



## Erika Anna Sluyters

March 30, 1926 - November 26, 2019

Erika Sluyters (nee Hanke) died on November 26, 2019. She was 93 years old. To say Erika had a full life is an understatement, a life with several distinct chapters. She was born on March 30, 1926 in Bandung on the island of Java in the Dutch East Indies (present day Indonesia). She was the daughter of Anna and Norbert Hanke, a telecommunications executive who was responsible for initiating telephone service between Holland and the Dutch East Indies. Consequently, the first phone call made from present day Indonesia and the Netherlands was placed from Erika's father in Batavia (Jakarta) to Erika's mother in Amsterdam.

Erika had a wonderful childhood along with her two older brothers, Norbert and Karel. By the time she was 16 years old, she was fully immersed into the tropical lifestyle and fluent in seven languages, including the three local languages of Java. She would often recount stories of finding scorpions in her bed or giant lizards and snakes in the bathroom. These were the days before air conditioning and windows were constantly open. In March of 1942, Japan invaded the East Indies and she was put into a Japanese prison camp, where she spent the next three and a half years with her mother (they separated the men and the women). This was a difficult time for Erika and her family. She bore witness to many atrocities and was significantly malnourished by time the American Army liberated her camp in 1945. She kept an empty Quaker Oats can in her kitchen that was airdropped into her camp by the American Army Air Forces as a reminder of the kindness that the United States had bestowed upon her.

At the end of World War II, the local atrocities on Europeans continued as the local Indonesian independence movement took hold. Erika and her family left The East Indies at the end of 1945 and was repatriated to the Netherlands. She was a refugee in her own country. She hadn't gone to school in four years and was nearly 20 years old. Erika quickly immersed herself into her education and met Theodorus Sluyters at a University of Amsterdam dance in 1951. She became a 2nd grade teacher in Amsterdam and married Theo in 1956. After Theo earned his Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Amsterdam in 1959, they moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where Theo worked as a nuclear physicist at

CERN (European Center of Nuclear Research). Their sons, Julian and Romuald, were born in Geneva before leaving for the United States in 1964. Her husband was a world-renowned high energy physicist at Brookhaven National Lab until his death in 1991.

Erika was a librarian for many years at the Patchogue library and sang in the Bay Area Friends of the Fine Arts (BAFFA) chorus. She was a world traveler, avid gardener and reader, played a mean piano and had a massive classical CD collection. She lived in the same house in East Patchogue for 55 years. Erika is survived by her two sons, Romuald (and Heather), Julian (and Cynthia), nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, please donate to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research ([www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)).

# Comments

---



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



**Karel Hanke** - December 04, 2019 at 01:03 PM

---



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



**Robertaccio Funeral Home, Inc.** - December 02, 2019 at 02:58 PM