



## Joanna Joan Johannessen Gerard Watkins Koester

May 20, 1927 - November 5, 2023

“An Extraordinary Lady”

Joanna Joan Johannessen Gerard Watkins Koester

Our beloved mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother arrived in heaven on November 5, 2023. Joanna was born to Edith and Henry Johannessen on May 20, 1927, in Tomah, Wisconsin. She was the seventh of eight daughters.

Her childhood was spent in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Joanna studied dance, and after graduating from Idaho Falls High School she worked as a professional dancer in San Francisco. She returned to Idaho to marry Richard (Dick) Gerard in 1946. They had three children: Richard Lee (Rick), Bobbi Jo, and Lorita Ann. While Dick served in the Navy during the Korean War, she stayed in Idaho Falls. After the war, they moved the family to Pocatello, Idaho, so that Dick could attend Idaho State University. After graduation, the family moved to Salt Lake City, Denver, and Bellevue, Washington, as her husband's construction business grew.

Dick passed away on September 16th, 1969, after a prolonged illness. Joanna had always worked to support her husband and family, and they were always active in the church and their community.

Joanna met Federal Judge Garl Watkins, and they married and moved to

Chicago, Illinois, for a couple of years. Garl passed away on Christmas Day, 1976. Joanna moved back to Bellevue, where she continued to live and work for the Social Security Administration. While interviewing a girl from Idaho Falls with the last name of "Koester," she asked if whether she knew Dale Koester. She did. Joanna and Dale had dated in High School and had been good friends for many years. Joanna and Dale were married and made their home together in the little red house on Dale's farm in Downey, Idaho. Joanna designed the home they built on the farm and helped Dale gather rocks from the fields to create its beautiful fireplace that their combined family enjoyed together for a little more than forty years. Their life was filled with family, church service, community service, and love.

Joanna laid Dale to rest on October 4, 2016. Joanna continued to live and serve her family and friends in the home they built together until she could no longer care for herself in the last few months of 2022. She lived with Bobbi and her husband in Bellevue, Washington, until she moved to South Jordan, Utah, for the last five months to be closer to more family. We all felt blessed to be close to her in her last days.

Joanna was a tireless worker, quilt maker, doll maker, and active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She lived to serve her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and community. In the end, she always wanted to "go home to Downey."

Welcome home, sweet mother of ours. You were so loved by all who knew you.

Funeral Services will be held, and her life will be celebrated on Monday, November 13, at the LDS Church, 310 E Center Street, Downey, Idaho. The Viewing will start at 11:30 AM, Funeral at 12:30 PM, and Graveside Services at the Downey Cemetery will follow.

### “Reflections from a Granddaughter”

After twelve hours in the car, we reached the small town of Downey, Idaho. Then, ten more minutes to travel down “Grandma’s driveway,” as we fondly called the road to her house. It almost felt like another twelve hours, but if we could handle the anticipation, we were always greeted with warmth, love, and laughter.

Visiting Grandma Jo was always a delight. After hugs and words of welcome, we toured her house and became reacquainted with the dolls in her collection. She would show us the ones she had made or dressed since our last visit. We then got to step into her sewing room to see the ones in progress. There were always quite a few in various stages of completion. There was always a crochet project in the family room and an exquisite quilt on the frame downstairs. We never could figure out how Grandma managed to keep so many projects going. Nor could we believe how intricate her quilts were and how many thousands of tiny, even stitches went into each one.

There was always plenty for a young child to do at Grandma’s house. Whether we were petting kittens, catching grasshoppers, joining in a game of pool, or playing cards, each minute was delightful. The best time of all was when we gathered around the table at the end of the day and enjoyed a delicious meal and a delightful conversation.

We weren’t the only ones to make the long drive between our houses. Grandma Jo and Grandpa Dale drove it often. They made every effort to be there for the big events in our lives. Our special occasions became even more meaningful because we eagerly looked forward to their visits. We always felt deeply loved, knowing they’d come a long way to be there for us. We love

you, too, Grandma, and we will miss you until we meet again.

# Previous Events

## Viewing

NOV 13. 11:30 AM - 12:15 PM (MT)

Downey 2nd Ward  
310 E Center Street  
Downey, ID 83234

## Funeral Service

NOV 13. 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM (MT)

Downey 2nd Ward  
310 E Center Street  
Downey, ID 83234

## Burial

NOV 13. 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM (MT)

Downey City Cemetery  
452 E Grant Rd #436,  
Downey, ID 83234

# Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Lori Thornbrue - November 09, 2023 at 01:54 PM



*Potato Harvest*

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