



Leola J. Oonk

March 19, 1931 - April 8, 2026

Leola Jeane (Van Koevering) Oonk, 95, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, April 8, in Zeeland, Michigan.

Born on March 19, 1931, in Zeeland, Leola was a woman of great faith and quiet resilience who moved through life with a smile on her face and a song in her heart. A graduate of Zeeland High School and the Grand Rapids Junior College School of Nursing, she devoted many years to caring for patients at Zeeland Hospital bringing to her work the same tenderness she brought to everything she loved. She helped bring hundreds of babies into the world as the lead RN of the OB Department, and those who worked alongside her knew they were witnessing something more than skilled nursing; they were seeing a vocation lived out with joy. After retirement, she provided home care nursing for infants and also volunteered as a flight nurse for Wings of Mercy.

Leola was unapologetically devoted to the people in her life. She was the kind of woman who would not hear a bad word spoken about anyone she loved — and she loved widely and without reservation. To know Leola was to feel known. She was a loyal and trusted friend, a gifted and tireless volunteer, and a steadfast presence for anyone who needed one. She was deeply intelligent, an avid reader who engaged thoughtfully with ideas and people alike; always curious, always generous with her attention.

Her faith was not ornamental; it was the foundation of everything. A member

of Second Reformed Church in Zeeland, she lived her beliefs through daily acts of grace, protection, and welcome.

She is survived by her son Tom (Deb) Oonk of Zeeland; grandchildren Holly (Rob) Corrigan, Logan (Lindsey) Oonk, Spencer Oonk, Matthew Oonk, and Isaac Oonk; great-grandchildren Harper Corrigan and Colin and Marin Oonk. Brother David Van Koevering of Eaton Rapids; and many beloved nieces and nephews.

Her husband Jack, to whom she was married for 56 years, preceded her in death in 2007, followed by her beloved son Timothy Oonk, in 2015. She was also preceded in death by her parents, George and Dorothy Van Koevering, and her brothers George and Barry.

A celebration of life service will be Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 2:30pm, 2nd Reformed Church, 225 E Central Avenue, Zeeland. Visitation will be 1-2:15pm prior to the service. Burial will be in Zeeland Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Wings of Mercy. www.yntemafh.com

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 14. 1:00 PM - 2:15 PM (ET)

Second Reformed Church
225 East Central Avenue
Zeeland, MI 49464

Funeral Service

APR 14. 2:30 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Second Reformed Church
225 East Central Avenue
Zeeland, MI 49464

Tribute Wall



“ *Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Leola J. Oonk* ”



Langeland-Sterenberg Yntema Funeral Homes - April 14 at 08:45 AM

AC

“ Leola was a dear close friend of my mother , Marcia Berghorst Davis From when I was 6 months old until I was 2 years old.. my mother and I lived in an apartment above BJW Berghorst & Sons , while my father was serving in the Army in Korea... Leola , Jack and Tommy also resided in an apartment there .. Tommy and I born only one week apart were always together .. like twins! And I'm told I called Jack

“ Daddy “ ... eventually we moved back to Knoxville TN on my Dads return ... but I grew up seeing my Mom and Leola stay in touch as close friends... Leola made trips to Tennessee numerous times to stay with my Mom (Jack did not come but let Leola have a girl trip) and they would stay up late talking all night ; like sisters ... so I heard a lot of their stories. Growing up ... our family drove to Michigan every summer in June to visit my Mom's parents Bill and Romey Berghorst ... at their cottage at the lake... we always made a visit to Zeeland to see Leola during those times ... one famous story Leola told was during high school, when she and my Mom were inseparable, they held an after school job at the Zeeland news paper that Leola's father ran or owned ? (not certain which) mom and Leola would walk there after school... one day they decided they just didn't want to work that particular day ... so they chose to do sometime else ... probably hang out at the soda joint ? So the result was Leola's father fired them! My mom proclaimed throughout her life that she had been fired from one job ! (I do believe They were rehired with some consequences) Well Leola did not follow her father in the newspaper trade but made her own news with all the people she touched as a nurse ! I have nothing but positive fond memories of Leola and while my mother was sick with dementia before she passed in 2017... I would talk to Leola who made me feel like I was talking with my own mom I last saw Leola when our family came to Michigan in 2018 to bring my mothers remains to Zeeland. I saw Leola serval times that week and also met her a church for a Sunday service .. I am blessed to have know this loving, gentle woman who loved God, life, laughter and family and friends .. she treated me like family because she and my Mom considered themselves sisters .. I love you Leola and look forward

to the time I see you again Reunited with my Mom now 🌸💕

Anne Colquitt - April 26 at 09:56 AM

SL

“ *I couldn't possibly fit everything that "Ola" meant to me in one paragraph...*

We met in 1955 when my quartet came up from Peoria, Ill. to sing for Tulip Time. I was 16...After Don and I married in 1957, and moved to Holland, Jack and Ola used to bring the boys over to our house in their "Dr. Dentons", put them to bed, and we'd spend the evening playing Canasta and visiting...

Through the years, the connection to Barbershop harmony was the focal point of just about everything we did as friends...both of our husbands were part of very successful and entertaining quartets that continued to sing for years...

Ola and I formed a very strong bond, both as wives and mothers, but really as sisters...I enjoyed bringing her a dessert in the afternoons these past couple of years...I miss our reminiscing...I miss her.

Susan Lucas

Susan Lucas - April 12 at 08:07 AM

KW

“ *What a perfect obituary describing Leola's legacy of faith, love and selfless service. She was a dear friend to my Aunt Verna and to my mother. I remember Bible Study and prayer time with Leola and the fact that she loved her family very much! My heart reaches out to you in sympathy and love and you celebrate her legacy and grieve her loss.*

Kathy Wyngarden

Kathy Wyngarden - April 10 at 02:35 PM

BV

“ Growing up, we all loved to visit Aunt Leola and Uncle Jack. Since we didn't live close, visits weren't as frequent. But I guess that made them more special. Happy memories of hanging out with our cousins, swimming in the pool and, walking on stilts!?! in the summer. And we always looked forward to getting a visit from the "Christmas Chicken" during the winter holiday get-togethers. She was a special lady and will be missed.

Brian Vankoevering - April 10 at 01:39 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Leola J. Oonk.



April 10 at 01:18 PM

TF

“ I am so sorry to read this news. Leola was a very special person. She was one of the first people I met when I moved to Zeeland in 1975. She was a kind and generous person. She had a great sense of humor and a wonderful laugh. I have an original piece of art in my home that she and Jack had made for me when I was the Music Director at First Reformed, where they were members at that time. It serves as a memory of the Oonk family and their love, talent, generosity and faith. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Thomas Folkert - April 09 at 08:43 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Leola J. Oonk.

April 09 at 01:39 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Leola J. Oonk.*



April 09 at 01:39 PM