



Karolyn Lenore Lee

April 1, 1944 - September 16, 2025

Karolyn Lenore Lee, age 81, a longtime resident of Bloomington, Minnesota and a beloved member of Oak Grove Presbyterian Church on West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, sadly left our world on September 16, 2025, after a life richly lived in giving love to others in service and kindness. She was born shortly after her twin sister Kathryn Lee on April 1, 1944 at the former Starbuck Hospital in Starbuck, Minnesota. Karolyn was the daughter of the late Rudolph Thomas Lee and his wife Eleanor [Pederson] Lee. She was also predeceased by her brother Karl Thomas Lee who died at birth.

Karolyn attended all twelve grades at the Starbuck Public School, Starbuck, Minnesota, graduating in 1962. She loved music, sang in the school choirs, and played flute in the concert and marching bands. She had talent in the art area and was the art editor for the 1962 Starbuck High School Yearbook.

Karolyn received her bachelor's degree in elementary education at the University of Moorhead, Minnesota. Later, she took extra courses at the University of Mankato, for the purpose of developing expertise in creating and operating a library resource center.

Karolyn and Kathy were very close throughout their entire lives. They loved each other as well as being best friends and communicators. Even though they were roommates only at the beginning and end of Karolyn's life, they visited each other whenever possible and had a wealth of wonderful and fun life-experiences together. They made a point of calling each other at bedtime each night to touch base.

Karolyn loved teaching and helping young Bloomington school students work toward achieving their potential. She started her career as an elementary classroom teacher and then moved into being appointed to the position as a Library Research Center Specialist where she excelled in the Bloomington school system and became very respected because of the effectiveness of her work.

Her nephew Chris said that storytelling was Karolyn's love language, an expertise that helped her become such a good research center specialist and a special aunt. He stated, "She reveled in the beautiful, enduring connections made through the sharing of stories, whether reading a book to children, making up a bedtime tale, or recounting real-life stories in casual conversation. To hear her tell a story was to be transfixed by her dulcet voice, her subtly animated inflections, and her boundless joy in the shared moment. And to tell her your own story was to receive the gift of a kindhearted and empathetic listener."

To the people who knew her, Karolyn was a giving, kind, compassionate, and loving human being. Nephew Jon stated, "But one characteristic she excelled in was imagination. Karolyn had a stunning imagination, and was more than willing to share and inspire all around her. It began with her beloved media center at a Bloomington school. The school had an open floorplan, with the classrooms surrounding, and opening into hers. In the middle of that media center was a tower to little learners. It had little caves and cubbies, each containing stuffed whistle-shaped chairs to lounge in while you read about knights and dragons and mystical faraway lands. To an eager student, it was a magical place, a natural place for lots of young imagination."

Karolyn introduced her Bloomington school students, as well as her two nephews, Chris and Jon, to computers. Jon wrote, "Each summer, she would bring the most up-to-date Apple desktop, accompanied by a stack of (actual) floppy discs with enough games and puzzles to keep us occupied for days. I fondly remember playing 'Oregon Trail,' and pondering what it must have been like to travel that dangerous path. Imagination strikes again."

Jon vividly recalls another wonderful nephew experience when Karolyn took the popular movie character "E.T." and created a make-believe character "T.E.," who supposedly was an unknown sibling of "E.T.": "Grandma's house had a marshy meadow behind it, and at the far edge of the field was a strangely-shaped and mysterious house. I don't ever recall seeing anyone go in or out, further adding to the mystery. Of course, Karolyn took it as an opportunity to weave a tale so complex and exciting that we could not wait until after dinner the next night when the story would continue. In short, this was the era of "E.T."; that little pot-bellied astral traveler was everywhere...cartoons, TV commercials, magazines, comic books. Much to our amazement, Karolyn shared with us the top-secret news that E.T. had a sibling, whose name was T.E. And T.E. just happened to live in the dark and shadowy house behind Grandma's in Glenwood, MN. Small world, I guess! Chris and I would sit on the edge of our seats, listening to Karolyn regale us with stories of T.E.'s adventures and travels, long after the sun set and the giant Minnesota mosquitos began circling above. I have met very few people since who could hold the attention of young kids to a knife's edge, always leaving us wanting more."

Karolyn was a very active member of the Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, joining the Church in 1988. She loved to talk about her church, its ministry, her spiritual faith, and her many friends there. One of her very favorite activities at Oak Grove was singing in its church choir. She looked to the weekly rehearsals and loved the Sunday Services. She served several years as a deacon.

Karolyn was invited to serve on the board of a Bloomington credit union, now named "My Credit Union." She served on this board for many years. Several of her ideas and suggestions became realities in the Credit Union's activities and operations. Recently, Karolyn became an Honorary Board Member of the Education Foundation of Bloomington because of her excellent work and commitment to this nonprofit organization. She was invited to be a Board

Member when she was actively teaching and put her heart and work in helping this Foundation to foster educational excellence, giving classroom grants, college scholarships, supplies for students in need, and presenting prodigy awards to outstanding educators.

Karolyn is survived by her sister Kathryn Lee who continues to live at Presbyterian Homes of Bloomington and her brother Ronald (Marie) Lee and who lives in Kingston, Rhode Island. She is also survived by nephew Jonathan (Leslie) Lee and their children Erik and Amy who live in Rhode Island, and nephew Christopher (Nora) Lee and their children Eleanor and Greta who reside in Connecticut. Karolyn also has three step-nephews, Jonathan (Jodie) Bender from Colorado, Jeremy (Beth) Bender from Maryland, and Joshua (Katie) Bender from New Jersey, and their families. Karolyn has many cousins and their children who live in the Midwest.

There will be a memorial service for Karolyn Lee at Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, 2200 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, Minnesota on Saturday, September 27, 2025 at 1:00 p.m., with visitation beginning at noon. The service will also be livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook for those unable to attend in person. Following the service, all are invited to join the family and friends in the church social hall for light refreshments and continuing conversation.

Memorials in remembrance of Karolyn may be given to Oak Grove Presbyterian Church, Bloomington, MN, or to a charity of your choice.

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **27**. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church (Bloomington)
2200 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431

Memorial Service

SEP **27**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church (Bloomington)
2200 West Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, MN 55431

Tribute Wall

AH

“*Karolyn and I were fellow staff members at Normandale Hills Elementary School in Bloomington, and on the staff that opened Normandale in 1968. Also, we lived across the hall from each other in an apartment building. As our media center director, she was an excellent support with students and staff in locating "fun" books or appropriate materials for reports, or special topics. Karolyn had a smile, sense of humor, and a special cheerful sound to her voice. Karolyn, those years are fondly remembered. May you rest in Peace.*

Ardelle Hansen

Ardelle Hanse - September 26, 2025 at 12:58 PM

TH

“*So sorry to learn of Karolyn's passing. I worked with her for many years at Normandale Hills Elementary. Such a wonderful lady! Respectful, Kind and always willing to lend a hand. I will miss her sense of humor and friendship.*

*With sympathy,
Theresa Harrington*

Theresa M Harrington - September 25, 2025 at 08:28 PM

KS

“*I am so sorry to hear of her passing. May you find comfort in the many memories you have. Sending peace and God's blessings to you and the entire family.*

Kim Sacchetti - September 25, 2025 at 01:55 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Karolyn Lenore Lee.*



September 25, 2025 at 01:49 PM



“ *Sending my sympathies to the family and friends of Karolyn. She had a wonderful sense of humor, and I loved to hear her stories and share a laugh together. I worked with her at Normandale Hills, and she was a treasure.*
Blessings to all of you,
Eva Carcione

Eva Carcione - September 25, 2025 at 10:32 AM