eulogy.co.za

Good afternoon, family, friends, neighbours, and all the people who somehow found their way into Nana Nora’s orbit and never quite left.

I’m Leah, her granddaughter,
the one who spent most school holidays in her kitchen,
flour on my cheek,
cinnamon under my nails,
trying to copy her way of crimping a pie edge with one hand while shooing me away from the koeksister syrup with the other.

We’re here to celebrate the life of Nora Evelyn Jacobs,
our Nana Nora,
born on 28 November 1939 in Pietermaritzburg,
who lived 86 bright years,
and somehow fitted a whole community around her table.

She grew up in Pietermaritzburg,
in a street where people knew each other’s dogs and recipes.
Out of that place and that spirit,
she started a home-industry bakery at her dining room table.
No branding,
no fancy equipment,
just a woman who knew that butter should be cold,
hands should be warm,
and neighbours should leave with more than they arrived with.

What began as “Nora, can you bake just two milk tarts for the school fundraiser?”
became a beloved neighbourhood fixture.

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

If you know, you know:
the milk tart with the velvet custard that never wept,
and the koeksisters that snapped softly before giving in to syrup.
She'd laugh when people asked for the "secret."
"There's no secret," she'd say,
"just patience and a dash more kindness than the recipe calls for."

Later she moved to Pretoria to be closer to us,
to Graham and Belinda, her children,
and to us grandchildren, Daniel and Kayla and me.
Pretoria's markets didn't know what hit them.
She set up her table at the Boeremark like it was a stage and a front porch all at once.
That's one of my favourite memories:
Saturday mornings, the sun barely up,
her table laid out like a hymn to butter and spice,
and every second person got a hug and a sample, whether they wanted it or not.
She had this way of turning buyers into friends and strangers into family
before the coffee even cooled.

She was married to the great love of her life,
the late Lionel,
whose photo still watched over her kettle.
They teased each other like old songbirds,
and even after he passed,
she kept his quiet steadiness beside her like a second heartbeat.
If you commented on their long marriage,
she would tilt her head and say,
"Ag, we just never kept score."

That line tells you a lot about her.
Nana was joyful, hospitable, resilient, endlessly resourceful, quick to laugh.
She believed in open-door hospitality,

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

in generosity without keeping score.
in community first,
in gratitude in all seasons.
Nothing was wasted with her —
not a scrap of pastry,
not a chance to welcome,
not a hard day that couldn’t be softened with a warm plate and a chair pulled out.

She didn’t limit her giving to her kitchen table.
She organised church fêtes that somehow felt both military-precise and cheerfully chaotic.
She ran community food drives with a clipboard in one hand and a tray in the other.
Half the city learned her name at those events,
the other half learned the taste of cinnamon that seemed to follow her like a signature.

And she played as hard as she worked.
She had her lawn bowls at the local club —
she called it “gentle sport with not-so-gentle commentary,”
and laughed like a bell whenever the bias betrayed her.
She coaxed fynbos to bloom in places it had no business thriving,
whispering to seedlings as if they were shy guests at a party.
She sang in a community choir,
not the loudest voice,
but that soft, steady alto that makes harmonies honest.
She pretended Sudoku relaxed her,
though we all caught her muttering at grids like they owed her rent.
And Sundays?
Big lunches, always.
A roast that smelled like home, salads that actually got eaten,
and a proper pudding,
because what kind of household sends people away without pudding?

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

If you ever came to one of those lunches,
you know the magic trick she pulled off,
the one that made her who she was.
She could stand at the stove,
stirring, tasting, laughing,
and somehow also be fully with you.
She'd look you in the eye, tilt her head just so,
and ask the question beneath the question.
Then, a hand on your shoulder,
a joke to loosen the knot,
a plate slid across to anchor the moment.
It was never performance.
It was presence.
That's what we'll miss most:
the smell of cinnamon in her kitchen,
the open-armed welcomes,
and the way she made a person feel like the guest of honour,
even if they'd just popped in to borrow sugar.

She had a spine of steel under all that softness.
Life asked hard things of her — losses, lean times, changes —
and she answered with resilience and resourcefulness.
When money was tight, she baked more.
When someone was lonely, she set another place.
When a plan fell apart, she laughed and made a new one.
She never denied the struggle; she stirred it into the batter and kept going.

People sometimes think gratitude is a mood.
For Nana, it was a discipline, and also a joy.
She named her blessings out loud,
not in a list to impress,
but as a way of seeing.
"Look at this day," she'd say, handing you coffee.

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

“Just look at it. What a wonderful world.”
And then she’d hum a bar or two,
not because it was a classic,
but because she meant it in her bones.

Since we’re wearing bright colours today,
I can hear her clicking her tongue at the thought of a black suit on a day like this.
She’d have told us to bring the light we have and put it to work.

To my mom, Belinda,
and to my uncle, Graham:
you learned from her not just recipes,
but a way of being.
I see her in the way you phone back,
in the extra serving you pack “just in case,”
in the way your door never needs an appointment.
To my brother Daniel, my sister Kayla, and to me —
we are the lucky ones who got her apron strings tied around our wrists like bracelets.
We know how to roll pastry until you can almost read a newspaper through it.
We know that tea is a verb.
We know that a table is not measured by its size,
but by the number of chairs you’re willing to pull from the garage.

And to all of you who came because somehow Nana made room for you —
she would have recognised every face,
remembered how you take your coffee,
and asked about your auntie’s hip before you could finish hello.
That was her way of measuring a life:
not in accolades,
but in the stories people carry out the door.

I keep thinking about those early mornings at the Boeremark.

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

I can still feel the cool air and the paper bags warm from the tarts.
A practical memory, yes,
but also a picture of her gift.
She met people before the day had decided what it was going to be,
and gave them a sweet beginning,
and a laugh to go with it.
That’s how she moved through the world:
a little ahead of the rush,
arms open,
offering a taste of something good.

It’s tempting, standing here, to say we’ve lost our anchor.
But Nana would insist the anchor was never a person —
it was the love we practised together.
She showed us how.
Now it’s ours to keep practising.

So, how do we honour her?
We make room at our tables, even when the fridge looks bare.
We give without keeping score.
We bring a plate to the neighbour who just moved in,
and we learn their names.
We sing in choirs even if we’re sure we’re off-key.
We plant something that needs patience.
We play our gentle sports fiercely and laugh at the bias.
We take a puzzle seriously enough to mutter at it,
but not so seriously we forget to make tea.
We say thank you often,
and mean it.

And when “What a Wonderful World” plays,
as it will today,
we let it land.
We let it be both a song and a promise,

because she lived like it was true.

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

There’s a community kitchen she championed,
a place where stories come with soup and dignity is served hot.
If you feel moved to remember her that way,
our family would be glad.
It’s exactly the kind of legacy she’d want:
not flowers wilting in a week,
but meals turning into second chances.

Nana, if I close my eyes,
I can see you in your fynbos garden,
apron still on,
hands in the earth,
head lifted to see who’s walking up the path.
You’ll wipe your hands, open your arms,
and say, “Ag, look who’s here.”
You always made us feel like we’d arrived exactly where we were meant to be.

Thank you for every Saturday at the market,
for every Sunday lunch,
for the smell of cinnamon that told us we were home.
Thank you for teaching us that hospitality is not performance,
it’s courage.
That community isn’t an event,
it’s a daily choice.
That gratitude isn’t naïve,
it’s strong.

We will miss you in the kitchen,
in the choir,
on the green,
in the garden,
at the market.

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za

But we will find you where we pass plates and listen properly,
where we laugh with our whole faces,
where we hold our heads high and our doors open.

Today is a celebration,
not because we don’t feel the ache,
but because you taught us to notice the light anyway.
You showed us how to set the table for joy,
no matter the season.

Go well, Nana Nora.
Give Grandpa Lionel a nudge from us.
We’ll keep the kettle on,
we’ll keep the tarts cooling on the rack,
and we’ll keep making room.

What a wonderful world you helped make.

This speech was created with eulogy.co.za.Answer a few questions and generate your own personalised speech now ateulogy.co.za

Create your own personalised speech at eulogy.co.za