



## Robert William Toivonen

August 12, 1943 - November 6, 2020

Robert “Bob” William Toivonen, 77, of Butte passed away peacefully Friday morning. Bob was born in Butte, Montana on August 12, 1943 to Toivo William Toivonen and Gertrude Susan Toivonen, the oldest of three boys. Bob lived a full and wonderful life. He loved his family more than anything, and recently celebrated his 50th anniversary with the love of his life, Virginia (Ginger) “McNellis” Toivonen who he married on August 15th, 1970. Softball brought them together many years ago, and they passed their love of sports down to their kids and grandkids. Bob was an amazing husband, dad to Chris and Beth, grandpa (“Papa”) to Conor, Katie, Carson and Cole, son, brother to John and Clarke, and friend. His family absolutely adored him, and will forever remember the lessons and love he had for each one of us. His spirit truly lives on in all the people he touched.

He grew up in Butte, with his first home near the Columbia Gardens where he had many fond memories. Bob’s childhood friends extended into adulthood, and he valued them a great deal. He attended Harrison Grade School, East Junior High, Butte High School and graduated from Montana Tech where he served as student body president and earned a bachelors and masters degree in Metallurgical Engineering.

He began his professional career as an Engineer, but later decided to become a teacher and used this profession to positively impact countless lives. It was

amazing the number of former students who expressed gratitude for the profound impact he had on them. In all, his teaching career spanned over 40 years, and included stops at Deer Lodge, West Junior High, Butte High School and Montana Tech. He spent a majority of his career teaching Math at Butte High School, driving his trademark 1971 Chevy truck for most of those days. Even after retirement, Bob never stopped teaching, always imparting knowledge to those lucky enough to be around him.

Considering Bob was such an amazing teacher, it isn't surprising that he excelled as a coach as well. Bob always viewed coaching as teaching, just with the setting transferred to a field or court. He coached many teams, including the Butte Merchant's Softball team where he met his wife Ginger, the Butte High Softball team who was recently inducted into the Butte Hall of Fame for their 1992 state championship, and of course all of his children's elementary teams. As head coach for the Bulldogs, Bob's teams won the Western AA title every season. He had an amazing knack for teaching hitting, and his batters were routinely at the top of AA. As an assistant coach in 1995, he and his daughter Beth celebrated a special state championship title. Bob passed his coaching acumen on to his kids, and along with his wife Ginger, would routinely travel almost 400 miles to watch their son Chris coach. Together, they rarely missed a game. Bob was also a lifelong Dodgers fan, as are his kids and grandkids. It was particularly special for him when the Dodgers broke their 32 year World Series drought.

Bob was an avid outdoorsman, and passed that love onto his kids and grandkids. He especially enjoyed fishing, and was a master of the underhand cast. In later years, Bob especially enjoyed collecting wood and sitting by a warm fire. A great storyteller, those around him always loved listening to him reminisce about his outdoor adventures. Those stories will continue to be passed down to future generations.

Whether it was watching a game, drama production, or just hearing about the kid's grades, he truly thought they walked on water. Even when he couldn't attend events, Papa Bob, as he was affectionately known, enjoyed watching the latest homerun, three-pointer, block or sack via video. Listening to phone conversations he had with the grandkids was always a special treat. He was never too busy for a long phone call or visit with his grandchildren, always letting them know just how special they were to him.

Bob's parents along with his Finnish ancestry taught him to be an honest, ethical and loving person. During a recent story telling session, Bob talked about "Sisu" which is a Finnish term that means strength of will, determination, perseverance. Sisu is not momentary, but the ability to sustain courage over time. Bob demonstrated this throughout his life, receiving a kidney transplant in 1986 and overcoming numerous health conditions over the years. No doubt about it, Bob had "Sisu". More than anything though, Bob was a great person. He was an amazing role model, and helped so many others strive to better themselves. The world needs more people like Bob Toivonen.

Bob was preceded in death by his parents Toivo and Gertrude Toivonen, brother Clarke Toivonen, brother-in-laws, Mike McNellis, John McNellis, Bob McNellis, Roland Reagan and sister-in laws Maria McNellis and Carol McNellis. He is survived by his wife Ginger, son Chris (Jamie) Toivonen, daughter Beth (Jason) Klaumann, grandkids Conor & Carson Toivonen and Katie and Cole Klaumann , brother John (Becky) Toivonen, sister-in-laws Rosemary Regan, Marjorie McNellis, Barbara (Joe) Comfort, Sherrie Fillbach,, Leigh McNellis, brother-in-law Jim (Dana) McNellis and numerous nieces and nephews.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, private services will be conducted and a public memorial services will be conducted when restriction are lifted.

Donations can be made to the polycystic kidney disease (PKD) foundation or Butte Senior Solutions.

# Previous Events

## Graveside

AUG **10**. 10:30 AM (MT)

Mountain View Cemetery  
3910 Harrison Avenue  
Butte, MT 59701

# Tribute Wall

TA

“Ginger, Chris, and Beth, I'm so sorry to hear this. Coach Toivonen was one of my favorites during my years at BHS and a great teacher of mine as well. Prayers to you all and his name will forever be a huge part of Butte history💕💕🙏

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**Theresa Adams** - August 04, 2021 at 04:45 AM

GL

“Toivonen Family,

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Bob. Mom and Dad, Millie and Toy Laitinen were great friends of Toik and Gertie and myself and my brother Ray spent a lot of time with Bob, John and Clarke when we were kids at their house or ours. Our sympathies go out to the family. Bob was a great guy!!

*Glenn and Sabrina Laitinen*

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**Glenn Laitinen** - November 19, 2020 at 12:35 PM

PM

“Ginger, Chris, Beth & family; Mary & I were saddened to read of Bob's passing. I have great memories of teaching with Bob at WJHigh. We both came to WJH in 1972, teaching there until West closed & we moved to BHS. Ginger, may the many memories you & Bob made and shared with your family soften the heartache of your loss. May God bless you all.

*Pat & Mary*

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**Pat & Mary McMahon** - November 18, 2020 at 03:45 PM

JH

“Ginger, Chris and Beth, I was sorry to hear of Bob's passing, I am sure you all feel a great emptiness now that he is gone, but I could tell from reading his obituary, that you have many fond memories as well. I would like to share a story about Chris and Bob and how they had an impact on me. As you know, Ginger, I was never one to accept technology in the the classroom. As a matter of fact I would refer to a calculator as a "tool of the devil". One day Chris was in my office for help on a problem and the question of whether a function was even or odd came up. Chris went directly to his calculator and graphed the function, then noted the symmetry, thus determining whether the function was even or odd. My approach was the traditional algebraic one that at times could be quite daunting. Well when I saw what Chris was doing, for the first time I realized that the "tool of the devil" may have a place after all. I'm sure that Chris learned that technique from Bob. Beth your wedding was the first western wedding that my wife, Chunlan attended she was quite overwhelmed by it all and she was particularly impressed with how Bob looked in his tux. It was a great introduction to a part of western culture and Butte weddings as well. I hope you are Okay and that you will remember all the good times as I will. Jim Handley

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**James Handley** - November 16, 2020 at 02:31 PM

VN

“I was fortunate to have Mr. Toivonen as a teacher at both West and Butte High. He was hands down the best teacher I ever had. I still use the lessons he taught me all the time and now help my daughter with her math using the tricks I learned from him. My condolences, he will be missed.

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**Vivian Noble** - November 14, 2020 at 12:05 AM

JH

“Ginger, Chris and Beth, my sincere condolences in the loss of Bob. Bob was the best assistant coach I could ever ask for. He is one of the reasons we won championships in softball. One memory I have to share is this funny thing, as Bob would have to sit on the bus during a game after I am the one who said something. He was always accused because he cheered so loud. He was a great man and teacher. He always had time for students either in the classroom or the softball field. I have so many of memories of him that will always be in my heart. Bob will never be forgotten by me.

*Sincerely*

*Toni & Jim Hope*

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**Jim Hope** - November 13, 2020 at 04:05 PM

GP

“Bob was a longtime customer of mine when I was service manager at Toyota in Butte. It was a pleasure to get to know him and visit with him when he came in for service...my condolences to the family.

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**Guy Perkins** - November 13, 2020 at 03:58 PM

AS

“ *Ginger and family,*

*We are saddened to learn of Bob's passing. He was a wonderful person, loved by his students and all who knew him. Kim and I have wonderful memories of him from our days at Hilton Head and Savannah...a trip which was made so much better because of you and Bob. I know he is the love of your life. Please take some comfort in knowing that Bob's legacy will live on in his children, grandchildren and those he taught and coached. The world is a better place because of him and all the lives he has touched. Hugs, my sweet friend...*

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**Ann and Kim Schach** - November 12, 2020 at 04:37 PM

JM

“ *One of the best days I ever had was a day I spend fishing with Bob. He also was a great source for the latest great book to read.*

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**JAMES MCNELLIS** - November 12, 2020 at 10:08 AM

CZ

“ *Dear Toivonen Family,*

*We are saddened to hear of the passing of Robert. He was my favorite and most patient math teacher in High School and college. I know my Mom and Dad also thought highly of him as well. May you find peace and comfort in his passing knowing what a huge impact he has had on so many.*

*Sincerely, Paul, Wayne, Chris Miller and Carla Zugel*

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**Carla Miller Zugel** - November 12, 2020 at 09:27 AM

MD

“ My deepest sympathies to Ginger, Chris, Beth, and families. I first met Bob when I was hired to teach freshman science at Butte High in 1989. Butte High was in the midst of its historic remodel, and even though I had attended Butte High myself, it was very confusing and chaotic. In addition, I was assigned new content and students who were not very enthusiastic about school. Needless to say, I felt overwhelmed. But I had the pleasure of eating lunch with Bob every day. He encouraged and coached me through the toughest days, always telling me that things would get better and that I could do this job. The next year I moved from fourth floor to the new science wing, but still sought out Bob's sage advice about negotiating teaching trials. I learned so much more from him about life in general.

*I sincerely hope your many memories of your husband, father, and grandfather will give you some comfort at this time.*

*Maureen Driscoll*

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**Maureen Driscoll** - November 11, 2020 at 12:58 PM

PZ

“ I was fortunate enough to have a classroom next to Bob's at West Junior High. I was hired to teach algebra and general math even though my degrees were in history/political science and and MFA in creative writing. Bob helped me get through that first year when I was lucky enough to stay a page or two ahead of the students. No matter what or when, he was there to help me. When I was then switched to teaching in my university subject areas, I continued to help him with his after school help sessions. Bob was an amazing teacher, especially to me during that first rough year.

*My condolences to all of you who were lucky enough to be Bob's family. Thank you for sharing him with so many of us.*

*Paul S. Zeigler*

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**Paul S, Zeigler** - November 11, 2020 at 12:51 AM

BH

“ Sincere sympathy to Ginger, Chris and Beth and families. The obituary was perfect for such a great teacher and coach. Sharing sporting activities with your family have become choice memories for us. He influenced Hal, Burke, Brant and Valli in many positive ways. It was a treasured experience to coach against Bob and then to be an assistant coach for the talented and successful Mile High Girls teams. God bless each of you as you adjust to this significant loss in your family. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Bob and Jolene Hunsaker  
PS We are serving a service mission in Tucker Georgia at the Bishop's Storehouse until May 2021.

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**Bob and Jolene Hunsaker** - November 10, 2020 at 07:54 PM

BF

“ Dear Ginger and family. How sorry we are of the passing of Bob. We have a special fondness for teachers especially ones of the caliber of Bob. Our best to all of the McNellis/Toivinan families.  
Sincerely. Jeff and Bobbie Frank

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**bobbie frank** - November 10, 2020 at 03:44 PM

CO

“ Dear Ginger,

*I have heard so many good things about Bob but I've never had the privilege of meeting him. I see that he was so accomplished and loved by many. He will be missed. My condolences to you and your lovely family.*

*I am now 99 years old and blessed with a good mind and wonderful family.*

*My love to you, Bob is in my prayers,*

*Violet McNellis Corr*

*6909 McQuillan Circle  
Sacramento, California 95820*

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**CORR** - November 10, 2020 at 03:03 PM

FR

“ Shirley and Frank Redle send our prayers for Bob, Ginger and family. There was never a time that Bob and Ginger were unwilling to help us in any way, including the bricking of an inside wall in our first house. GOD BLESS BOB AND HIS FAMILY

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**frank redle** - November 10, 2020 at 01:32 PM

GC

“ I was saddened to hear of the passing of Bob. I felt fortunate to have had the privilege to work with him at Butte High School and go on a couple of fishing trips as well. My thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time. Gary Carle

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**Gary Carle** - November 10, 2020 at 12:29 PM

JH

“ *Mr. Toivonen was, by far, the best teacher I had. I sought out his classes because he challenged everyone to do the absolute best. He not only taught math lessons but, more importantly, life lessons —ones I still recall (and repeat) to this day. He was an amazing person who I was privileged to know. To his family, you remain in my thoughts now and always. I am truly sorry for your loss.*

*Joslyn Hunt*

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**Joslyn Hunt** - November 10, 2020 at 05:33 AM



“ *2 files added to the album Memories Album*



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**Wayrynen-Richards Funeral Home** - November 09, 2020 at 02:02 PM