

Yolanda Marie Butenas, 97, the beloved matriarch of the Butenas family, passed away peacefully on February 27, 2025, under the compassionate care of Vive Hospice. Born to Alphonse and Mary (Castelli) Bernardi on November 16, 1927, in Toluca, Illinois, Yolanda grew up in a vibrant community of Italian, Lithuanian, and Polish immigrants who had settled in the area to work in the coal mines, on the railroad, or to farm the land. She often fondly reminisced about her childhood in this tight-knit, extended family, where cousins, aunts, and uncles were like second parents, and the town was filled with spirited children who turned the stores, taverns, and Italian ristorantes into their playground.

Her love story began when a handsome, hometown boy, Bill Butenas, returned from Navy service after World War II. They were married on July 19, 1947, and together they built a life filled with love, adventure, and family. Their union was blessed with two children: Rudy and Mary Annette.

Bill's long career with Caterpillar Tractor Company led the family from Toluca to Aurora, Illinois, and eventually to their permanent home on a farm in Waterman, Illinois, in 1965. There, Yolanda, affectionately known as "Noni" (the Italian word for Grandma), embraced farm life with vigor, managing their 80-acre farm in DeKalb County while Bill continued his career. She took great pride in operating machinery and caring for their livestock, a testament to her strength and independence.

Faithful and devoted, Noni led by example, her deep love for her family shining through every aspect of her life. As her children grew, she supported them at 4-H events across Illinois, where their champion pigs and horses earned numerous awards. The county fairs remained close to her heart, even after her children were grown, where she continued to support her church's lunch counters and became a perennial winner of the annual pie-baking contest.

Her grandchildren, too, fondly remember their summer visits to the farm, exploring the many buildings and playing in the creek that ran behind the house. The property was always a haven of flowers and vegetable gardens, the produce shared generously with family and friends. Yolanda and Bill also nurtured a love for horses and ponies, raising and showing them in various events throughout northeast Illinois. Their horses participated in parades, with the couple meticulously decorating their wagons, and their children and grandchildren delighted in riding along, tossing candy to the crowd and waving to onlookers.

Noni's legacy is one of strength, resilience, and an unwavering love for her family. She leaves behind a lasting imprint on all who knew her. She was preceded in death by her parents, her beloved husband Bill, her brothers Ernani, Max, and Rudy, and their wives, as well as her grandson Jason. Her memory will forever be cherished by her children, Rudy (Adele) Butenas and Nettie (Kerry) Bridge; her grandchildren, Tina (Michael) Wicker, Dondi Trebelhorn, Keno Bridge, Darren (Jessi) Butenas, Stacie (Steve) Thompson, Todd (Jess) Johnson, Jodi (Tim) Zebell, Megan (Bjorn) Kleven, Derek Butenas; 24 great-grandchildren; and 9 great-great-grandchildren.

The family extends special thanks to the staff at both Pioneer Cottages and Vive Hospice for their exceptional care during Yolanda's final days.

*In honor of their Noni, her granddaughters are baking pies to be served at the luncheon following mass.*

# In Loving

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## M E M O R Y



*Yolanda "Noni" Butenas*  
November 16, 1927 - February 27, 2025



*God looked around his garden  
And found an empty place,  
He then looked down upon the earth  
And saw your tired face.  
He put his arms around you  
And lifted you to rest.  
God's garden must be beautiful  
He always takes the best.  
He knew that you were suffering  
He knew you were in pain.  
He knew that you would never  
Get well on earth again.  
He saw the road was getting rough  
And the hills were hard to climb.  
So he closed your weary eyelids  
And whispered, 'Peace be thine'.  
It broke our hearts to lose you  
But you didn't go alone,  
For part of us went with you  
The day God called you home.*

*-Author Unknown*

## **Memorial Mass**

Monday, March 10, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

St. Lawrence Catholic Church

Perham, Minnesota

### **Officiant**

Father Tom Skaja

### **Readers**

Megan Kleven - Stacie Thompson

Dondi Trebelhorn - Tina Wicker

### **Readings**

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 - Isaiah 25: 6A, 7-9 - Romans 14:7-9 10C-12

### **Gift Bearers**

Blake, Logan, and Abi Johnson

Frank Kleven

### **Musicians**

St. Lawrence Choir

### **Musical Selections**

"Here I am, Lord" - "Shepherd Me"

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand" - "Hail Mary Gentle Woman"

"Song of Farewell" - "Be Not Afraid"

### **Honorary Urn Bearers**

Derek Butenas - Todd Johnson

Keno Bridge - Darrin Butenas

### **Interment**

St. Lawrence Catholic Cemetery

Perham, Minnesota