



## John Robert VanOcker

October 26, 1953 - December 18, 2017

John R. VanOcker, age 64 of Kalkaska, formerly of Grand Rapids, passed away unexpectedly early Monday morning, December 18, 2017. He was born on October 26, 1953 in Grand Rapids, to the late Gordon and Elizabeth (Gessler) VanOcker. John was employed by Meijer's of GR for 33+ years starting at age 18 and working up the ladder to Hard Lines Manager and filling in as Store Manager as needed. After Meijer, he worked for Suburban Inns Hotel and Be Line Haulers. He was a tireless, dependable worker and respected group leader. John and Colleen retired to their new home on a lake in Kalkaska. John loved the outdoors, felling trees, like his father and grandpa, chopping and splitting wood, taking care of the yard, loved to deer hunt and make venison sausage and special soups. But his first love was farming - on his grandpa's farm in down-state and then, at the hay farm he bought in Kalkaska. Farming was a joy for him, never work. He was a top notch handyman and could fix or build just about anything. John was a patient teacher to others who were learning to do basic home repairs. He loved to help others; offering to plow a field for a fellow farmer or lend someone a hand. He was a true and reliable friend. He is survived by his loving wife of 15 years, Colleen (Heslinga) VanOcker, his daughter, Stephenie Battjes (Jason) three grandchildren, Evie, Alia, and Corbin Battjes of Fruitport, MI, his sister, Mary Yates of Rochester, NY, his brother Ed VanOcker of Lakeview, MI, Aunt Donna VanOcker of Traverse City, sisters-in-law Ellen (Denny) Lindner and Sue (Steve) Willard, several nieces and nephews, friends, and coworkers. He

was preceded in death by his parents, Gordon & Betty VanOcker, and his best friend and "little brother" Jim VanOcker. John will be missed greatly by his wife, who appreciated all the nice things he did for her, made her laugh and helped her feel safe and secure in his arms, his daughter, sister, brother, grandchildren, other friends and family members and special friend Kevin Wells. He was a big man with a big heart that left us way too early. Goodbye "Farmer John." Now you and Jim can continue to hunt together. Cremation has taken place. A fond farewell for family and friends will be arranged sometime next year. Please watch for a future notice. Please feel free to share thoughts and memories at [www.kalkaskafuneralhome.com](http://www.kalkaskafuneralhome.com). Arrangements were entrusted to Kalkaska Funeral Home.

# Tribute Wall

CV

“ Hi honey. Sure miss you 🥺 Abby barks "hi." Went to barn & sold some hay. Sure a lot of "stuff" in that barn. And a lot of memories. Love you, Colleen

Colleen VanOcker - January 23, 2018 at 06:28 AM

CV

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Colleen VanOcker - January 23, 2018 at 06:25 AM



“ My heart goes out to your family! I have worked with John for many years! I m very taken back by his loss! Myvthoughts and prayers are with you and your family !

Kristina Vanoeffelen - January 06, 2018 at 09:02 AM

CV

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Colleen VanOcker - January 05, 2018 at 07:30 AM

DV

“ We are shocked and so incredibly saddened at having just learned of Farmer John’s passing. We couldn’t have asked for a better neighbor and friend than John. Such a happy, kind man. Praying for the peace and comfort that only GOD can provide for you Colleen, and the rest of his family and many friends at this time. Your neighbors across the field, Jim and Diann Vipond.

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**Diann Vipond** - January 02, 2018 at 07:12 PM

CV

“ 3 files added to the album New Album Name



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**Colleen VanOcker** - December 30, 2017 at 08:18 AM

DV

We are so shocked and saddened as we’ve just learned of John’s passing. Such a happy, kind, wonderful friend and neighbor. We’re very BLESSED to have known him. 💕

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**Diann Vipond** - January 02, 2018 at 07:37 PM

VO

“ Colleen, I am so saddened to hear of John's passing and can't imagine your sense of loss. We share some great memories of your visit to PA many years ago. John was a farmer at heart, and I remember his leaving the dining table just to go out and walk through the barn on a hot July night. He was a wonderful man, gone way too soon. Vicki Otto

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**Victoria L Otto** - December 29, 2017 at 05:50 PM

KW

“ We talked of Farming, John Deere's, Hunting, We helped each other and never ask for a favor in return ,. We had fun haying last summer, and had a cold beer after. Shook hands and said " I'll see ya later". No more bags of "PICKELS" will be left on my back porch for my wife to can. John we had to many good times to mention JOHN " THANKS FOR BEING MY FRIEND" Kevin

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**kevin wells** - December 23, 2017 at 06:53 PM

CK

“ Dearest Colleen,

*There are certain extraordinary people who touch the lives of those they know in a unique way. Knowing them brings us joy and inspiration. John was one of those people.*

*John will never be gone... he has a cherished place in our hearts where he will always be remembered for the love he shared, and the happiness he brought. Memories of all John offered will remain with us.*

*Thinking of you, Colleen, with sympathy... and hoping you will find comfort in your special memories.*

*Our love to you,  
Cheri, Zachary, and Joshua Keenan*

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**Cheri Keenan** - December 22, 2017 at 10:53 AM

BM

“ So sorry for your loss, Colleen. Nancy and I are thinking of you. We will keep you in our prayers.

*Bob Mills*

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**Bob Mills** - December 22, 2017 at 08:38 AM

KO

“ Colleen, I'm so sorry to hear of the loss of your dear husband John. I'm keeping you and the family in prayer for comfort & peace as you grieve his passing. My love to you, Katie Orent

Katie Orent - December 22, 2017 at 07:56 AM

KS

“ So sorry to read of your lose. Death is an enemy whenever it strikes. The words found at Rev 21:3,4 are a real comfort as it offers a hope for those we have lost in death. My hope is this is of a comfort to you as well now and in the months ahead. Please except my sincere sympathy as well.

karen sw - December 22, 2017 at 07:50 AM

TM

I am so sorry to hear of John's passing. May the peace of god that passes understanding be upon you as you grieve his loss. I worked with John many years at Meijer, he will be missed. Many blessings to you!!!

Tony Mehari - December 22, 2017 at 09:24 AM

RS

Dear Colleen. My thoughts and prayers are with you. May God give you His peace to help you get through this.

rosemary smith - December 22, 2017 at 09:38 AM

PP

“ Collen...We were sorry to hear of the passing of John, you are in our thoughts and prayers , Polly & Wayne Piltz

Polly Piltz - December 22, 2017 at 12:12 AM

KA

“ We are heartbroken to lose such a good neighbor and wonderful friend. Words can't express how we feel. John, we will sorely miss your presence but be assured we're here for Colleen and your sweet, crazy companion pup, Abby. John, we'll always toast your memory, your big smile and hearty laugh; you left us all way too soon.

*With love, Kristy & Rags Avery*

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**Kristine A. Avery** - December 21, 2017 at 03:12 PM

CV

“ Hi honey. Abby and I miss you already. Hope you are on your tractor in the big farm in the sky. Love & hugs. Colleen



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**Colleen Heslinga VanOcker** - December 21, 2017 at 02:11 PM

CV

“ 3 files added to the album John's life



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**Colleen Heslinga VanOcker** - December 21, 2017 at 01:29 PM