



Janice R. VerHelst

September 4, 1928 - August 3, 2024

Janice R. VerHelst, age 95, of Holland, passed away Saturday, August 3, 2024 at Riley's Grove Assisted Living and Memory Care in Zeeland.

Janice Rae VerHelst was lovingly welcomed into this world on September 4, 1928 by parents Susanne and Garrett VanderBorgh in Holland, MI. She attended Holland Public Schools and Hope College where she met her husband, Maurice VerHelst Jr. and proudly graduated with him in 1950. Together they embarked on a short teaching career before he enlisted in the Air Force which began their travels together including time in Biloxi, MS and East Orange, New Jersey. They shared two children, Jeff and Jenni, before returning to settle with their family in Holland Heights in 1962 where they became devoted members of Calvary Reformed Church and had dear neighbors who became second family members. Jan became a young widow in 1965 when Bud passed away from Hodgkin's disease.

Thus began Jan's next chapter in life trailblazing as a working single mother of two which in the mid-60's was not an easy or typical lifestyle. She was offered the opportunity to organize the library program in the West Ottawa Public School district and after taking graduate classes at Western Michigan University, served as an elementary school librarian there for the next 26 years along with good friend Ruth Dirkse. She met many other lifelong friends thru her career.

After a short retirement, Jan was asked to collaborate on a new educational program forming for retired adults in Holland. As an advocate for life-long learning, Hope Academy for Senior Professionals or HASP as it is known, fit in perfectly with her need for "intellectual stimulation" and she eagerly joined in growing that program, volunteering with them for 11 years and receiving their Distinguished Service award in 2001.

Because of her creativity, leadership gifts and great compassion, community and church involvement was always important to Jan engaging her in many activities. She was a member of AAUW, League of Women Voters, served as a Resthaven Board member, Calvary Reformed Church teacher and elder, Christ Memorial Church Kids Hope tutor, and Adult Learning to Read mentor.

Other talents and hobbies included playing the piano, knitting, gardening, playing pinochle, traveling internationally with family, coloring, reading all genres with mysteries being a favorite and completing crossword puzzles, still recently able to assist her daughter with some unknown answers. In her final years, heartily singing hymns with Carolyn, a dear companion, also brought her great joy.

Jan remained a cheerleader for Holland establishing thru HASP, a Dutch Tour Guide program during Tulip Time that remained for many years and then moving downtown into the Warm Friend where she lived for 13 truly wonderful years sharing great friendships and watching many parades from her apartment windows.

It's no wonder Grandma Jan was lovingly known to her family as the "energizer bunny".

Hope College was always a large presence in Jan's life from her roots as the

daughter of a Hope professor, attendance as an undergrad, Delphi Sorority member, establishing lifelong friendships, and meeting her marriage partner in Bible class to always encouraging her children and grandchildren to attend, where she finally found success as one grandchild is a fellow alumni. Jan provided a warm substitute family presence with her frequent meal invitations for many out of state cousins and summer living arrangements for international students attending Hope College.

Jan wished to be remembered as someone who "loved my Lord and my family and treasured my friends" which she certainly did and will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Since childhood, books were her "special friends" so please, go read one in her honor today.

Special thanks go to Warm Friend staff, Hospice staff and the many caregivers and staff at Riley's Grove who treated Janice with kindness, compassion and utmost respect, especially in her final days. You are all so much appreciated!

Janice was preceded in death by her husband, Maurice VerHelst, Jr. in 1965; and great granddaughter, Nella Praamsma.

Janice is survived by her:

Son

Jeffrey (Tami) VerHelst of Phoenix, AZ

Daughter

Jennifer VerHelst of Holland

Grandchildren

Arjana VerHelst
Joshua (Shana) VerHelst
Rebekah (Chris) Praamsma
Jason (Jessica) VerHelst
Elle VerHelst

Great Grandchildren
Hanna (Leo) Kronkosky
Keemaya Praamsma
Xander VerHelst
Sabella VerHelst
LuJune VerHelst
Cash VerHelst

A memorial service is planned for 2:00pm Saturday, September 21, at Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home, 315 E 16th St., Holland. Rev. Bill Boersma will officiate. A private burial has taken place in Lake Forest Cemetery in Grand Haven. Memorial contributions may be made to Hope College, Habitat for Humanity, Hospice of Holland, or Words of Hope. Arrangements are by Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home and condolences may be left online at www.langelandsterenbergh.com.

Cemetery Details

Lake Forest Cemetery

Grand Haven, MI

Previous Events

Community Farewell/Memorial Service

SEP 21. 2:00 PM (ET)

Langeland-Sterenbergh Funeral Home
315 E 16th St
Holland, MI 49423-4213

Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Watch Funeral Service in memory of Janice R. VerHelst*



Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes - September 21, 2024 at 03:39 PM



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Janice R. VerHelst*



Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes - September 19, 2024 at 05:34 PM

MG

“ *Jenny,*

I am sorry for the loss of your mom. Jan was a special, dear friend and neighbor for many years at Maple Creek, and I will have fond of our time together.

Myra De Graaf

Myra De Graaf - August 21, 2024 at 03:17 PM

PV

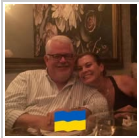
“ Dear Jen on behalf of the family,

While saddened by this news of Jan's transformation, how appropriate that it comes first through HASP. She was such a pillar of the organization, ever a friendly face and greeting, to say nothing more of the many attributes you have shared in the obituary. Thank you for her mini-biography.

Best of God's blessings to you and the others who will have been blessed by Jan. You are a sacred successor to your mom, and may you continue to follow in her footsteps. I'll hope to see you at her memorial service.

*Fondly,
Peg VanGrouw*

Peg VanGrouw - August 11, 2024 at 05:41 PM



“ Jen: Sorry to hear of your Mom's passing. Our Moms were high school and college classmates, sorority sisters and good friends.
Jim Schipper

Jim Schipper - August 08, 2024 at 12:39 PM

JV

I remember her talking about many activities with Vern and Isla and the rest of the Hope crew! Thanks Jim!

jen verhelst - August 13, 2024 at 01:08 PM

BL

“ Jen,
Your mom sounds like a very special lady. What a life and legacy!
Sending sympathy to you and your family.
Barb Long

Barb Long - August 08, 2024 at 10:49 AM