



Gladys VanDenHeuvel

May 17, 1932 - February 5, 2026

Gladys Freeman VanDenHeuvel of Niagara laid to rest on February 5, 2026, at home with her family at the age of 93. She was born May 17, 1932, in Iron Mountain to Dewey & Irene (Peters) Freeman of the county N farm.

She graduated in 1951 and married Leslie Bjorkman at the Niagara Chapel on Chapman Rd.

Gladys grew up working the farm, milking cows, and planting crops seed by seed on her belly on the buckboard pulled behind by their horse. Being raised where seasonal loggers boarded a big log cabin behind the small farmhouse, she carried in heated water for many years, picked berries and tended animals. All meals were prepared and eaten in a long building called the summer kitchen. They had a 2 hole outhouse and walked wherever they went. There were no cars then, so one got to know their neighbors to get a drink. With a family of 11 children and 2-3 Genrich family, tending gardens was a community project, a work ethic that was passed down to grandchildren to learn on the hottest of days. She would say, "Bruce and I were the hardest workers on the farm and the last 2 alive." Now Bruce carries the legacy with his son, Charlie, managing the cattle farm.

Glady was a jolly person; smiles came quickly and she was always willing to help those in need. She assisted many elderly with rides and household

chores and worked at the Pembine Feed Mill. She drove pulp trucks with Pattersons, cooked at Four Seasons, and fed many of acquaintance on the old Barker Farm where she had a long summer kitchen: a room with incubators, a butcher table, a wringer washer, drying racks, kettles, and the aroma of vittles cooking. Her first paid job was as a bartender, which found her 35 year career in 10 taverns from Beecher, Aurora, to Spread Eagle; she even owned the Hideway Bar (in Aurora) with many patrons from all over. Being the early morning riser, she helped Tinker open her summer kitchen for many seasons. Thanks to Gladys, we all learned to get our red rubber boots on, get our hands dirty, and give more than you receive.

She was a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, Homemakers Club, Protestant Church, and Tavern League.

Her surviving family includes her brother, Bruce Freeman; her children, Linda (Dennis) Conrad, Donald (Debbie) Bjorkman, and Evelyn "Tink" & Earl "Butch" Rugg; grandchildren, Melissa Welter, Matt Schettler, Dawn Rock, Nichole Bloomquist, Jason D. Bjorkman, Earl III "Sonny" Rugg, April Rugg, Beau Rugg, and Leah (Kyle) West; 19 great-grandchildren; a great-grandchild; 12 stepchildren; and many nieces, nephews, neighbors and dear friends.

Relatives departed are her husbands, Leslie Bjorkman, Arnold Barker, and Roger VanDenHeuvel, who passed in 1994; siblings, Sonny, Putty, Rufus, Dennix Freeman, Janet Davis, Mabel Chartier, Anna Mae Larsch, Alice Hayes, and Carmen Harvath; son-in-laws, Larry Schettler and Dennis Conrad; Michael Catlow Mcdonald; a special niece, Nancy; and countless friends and family.

Family and friends may gather for a graveside service at the Niagara Cemetery at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, May 29, 2026. Following the burial her Celebration of Life will be held at the Niagara Community Center, 569

Washington Ave., from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 29, 2026.

The family would like to extend their sincerest gratefulness to Dr. and Mrs. John L. Loewen and their loving nurses, Doctors Morel and their kind nurses, the MMC-Dickinson Home Health Nurses, Aid and staff, and Karen Klenke with the Prayer Shawl Ministry.

Condolences to the family of Gladys Freeman VanDenHeuvel may be expressed online at www.ernashfuneralhomes.com

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Niagara Cemetery

Washington St.
Niagara, WI 54151

Previous Events

Graveside Service

MAY 29. 12:30 PM (CT)

Niagara Cemetery
Washington St.
Niagara, WI 54151

Celebration of Life

MAY 29. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Niagara Senior Center
569 Washington Ave.
Niagara, WI 54151

Tribute Wall



“ Gladys' Life Celebration is Friday, May 29th @ Niagara Com. Ctr. 1 to4 following burial @ cemetery 11:30. Please pass the word.

Tinker Belle Rugg - May 24 at 03:33 PM

JL

“ Sorry to hear about Gladys passing, Marcella Lyman Lucas and Jeff Lyman.

Jeff Lyman - February 21 at 02:49 PM

DE

“ So sorry for your loss, she was quite the lady. She will be missed.
Jim & Diane Ehmet

Diane Ehmer - February 14 at 12:23 PM

AM

“ I will miss this dear lady & great friend & will always cherish the memories & all the laughs we had on our adventures! She was one of a kind!

Arlene Mohr - February 13 at 02:32 PM