



Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker

September 26, 1937 - December 29, 2025

Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker was born on September 26, 1937, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Frank Clifford Nebeker and Loraine Walker. She passed away at home, surrounded by family, on Monday, December 29, 2025, in Ivins, Utah.

Jo grew up with her siblings Patricia "Pat" Kitchen, William "Bill" Frank Nebeker Sr., and Susan "Sue" Scofield, relationships that remained an important part of her life.

Jo was fiercely independent, a quality that shaped how she moved through the world. She believed in authenticity, fairness, and showing up fully for the people and causes she cared about. She paid attention to people, ideals, and current events, and when something mattered, she felt a responsibility to respond.

She completed her undergraduate studies at Utah State University, majoring in speech and drama and minoring in physical education. She earned a master's degree in children's theatre from Michigan State University, writing and producing *The Baker's Dozen* as her thesis, and later earned her Doctor of Education in Leadership and Curriculum at Wayne State University.

After her studies, Jo devoted her professional life to public education. She began as a classroom teacher and later served the remainder of her career as

a school administrator in the Pontiac School District in Michigan, where she was deeply committed to students, educators, and the belief that schools could be places of both rigor and compassion.

Her career included leadership during the early years of school desegregation in Pontiac. Throughout her administrative work, she advocated for fairness and equity, including successfully fighting for equal pay. She later became the first woman appointed principal of a secondary school in the Pontiac School District, a milestone reached through persistence and conviction.

After retiring after 30 years at Pontiac schools, she continued to work for many years, serving as a liaison for an early childhood math project at Oakland University. In her later years, until this past fall, she volunteered at Tuacahn, a local theater in Ivins, UT.

In 1984, Jo found enduring love and partnership with Barbara “Barb” Ziegler. Together, they built a life grounded in devotion, mutual respect, and care for others, serving as a quiet and generous example of a committed, loving partnership.

She never met a stranger and stayed closely connected to her wide circle of family and friends. When she was home, she surrounded herself with the people she loved, sharing meals, tying quilts, playing cards, or simply sitting with an old friend in conversation.

Jo’s love of travel reflected her independence and curiosity. As a young woman, she drove solo cross-country to work at a girls’ summer camp in Vermont and later drove to Alaska in her Nash Rambler convertible. In later years, she and Barb traveled extensively, eventually setting foot on every continent, including Antarctica, and spending time traveling full-time by RV. Jo loved to drive and often said driving represented freedom.

She was preceded in death by her beloved partner, Barb Ziegler, who passed away in December 2020, and by her siblings Pat Kitchen and Bill Nebeker.

She is survived by her sons, Daniel Ziegler of Ivins, Utah, and David Ziegler of Orono, Minnesota, and his wife, Kelly Rische, her grandchildren, Colin Ziegler and Sadie Ziegler, and her sister, Sue Scofield.

Graveside services will be held on Friday, January 16, 2026, at the Ivins City Cemetery at 1:00 p.m. A viewing will take prior to services from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at Serenity Funeral Home of Southern Utah located at 1316 South 400 East Ste A5, St. George, Utah.

Cemetery Details

Ivins Cemetery

200 West 400 North
Ivins, UT

Previous Events

Viewing

JAN 16. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (MT)

Serenity Funeral Home
1316 South 400 East A-5
Saint George, UT 84790
<http://www.serenitystg.com>

Graveside Service

JAN 16. 1:00 PM (MT)

Ivins Cemetery
200 West 400 North
Ivins, UT

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *Funeral Audio Recording*



Serenity Funeral Home of Southern Utah - January 16 at 06:32 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker.



January 14 at 06:57 AM



“ The Dunham Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker.

The Dunham Family - January 14 at 06:57 AM



“ Jordan Park planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker.

Jordan Park - January 14 at 02:10 AM

JP

“ Jordan Park purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker.



Jordan Park - January 14 at 02:10 AM

JJ

“ Jon J. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker.

Jon J. - January 13 at 09:22 PM

MA

“ Martha A. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Jolene "Jo" Nebeker.

Martha A. - January 13 at 01:18 PM