



Gottfried Josef Kotscher

July 31, 1937 - June 30, 2025

Gottfried Josef Kotscher, 87, of Bonita Springs, FL, passed away peacefully on June 30, 2025, in Fort Myers. Born in Freudenthal, Czechoslovakia, he was the beloved son of the late Erwin and Elfriede Kotscher.

Gottfried liked to share the story of his life with others, which began with an idyllic childhood in the Sudetenland but turned tragic when WWII broke out when he was three. After the war, his family lost everything and were among the first wave of Austrian and German-speaking people expelled from Czechoslovakia. At age eight, he and his parents missed the closing of the West German border by just one day and from then on faced many additional hardships. At age twelve, Gottfried lost his father, Erwin, to stomach cancer. Thanks to the courage of his mother, Elfriede, they escaped the Iron Curtain when he was thirteen and began a new life in Austria.

Gottfried's early adulthood was shaped by a determined work ethic and a dedication to craftsmanship. He apprenticed as a watchmaker in Vienna. After working as a watchmaker in a watch factory in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, he immigrated to the United States from Austria at the age of 23, settling in Waterloo, Iowa. Not long after, he began work at Newton's Jewelry store, where his passion for precision and beauty flourished. During this time he met his wife Kathie and they married in 1965.

In 1974, Gottfried fulfilled a lifelong dream by opening G.J. Kotscher Jewelers in Oelwein, Iowa, alongside his wife Kathie. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to expand the business, opening additional locations in Decorah, IA, and Prairie du Chien, WI. His stores were known for quality craftsmanship and personal service, a reflection of his deep commitment to his work and community.

In 1999, Kathie and Gottfried closed their jewelry stores and moved to Bonita Springs to enjoy retirement. During these years, they split their time between Florida and their cozy mountain cabin in Kindberg, Austria, where they spent many happy summers from May to October. Here they welcomed many friends from home and loved showing them the beauty and fun of Austria. And during the winter months, they would welcome friends from Austria to enjoy the sunshine of Florida.

Gottfried had a knack for fixing anything and everything. He found joy in boating, jet skiing — a hobby he continued into his 80s — and exploring the world with his beloved wife. Together, they traveled extensively, with memorable adventures to destinations like Morocco, Egypt, Russia and Croatia, and many cherished cruises along the way.

Gottfried was survived by his devoted wife of almost 60 years, Kathie Kotscher, who passed away five weeks later on August 9th. He is survived by his son, Christian Kotscher (Michelle) of Cumming, GA, and daughter, Heidi Gossman (Jody) of Shawnee, KS. He was a proud and loving grandfather to Ellie Gossman, Kinsey McKnight (Brendan), Emma Gossman, Chani Kotscher, Jack Gossman, and Bernadette Kotscher. He is also remembered fondly by many nieces and nephews.

A funeral mass will be held at 11:00 AM on Saturday, September 27, 2025, at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Naples, Florida. Additionally, a

memorial mass will be held at 11:00 AM, November 29, 2025 at Sacred Heart Church in Oelwein, Iowa. Gottfried and Kathie will be laid to rest together in Waterloo, Iowa.

To sign the guest register or to leave online condolences, please visit www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com.

Arrangements are being handled by Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home in Florida and Cedar Memorial in Iowa.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

SEP **27**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
625 111th Avenue North
Naples, FL 34108

Memorial Mass

NOV **29**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Sacred Heart Parish
600 1st Ave. SW
Oelwein, IA 50662
parish@sacredheartoelwein.com
<http://www.sacredheartoelwein.com>

Tribute Wall

BR

“ *Gottfried and Kathie were wonderful people. We loved them both so much. God bless the Kotscher family. Wallace and Barbara Rundle, Oelwein Iowa*

Barbara Rundle - December 04, 2025 at 12:07 PM