



Etta Hesselink

January 12, 1931 - July 23, 2024

Etta Marie Ter Louw Hesselink was a remarkable woman. Lover of trains, intrepid bicyclist, missionary, teacher, musician, world traveler, lover of art, wife, mother and friend. She touched countless people around the world during her 93 years with her generosity and her unending curiosity and love. And her faith defined who she was, her life, her choices and the legacy she leaves.

Born in Waupun, Wisconsin, to Rev. John S. Ter Louw and Annette (Vander Hart) Ter Louw, Etta grew up as a minister's daughter in 5 different Midwestern towns, with deep family roots in Pella, Iowa. Etta majored in music - Pipe Organ - at Central College (Pella, Iowa), graduating Summa Cum Laude in 3 years. While at Central, she met I. John Hesselink. They were married shortly after her graduation and she moved to Holland, Michigan to be with him for his final 2 years at Western Theological Seminary. During those years, she taught music. Her childhood dream came true in 1953, when she and John headed to Japan as missionaries with son John, then just 9 months old. She loved living in Japan and rising to meet the challenges that faced foreigners in the post-war years. There was also a 2 1/2 year stint in Switzerland while John studied for his doctorate.

Over the first 22 years of their marriage, Etta and John lived in 12 homes, spanning 3 continents - with Etta doing all the packing, maintaining the home,

raising 5 children ... and typing thousands of pages of notes and lectures for John. She also managed to direct choirs, work on a hymn book project, and teach Bible classes.

Her life changed dramatically in 1973, when John became president of Western Theological Seminary and they moved to Holland, Michigan. The move was not what she would have chosen, but, true to her nature, she made the most of it. She now was to live in one town the rest of her years (and 45 years in one house). Stability did not slow her down. Mission work continued to be the love of her life, and Japan remained her passion. In Holland she was active in many things, including working as a translator, teaching origami and courses on Japan and its culture and arts and playing Ragtime music. She was also actively involved in Third Reformed Church and its choir, Japanese Church, HASP and the Century Club, all while supporting John in his role at Western. And, she managed to complete a masters degree at the University of Michigan in Japanese studies at the age of 65. She was tireless - providing relentless support for her family, church and the missionary community, while teaching, performing, and traveling, including leading tours in Japan ... and much more.

Etta died peacefully on July 23, 2024 with family members present. She is survived by her 5 children and 2 grandchildren: John Hesselink III, Ann Hesselink (married to Paul Naour) and her daughter Katie Hesselink-Hicks (married to Chris Kaiser), Jud Hesselink, Nathan Hesselink (married to Serra Hwang) and their son Braque Hesselink, and Greg Hesselink. There are numerous nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her 5 siblings and her husband, Dr. I. John Hesselink, Jr.

She will be deeply missed. May her inspiration to all of us remain alive.

A memorial service will be 10:00 a.m. Monday, August 5, 2024 at Third

Reformed Church, 111 W. 13th St. Holland. To watch the service, please visit, <https://trcholland.org>. A time of fellowship will follow the service. Interment in Graafschap Cemetery. To leave a condolence and for more information, please visit, www.langelandsterenberg.com.

Cemetery Details

Graafschap Cemetery

32nd Steet at Graafschap Road
Holland, MI 49423

Previous Events

Memorial Service

AUG 5. 10:00 AM (ET)

Third Reformed Church
111 West 13th St.
Holland, MI 49423

Tribute Wall

ML

“ *My belated condolences to Etta's family and friends. Etta was my late grandfather's (John Walter Ter Louw) sister. I had the joy of visiting Etta and John oh, maybe 15 years ago in Holland, MI. They were such warm, generous, and interesting people. I loved meeting them and the short time we spent together.*

Several years after that meeting, Etta called me out of the blue, quite by accident. I was at a grocery store and saw her name pop up and happily answered, thinking it must be important. I believe this was soon after John passed and she was moving some of their possessions. Even though she called me by mistake and I was in the middle of the store, we must have talked for at least 20 minutes, like we were old friends.

I think of Etta once in a while and now am sad to learn of her passing. The memories here have given me a fuller picture of her and her life. She is missed. I hope her children and grandchildren are doing well.

Mike Ter Louw - November 20, 2025 at 01:32 AM

DB

“ *Etta has been a friend since our college days. Our most notable relationship was the result of an architectural tour of contemporary churches in Japan which I was asked to do by the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art & architecture.*

Etta contributed information, insight, and contacts in preparing for the tour. I chose Etta to be our guide knowing her clarity of mind and speech in Japanese and English. In choosing our hotels and dining venues, Erma observed that architects traveled differently than missionaries. Meticulous in planning, Etta went far beyond the second mile in doing the tour in advance in order to assure that everything was "doable. On the tour Etta, because of both knowledge and personality quickly appeared to be the star of the show and was loved by all. Because of her, the tour was a resounding success.

Last year I went on a Smithsonian tour to Japan. It was a vivid reminder, by contrast, of the sterling success of our Japanese tour. After the tour I called on Etta and was able to remind her of her stellar contribution to the success of that tour. She will be missed.
Don Bruggink

Donald J Bruggink - August 04, 2024 at 01:55 PM



“ *Ann*
I was so sorry to read of mom's death but thru it I got to remember you! There is a time... <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/tg9j4MsLU7a7XZW4/?mibextid=oGgwdE>

William Peake - July 30, 2024 at 06:28 PM

JB

“ Miss Etta was a friend of my late Mother Lois V.O. They were in the Woman's Group together working on many church activities. She was a lovely lady. My thoughts and prayers are with the family.

Judy Van Oosterhout Bakker - July 29, 2024 at 12:50 PM

TF

“ I have many happy memories of Etta, the first of which was back in the early 60's when the Hesselinks, as RCA missionaries visited us at First Reformed Church in Lansing, IL, where my father was pastor. I remember they came to our house for Sunday dinner, and there was an ice cream social after church on Sunday night. Later, in Holland both John and Etta were supportive to me in so many ways in my work at Christ Memorial and as a "special" student at Hope College. I always looked forward to seeing them when I would sing at Third Church in the summers. The world and the Kingdom of God are better off for Etta's contributions. I am sorry to hear of her passing. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Thomas Mark Folkert - July 26, 2024 at 08:52 PM



“ Your Light Shines was purchased for the family of Etta Hesselink.



July 26, 2024 at 02:53 PM

GW

“ As her stylist for many many years I really got to know and appreciate her talent and wisdom Her zest for life and learning was remarkable Sending my deepest sympathy to all of you

Gail Shinabarger Wheatley - July 26, 2024 at 10:23 AM

GD

“ Prayers for family as you grieve and celebrate her life 🙏

Graham Duryee - July 26, 2024 at 08:49 AM

PF

“ Our sincere condolences to Etta's entire loving family.

*~The Fabiano Family
Holland Peanut Store
Holland, Michigan*

Paula Fabiano - July 25, 2024 at 07:56 PM