



Ruth Johnson

December 26, 1914 - July 5, 2012

Ruth Gustafson Johnson, 97, lived a life of travel and adventure, even as a baby. She was born Dec. 26, 1914, in Chicago, and moved to China with her missionary parents, the Rev. David and Luella Gustafson. After their return to the United States, she later graduated from high school and college (Carnegie Mellon University) in Pennsylvania. She took teaching jobs in Kentucky and Illinois. Her travels continued when she and four friends drove a Model T to the World's Fair in San Francisco in 1940 -- an unheard-of trip for five single women. But it was a great adventure and the media coverage made great memories and good copy for years.

Ruth met her husband, Edgar J. Johnson, in Kankakee, where she was serving as a county home extension adviser. They married in 1943 and raised their family here. She is survived by their three children, David (Linda) Johnson, of Kankakee, Nancy Sweet, of Eagan, Minn., and Keith (Susan Fuller) Johnson, of Vancouver, Wash. Survivors also include three grandchildren, Sheryl Johnson, Alex Johnson and Matt Johnson.

Ed Johnson died unexpectedly in 1990. He had been a founder of Johnson-Downs Construction Company Inc., following several years as a homebuilder in Kankakee, and owner of Oakwood Trucking & Excavating Co. Ruth was also preceded in death by brothers, Paul and Wilbur Gustafson; sister, Robin Carlson; and son-in-law, Bradley C. Sweet.

Ruth was actively involved at Asbury United Methodist Church, where she taught Sunday school, served as elementary superintendent and held many offices in church organizations. She served for eight years on the Central Illinois Conference Board of Education for the Methodist Church.

Both Ed and Ruth were active in the Kankakee community. She served in the Kankakee County Homemakers Extension Association, Kankakee County Home Economists, Minerva Study Club and as a 4-H leader.

After the children were grown, Ruth developed an interest in photography and joined the Kankakee Camera Club. She was active as a national amateur photographer and a judge in international amateur exhibitions. This led to more adventures and travels. While Ed stayed home to focus on his businesses, she joined other photographers on worldwide tours. She had many published photos, often in The Daily Journal, and she became known for the slideshows and travelogues presented locally. She and Ed did a lot of traveling together, from family road trips to foreign countries. They visited all 50 states.

Prior to her death on July 5, 2012, Ruth had been a resident of Butterfield Court, then of the Miller Center. The family is appreciative of the many years of good care she had there.

At her request, Ruth's body was donated to science. A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 5, at Asbury United Methodist Church, Kankakee. Memorial donations may be made to Asbury United Methodist Church, the Kankakee County Museum or to the Wright in Kankakee. Clancy-Gernon Funeral Home, Bourbonnais, is in charge of arrangements.

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

AUG 5. 3:00 PM (CT)

Asbury United Methodist Church

196 S. Harrison

Kankakee, IL 60901

(815) 933-4408

<https://www.kasbury.org/>

Tribute Wall

LB

“ Mrs. Johnson was one of my favorite moms on the planet!! Being Nancy's friend had many perks with benefits---especially knowing The Johnsons and spending time with Ruth Johnson was certainly one of them. I am not sure when I spent my first slumber party at the Johnsons-- or had my first taste of Mrs. Johnson's chocolate cake, I just know it was wonderful. My mother's favorite photograph of me---was taken by Mrs. Johnson. Mother kept it at her desk in the office--and later, she kept it near in her final days. I was a pilgrim. She made the hat, garb and met me at the Historical Society for a photo shoot with Mr. Stinson, Mr. Williamson, and her. I have no idea why she wanted me to be a pilgrim. All I know is that when she asked, I would never ever say no because---she was Mrs. Johnson. She even shot my senior pictures in college---without the pilgrim hat, of course. With her gracious hospitality and encouraging ways, she enriched my early years with joy, wit, and loving kindness. My heartfelt sympathy to dear David, Keith, and my Nancy..... and your family. With love and memory,
Lana Weiss Brown

Lana Weiss Brown - August 03, 2012 at 01:41 PM

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“ On behalf of Fr. Mario Quejadas and the parishioners of St. Martin of Tours Kankakee, I would like to express our sincerest condolences to your family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.



May God's blessings of love and peace be upon you.

Aimee Flor Nellas - August 03, 2012 at 10:50 AM