

Johanna Jantiena Renkema

May 18, 1927 – September 17, 2023



Johanna Jantiena Renkema was born on May 18, 1927 to Gerke and Janna Harmina Anna Van Kampen Renkema. Jo was the oldest of three, including two brothers. Growing up as a child during World War II was difficult. The German occupation of Holland affected every aspect of life such as schools only being open half days. In 1945, after the liberation of Holland, schools returned to full days. In Holland, education was very important. High school was like going to college. Students were required to learn four languages: French, Dutch, English, and German. Only academic subjects were taught. In 1948, Jo graduated from high school. After a successful treatment for tuberculosis, Jo decided to pursue a nursing career.

In 1960, Jo and her family were visited by her cousin, Dr. Simon Wolters, an OB/GYN physician practicing at the Kaiser Permanente Foundation Hospital in Fontana, California. Dr. Wolters suggested that Jo consider coming to the United States to pursue her nursing career at Kaiser – Fontana. Dr. Wolters said he would sponsor Jo and help her get a work permit. Jo accepted his offer and worked for two years to pay for her transportation to America.

Jo left Holland on a ten-day voyage to America with 400 other passengers. She played the ship's organ to help entertain the passengers! On April 13, 1962 when she was thirty-four years old, Jo arrived in California. For five years, Jo worked as a staff Registered Nurse in the acute surgical ward of Kaiser Hospital in Fontana.

In 1967, Jo's father was very ill with cancer, and Jo went back to Holland to help care for him. After her father passed away, Jo accepted a position as Director of Nursing at Salem Christian Homes at the Ontario location.

In 1979, Jo accepted a position with Casa Colina in Pomona as a Registered Nurse on the stroke team. She remained at Casa Colina for ten years until her retirement in 1989.

Retirement allowed more time to enjoy classical music and operas. Jo also did volunteer work at Upland Rehabilitation and Care Center for many years. She also delivered meals for "Meals on Wheels" in Upland and was a Deacon at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ontario. Her Christian faith continued to guide her life and she led TLC Bible Study at the church.

In 2000, Jo moved from Upland, California to Hillcrest Retirement Homes in La Verne, California. After moving, she joined the La Verne Heights Presbyterian Church, where she remained a member until her passing on September 17, 2023 at Hillcrest Homes and Wood's Health Services of natural causes.

Jo's family and friends especially want to thank all affiliated with Hillcrest Homes and Wood's Health Services in La Verne. Jo chose Hillcrest Homes and Wood's Health Services as the place in which she wanted to live when it became too difficult to live in her own home. The names of all who served Jo at Hillcrest Homes and Wood's Health Services, in some cases for many years, are honored in God's Book of Life!

Jo is survived by many friends in the United States and by family in Australia and Holland. She will be laid to rest at Bellevue Park, 1240 W. G Street, in Ontario, California.

A Celebration of Life Memorial Service will be held at 10 a.m. at La Verne Heights Presbyterian Church on Saturday, September 30.

In lieu of flowers, Jo requested contributions may be made to

La Verne Heights Presbyterian Church
1040 Baseline Rd., La Verne