It wasn’t long before they realized someone would have to go to town and make some money. Her son Frank heeded the call, went to town and got a job at Sawyers grocery store. While working there, in those early days, Frank became good friends with a co-worker, John Marman, and they decided to become partners and go into business together. They opened the first Reynolds store in Glendive in 1925. Now 95 years and generations later, Reynolds still successfully operates five stores in 5 different Eastern Montana communities.

Be that as it may, Frank found running a grocery business was exciting and demanding, but left little time and energy to pursue a wife of his own. There was no match.com in those days, but a traveling salesman recognized Frank’s plight and came to his aid. He told Frank of a beautiful young, unmarried lady named Ottelia (Tillie) Klarmann, who was a secretary at his company’s headquarters in Iowa. Frank must have had quite the command of the romantic languages, because after a few love letters and one trip to meet her, she said Yes! He went to Iowa, brought his bride back and they tied the knot in

August, 1923. Together they raised six children, one being Ritamary Reynolds, our Mom, born March 25, 1927.

Growing up in the grocery business is like the family farm, you get involved whether you feel like it or not. There was a young man, Kenny McGovern, working at the store with Mom and they took “a shine” to each other. About that time WWII came along and Kenny got drafted #1 out of Dawson County. He went off to Europe with Uncle Sam, but the two love birds kept in touch as much as possible. Dad was smitten with Mom, but he was twelve years older than she. She said she wrestled with the age difference but explained that no one quite measured up to Dad in her eyes, and they tied the knot in Sept. 1949.

On their honeymoon they hopped into Dad’s snazzy, black, bumble bee nosed Studebaker coupe and went on a two month-long trip. They toured the West Coast hitting several baseball games, the Rose Bowl and other sporting events. Mom always laughed about how Dad scheduled their honeymoon to coincide with sporting events. That was a big trip, especially for those days! It was good that they traveled then, as in short order, seven kids entered into the world. There were two girls and five boys; Maureen, Kevin, Greg, Terry, Brian, Todd and Ann.

We lived and grew up in the big old Hollecker House, next to the Yellowstone River. Mom and Dad were always there to support and love us in our varied adventures and activities. Somehow, Mom and Dad made each of us feel special, we knew they had our backs. Our Dad was a character and to us kids his word was law, and Mom was the shrewd negotiator. One absolute rule was no hard baseball playing in the front yard because of the picture windows. Returning from a week-long Canadian fishing trip, even Dad had to laugh when he saw the taped-up picture window. The big jagged glass cracks were taped, and Mom had the perpetrator spell out “Hi Dad!” in big letters! Smooth move, Mom! I think they did a great job with us kids. They saw to it that we all graduated from college, none of us, to my knowledge, ever spent a night in jail and they stressed the two most important things; they gave us the gift of

family and the gift of faith. It binds us together and strengthens us to this day. Mom gave us a painting that said it all, "What you do for yourself dies with you, what you do for others, lives for eternity." How Mom did so much while raising us seven kids was a true balancing act. She was totally involved in community and church activities her entire life. She was on a number of boards, especially Glendive Medical Center and Sacred Heart Parish Council. She served a term as President for the Society of Montana Hospital Association Volunteers. She also was recognized by the Glendive Chamber of Commerce with the Lifetime Community Service Award (we were so proud of her). She played the organ at church and accompanied her singing son, Kevin, also the author of this life story.

Of special interest to her was "The Attic", a secondhand store, loaded to the hilt with donated clothes, housewares, books, etc. Mom, along with two other women started The Attic where she volunteered and served as a chairperson for over 40 years. Profits generated by The Attic of over 4 million dollars have purchased much needed equipment for Glendive Medical Center. Mom especially loved that many people are able to afford basic items that would be a financial challenge for them otherwise. Operated entirely by volunteers, Mom would often come home with funny "Attic" stories. Once a volunteer's winter coat was sold by mistake by another "Pink Lady"! You had to be careful where you put things down. Back Roads of Montana, a Montana PBS TV show, was at the Attic doing an episode when one of the ladies sold the photographer's very expensive camera by mistake for \$8. They were lucky to find and retrieve the camera from the customer who purchased it. Mom laughed and loved the volunteers she worked with!

It is very difficult to encapsulate 93 years of a life well lived. Of special challenge to Mom was the tragic accidental passing of our brother Terry in 1985, Dad's death in 1987 and our wonderful sister, Maureen, in 2016. Mom would become very emotional and ask us if we were sure they had lived a good and happy life – to which we always reassured her.

In the last chapter of her life, after living in the same big old home for 78 years straight, we circled the wagons and she lived with Kevin, Brian and Ann in the Billings area. Mom was our Rock, our spiritual mentor, parent, teacher and friend. Mom showed us how to live and now she guides us from above. Many have told us that she profoundly touched them in a good way and made marks upon their hearts. Ritamary McGovern—a life well lived, a remarkable lady. Unforgettable!

Rita is survived by her children: Kevin (Sandi) of Laurel; Greg (Debbie) of Phoenix, Brian (Janette) Billings, Todd (Stacy) Fergus Falls, MN and Ann Walsh of Billings. Grandchildren: Kelly (Brian) Bourgeois of Helena, Beth (James) Zerr of Phoenix, Matthew McGovern of Minneapolis, Lauren (Eric) Herzog of Fergus Falls, MN, Nick Walsh, Brendan McGovern, Kelsey (Devon) Hedin and Mike (Kelly) Gilbert all of Billings, MT. Great grandchildren: Luke and Emerson Bourgeois, Jackson, Diem and Freddy Zerr, Ryker Hedin and Riley and Weston Gilbert. Her siblings: Robert Reynolds, Sacramento, CA, Richard (Rita) Reynolds, Marilyn Hoffman, and sister-in-law, Marge Reynolds, all of Glendive as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Memorials are suggested to Glendive Medical Center Foundation or a charity of your own choice.

Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silhafuneralhomes.com.

Cemetery Details

Dawson County Cemetery

Corner of North Sargent Ave. and East Allard
Street
Glendive, MT 59330

Previous Events

Vigil Service

SEP 23. 7:00 PM (MT)

Silha Funeral Home
221 North Meade Avenue
Glendive, MT 59330

Mass of Christian Burial

SEP 24. 10:00 AM (MT)

Sacred Heart Catholic Church
316 West Benham Street
Glendive, MT 59330

Tribute Wall



“ Vicki Rossetto lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern



Vicki Rossetto - January 28, 2025 at 04:32 PM



“ Rita McGovern

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM



“ Gerhard Kron lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern



gerhard kron - October 14, 2020 at 01:54 AM



“ The McGovern's are one of my all-time favorite families. What a crew. My memories hanging with Terry at school and his house are precious, some of the best of my life. I'm sure we were a handful, but Rita was just so kind and helpful and understanding. My thoughts and prayers for Rita and the entire crew. Terry, you don't know how much I miss you, buddy. Mike Powers

Mike Powers - September 29, 2020 at 04:45 PM

VB

“ *Greatest sympathy to the McGovern family! I feel privileges to have known this special and giving lady as a resident at WyndStone. I always enjoyed her quiet, quick wit and willingness to help out in any way needed! She will be greatly missed! Vivian Beals*

Vivian Beals - September 25, 2020 at 05:38 PM

SS

“ *Condolences go out to Sandy & Kevin and rest of the families*

Sue Schwindt - September 25, 2020 at 04:10 PM

SS

“ *Sue Schwindt lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern*



Sue Schwindt - September 25, 2020 at 04:09 PM

MA

“ *Sincere condolences to the McGovern families. Cheers to your wonderful mother, Rita, of living an inspiring life well lived and loved.*

Mary Lou Ayre - September 25, 2020 at 12:41 PM

MH

“ *My sympathy to all of the Reynolds family. A long relationsjip with the krug and Hanrahan families. I went to school with jack, Marilyn, richard, bob aad sister in law marge. Prayers to you all. Maureen Hanrahan New Orleans, Loluisiana*

Maureen A. Hanrahan - September 24, 2020 at 07:12 PM

MP

“ Heartfelt sympathy to Rita's family. My memories of her go way back to my growing up on River Avenue in Glendive and I do remember her wedding in 1949. She has always been a role model to me. What a pleasure to see her when I came back to Glendive to visit my mother; What a gracious and generous woman. I've never seen anyone with a smile like that !
Thank you for all the family memories.
From Margot Harstad Portal

Margot Harstad Portal - September 24, 2020 at 02:50 PM

SW

“ Rita will be dearly missed by many. She touched each and every heart she crossed paths with. Hugs and prayers.

Sharon Weiss - September 24, 2020 at 01:41 PM

DT

“ Good Morning all - just heard this morning from sister MJ of Rita's passing. What a great woman she was and what a great family the McGovern clan is - her and Kenny's wonderful heritage of friends, family, and "giving back" to the community are embodied by all of you. I am eternally grateful for and can not even begin to enumerate all the wonderful memories our Thompson family has with the McGovern family - with Rita at the center. The many memories warm my heart and bring a smile to my face. The countless Thanksgivings, Christmas's, New Years days/evenings and other excuses created to have the two families gather together - all gathering reflected by the warmth Rita created at the McGovern home and all had components of meals and fun and time together. Naturally all the gatherings had some component of watching sports in the den - with all of us kids nearly stacked like cord wood on one another in the den's small area - and yes we had to be quiet! How Rita had the energy to orchestrate all the things she did continues to amaze me. She lived a full and wonderful life with her family at the center, calmly overcoming obstacles along the way, and taught all of us how to be a better person by her leadership and examples. Rest in peace Rita - we love you and your family.

*Dick (known as Rick when a lad) and Gaylene (Kampschorr)
Thompson*

Dick (rick) Thompson - September 24, 2020 at 01:40 PM

DB

“ Our condolences to Rita McGovern family and friends at this difficult time. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.



Denise & Joe Borntlager - September 24, 2020 at 03:52 AM

PV

“ *Pete And Deb Vogel sent a virtual gift in memory of Rita McGovern*



Pete and Deb Vogel - September 24, 2020 at 12:21 AM

PV

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you all during this difficult time. Your Mom was a great and gentle woman and inspired others. May the Lord wrap you in love and comfort in the days ahead* 🙏🏻🕊️🙏🏻

Pete and Deb Vogel - September 24, 2020 at 12:20 AM

TM

“ *Tammy Milne lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern*



Tammy Milne - September 23, 2020 at 11:46 PM

PH

“ *Kevin, Sandi, Kelly and the McGovern family, our sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy for the loss of your mom and grandma. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Paul and Amy Hopfauf*

Paul and Amy Hopfauf - September 23, 2020 at 11:11 PM

MH

“ One time when I was visiting the Attic back in the late 70s and Rita told me that my mother had brought back the idea of the Attic to some organization that they both belonged to. I had no idea and it was nice of her to share that with me since my mother had recently passed away. She was a very kind and caring person and she has been missed from the Attic already. Glad you all have warm memories and God to comfort you.

Mary Ann Burke Holderman - September 23, 2020 at 07:45 PM

KK

“ What a wonderful woman she was and had such Grace. The world was better off with her in it...she will be missed!
Gary and Karen Kampschorr

Karen Kampschorr - September 23, 2020 at 06:10 PM



“ Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Rita McGovern.



September 23, 2020 at 04:44 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Rita McGovern.



September 23, 2020 at 04:39 PM

JH

“ Dear Kevin and all you other McGoverns, I didn't know any of you personally, I don't think, but I very, very much enjoyed reading this heartfelt and historical obituary for your Mom. Thank you for taking the time to write it. McGovern is such an iconic Glendive name, you know. Your Mom seems like she was quite the character, and I know you will all miss her terribly. I hope your family glue will still hold true now that she's gone.

Jo Anne (Jonutis) Herem - September 23, 2020 at 03:02 PM

KR

“ I remember Rita as a very kind and gentle soul. A particular memory was once when Brian brought a boatload of friends over, Rita served us all an amazing homemade dessert - so welcoming, a true homemaker and mother extraordinaire. She and Kenny raised amazing kids. I love you McGovern family💜

Kristi Bergland Ragar - September 23, 2020 at 01:11 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Rita McGovern.



September 23, 2020 at 11:17 AM

DJ

“ Dear McGovern Family,

We were sorry to see the obituary for Rita in the Gazette this morning. Although we met in a business environment, we quickly realized that your family was special and we thoroughly enjoyed all of the time we got to spend with all of you over the years. Rita was a big part of that experience. We consider ourselves fortunate to have gotten to know all of you and treasure the memories of the Associated trips, fishing trips, basketball games and even beer can CanVentions. We can't offer much to fill the void left by your mother's passing but we are certain that she gets a free pass to the head of the line as she begins her next adventure. Had we not recently moved to Oklahoma we would certainly attend the funeral but please know that we are with you in spirit.

Dave and Diane Jonckowski


Dave and Diane Jonckowski - September 23, 2020 at 07:49 AM

SW

“ Shirley Wolff lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern



Shirley Wolff - September 23, 2020 at 01:17 AM


Stefanie
Roesler
Meek

“ What a beautifully written story of her life! You can feel the love in every sentence.

Stefanie Roesler Meek - September 22, 2020 at 06:35 PM

WG

“ With love, Bailey Jordan & Jenny Grove purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Rita McGovern.



With love, Bailey Jordan & Jenny Grove - September 22, 2020
at 01:33 PM

HH

“ Thoughts and prayers to the McGovern family. We are sorry for your loss of this special lady. Rita will be remembered for giving to her church and to the Glendive community. She will be missed and may she rest in peace. Hilary and Jean Hopfauf

Hilary Hopfauf - September 22, 2020 at 12:17 PM

MS

“ Mike and I pray for each one of you during this time. May special memories and the Lord's Prayers carry you through each and every day. She was quite the lady and will be remembered always! Hugs!

Mike & Jacky Saur - September 22, 2020 at 10:37 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Rita McGovern.



September 22, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PR

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Peggy A Reynolds - September 21, 2020 at 08:34 PM

DJ

“ *Delores Jacobs lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern*



Delores Jacobs - September 21, 2020 at 06:15 PM

LS

“ *LaNette Simonton lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern*



LaNette Simonton - September 21, 2020 at 04:52 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Rita McGovern.*



September 21, 2020 at 02:50 PM

VD

“ Vonda Dinger purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Rita McGovern.



Vonda Dinger - September 21, 2020 at 12:33 PM

TG

“ Tony & Joy Gaffke purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Rita McGovern.



Tony & Joy Gaffke - September 21, 2020 at 12:22 PM

KS

“ Kristie Stanhope lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern



kristie stanhope - September 21, 2020 at 10:01 AM

PR

“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Peggy A Reynolds - September 21, 2020 at 12:36 AM

KS

“ Ken & Connie Schell purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Rita McGovern.



Ken & Connie Schell - September 20, 2020 at 10:13 PM

MT

“ Marlene Taylor lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern



Marlene Taylor - September 20, 2020 at 09:01 PM

MP

“ Mary Coyan Perryman sent a virtual gift in memory of Rita McGovern



Mary Coyan Perryman - September 20, 2020 at 03:16 PM

NS

“ Noren And Karen Shanley sent a virtual gift in memory of Rita McGovern



Noren and Karen Shanley - September 20, 2020 at 12:23 PM

TF

“ *The Herzog Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Rita McGovern.*



The Herzog Family - September 19, 2020 at 08:13 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Rita McGovern.*



September 19, 2020 at 01:53 PM

TP

“ *Kevin
Sorry about your loss
Tyler Pust*

Tyler Pust - September 19, 2020 at 12:33 PM

MH

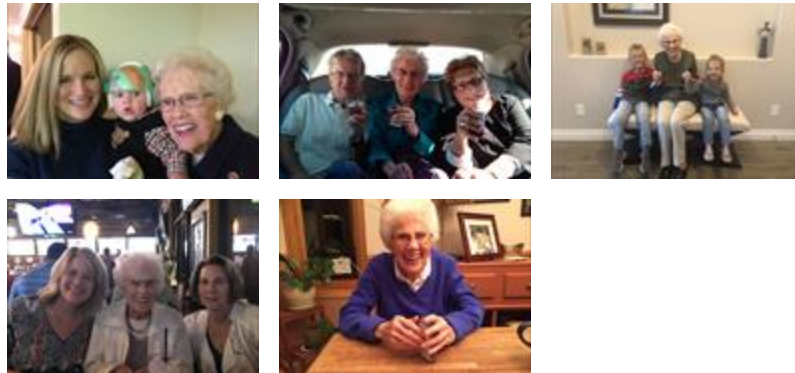
“ *Marvin And Sue Howe lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern*



Marvin and Sue Howe - September 19, 2020 at 05:08 AM

DM

“ 5 files added to the album Rita



Deborah McGovern - September 19, 2020 at 01:45 AM

AG

“ McGovern family

You all have my deepest sympathy for the loss of this wonderful woman. I will always remember your mother for her kind and wonderful heart. Rita you have earned your beautiful wings so fly high. I will miss you.



Arlene Gieser - September 19, 2020 at 01:32 AM

NK

“ NANCY KORB lit a candle in memory of Rita McGovern



NANCY KORB - September 18, 2020 at 08:55 PM

DD

“ *Dan And Donna Dobson lit a candle in
memory of Rita McGovern*



Dan and Donna Dobson - September 18, 2020 at 08:51 PM