



Official Obituary of

Jennifer "Jo" Montana

December 29, 1947 - April 26, 2026

Jennifer 'Jo' (Carter) Montana, born on December 29, 1947, in Ponca City, OK, to Billy and Mary Sue Carter, passed from this world on Sunday, April 25, 2026, to her home in Vinita, Oklahoma.

Jo was born the second of five children in Ponca City, OK, before moving to southern California with the family at the age of six. In 1969, she married Freddie Montana and made their home in Lompoc. Freddie and Jo have two daughters, KC and Kendra Sue, who enjoyed life in the flower fields and beaches of the valley before moving back to her beloved Oklahoma in 1983.

Upon returning home, Jo took care of her growing girls before deciding to run for Mayor of Vinita in 1987. Jo was elected and remains the first and only woman ever to serve as Mayor of Vinita. She was an avid supporter of emergency services, economic development, and infrastructure.

From there Jo made a bid for state representative when women did not run for office in rural Oklahoma. She did not secure the position, but her efforts inspired women to follow in her footsteps and seek public office. She went on to serve as Oklahoma Congressman Mike Synar's campaign manager and field representative for years before taking her position at Grand Gateway Economic Development Association in 1995. During her time at GGEDA, she helped build northeast Oklahoma. Hired as the Highway Safety Coordinator, Jo quickly shined and she was promoted to Capital Improvement Planning Coordinator and soon Director of Capital Improvement Planning. She had a passion for small, poor, rural, and tribal communities. Jo successfully secured multiple millions of dollars in grants for community infrastructure and development, water treatment facilities, roads, bridges, emergency services infrastructure, parks and created countless jobs for area residents through her work. She has been described as 'endlessly dedicated' to the communities she served. She retired from GGEDA as the Deputy Director leaving behind a legacy of progress and good work.

Jo was a devoted Catholic. She was a dedicated member of the Holy Ghost Catholic Church, in Vinita, where she helped establish Oktoberfest, and taught religious education while her girls were growing up.

Jo was an avid runner. Over the past 40 years she could be seen running around the streets of Vinita, and county roads.

Freddie and Jo made their home in Vinita for more than 40 years, enjoying their family and friends and watching their children, nieces and nephews grow.

In 1998, her daughter KC gave birth to her only grandchild, Carter Montana Randolph, who she adored.

Jo served as a member of the Vinita Public Library Board and ROCMD Board of Directors for many years.

Jo is survived by her daughter, Kendra McGeady and husband Tom, of Vinita, grandson Carter Randolph, of Tahlequah, sister Katie Sigler and husband Jeff, of Vinita, brother Timmy Carter and wife Janatha, of Ketchum, brother Chris Carter, of Vinita, and nieces and nephews Kimberlee Chuculate, Timmy Carter, Jared Sigler, Brooke Carter, Launi Bo Wylie, Billy and Adam Carter, of Oklahoma, and sister-in-law Clara Montana and brother-in-law Ray Hennessey of California, and nephew Mitchell Hennessey.

She is preceded in death by her brother Billy C. Carter, parents Billy and Mary Sue Carter, her daughter, KC Montana Randolph, husband Freddie Montana, nephew Park Carter, and sister-in-law Jody Carter.

A rosary will be held at 6 pm on Thursday, April 30, followed by visitation until 8 pm at Burkhalter-Highsmith Funeral Home, in Vinita, Oklahoma.

A funeral service will be held on Friday, May 1, at 2 pm, at Holy Ghost Catholic Church, in Vinita. Graveside services will follow at Carselowey Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that you donate to the KC Montana Randolph Library Foundation at the Vinita Public Library.

Online condolences may be made at www.highsmithfh.com or on the funeral home Facebook page. Arrangements are in the care of the Burkhalter-Highsmith Funeral and Cremation Services of Vinita. "Vinita's only locally family owned and operated funeral home."

Events

Rosary

Thursday, April 30, 2026
6:00PM - 6:30PM

Burckhalter-Highsmith Chapel
201 N Wilson
Vinita, OK 74301

Visitation

Thursday, April 30, 2026
6:30PM - 8:00PM

Burckhalter-Highsmith Chapel
201 N Wilson
Vinita, OK 74301

Funeral Mass

Friday, May 1, 2026
2:00PM

Holy Ghost Catholic Church
120 W Sequoyah Ave. Vinita,
Oklahoma 74301

Final Resting Place

Carselowey Cemetery
Vinita, OK 74301
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