

Gordon Bertolin obituary



For all those connected to Gordon Bertolin, it is with sadness that we inform you he passed away on Dec. 9th, 2025, at 74 years old, after a long battle with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

Gordon grew up in Olympia, Washington and attended Yale University, where he majored in History, a passion he pursued throughout his life. Upon graduation, he joined the Peace Corps, which launched a love of service, travel, and of course, where he met his wife and lifelong partner, Paula. Upon leaving the Peace Corps, they returned to the

United States for graduate school at Columbia University. After graduation, he began his career at USAID as a Foreign Service Officer. Over the course of his career from Peace corps through his retirement in 2007 he served throughout Africa (Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Kenya, South Africa), specializing in democracy building and climate change prevention. He was known as a not only as immensely knowledgeable about the work at USAID, but to be a kind, patient, and fair colleague, supervisor, and mentor. In particular he was an advocate for his FSN/local staff colleagues and dedicated much of his focus on helping to build the next generation of local development leaders. All this while wheelchair bound, battling MS. He retired from the Foreign Service in 2007, but that didn't stop him from giving back. He continued to volunteer at a local citizenship test prep nonprofit, and even proudly canvased for elections and civic involvement on the streets of Arlington, VA from his scooter. In the past decade, he spent his days pursuing family genealogy, studying history, reading, and watching jeopardy. He passed quietly at home on December 9th. Gordon is survived by his wife Paula, his daughters Caroline and Beth, and his four grandchildren, Joanna, Fenn, Elizabeth and Sophia.

Donations in his memory can be made to the National MS Society. And/or please join us in the Annual Walk MS event, held at locations nationwide.