



Twila June Ratzlaff

September 23, 1954 - September 6, 2026

Topeka, Kansas

Twila June Ratzlaff died in Topeka on September 6, 2026. She was seventy-one. Born there on September 23, 1954, she grew up knowing wheat as a rumor that paid and a river as a weekday neighbor. She learned a scale before she learned a highway. A ticket, she said, is a kind of honesty: it shows what you hid or it does not.

She spent twenty-four years in a grain elevator that started before daylight, first as a helper, later as the woman who could tell, from the sound of a leg, whether a lot would hold through a late car. She kept extra coffee for the trucker whose morning had already been too long. She would not let a buyer invent a grade that made the scale a liar. After a bad afternoon she sat in the stairwell with the radio off until her hands were quiet.

She married Dean Ratzlaff in 1976. They bought a bungalow in a neighborhood that later became expensive around them. They stayed. A son and a daughter went through public schools she trusted more than she trusted waterfront talk. After Dean died in 2018 she kept the garden of rhubarb and the habit of walking a neighbor's child to the bus when a shift ran late.

Neighbors remember a woman who swept her sidewalk and yours if the wind had been unfair, who kept a coffee can of measuring spoons, and who could sit through a graduation without making it about herself. She liked the Kaw early, before the heat, when the bluffs still looked like a place a person could walk. She died in Topeka, the only city she had ever needed.

Services

A memorial in Topeka with tea afterward. In lieu of flowers, a gift to an elevator-workers' fund is welcome.

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