



Joanne M. Johnson

March 31, 1928 - November 15, 2011

Joanne M. Johnson

1928 - 2011, Boulder, CO

Joanne M. Johnson passed away peacefully at her home, The Academy at Bella Vista, in Boulder, Colorado on Tuesday, November 15. She was 83.

Born in New York City on March 31, 1928, Joanne spent the first 12 years of her life in Brazil, where her father had been sent to manage power and light utilities. In the small town of Campinas, Joanne was home-schooled by her mother, but learned Portuguese from her Brazilian friends who spent many happy hours with her climbing mango trees in their backyards. Every two years, she and her parents traveled by steamship to visit family in Vermont and Texas.

At age 12, Joanne and her parents moved to Jefferson City, Missouri, and she attended her first school -- a public junior high -- where she discovered that phrases like "Behold!" and "Hark!" were not in vogue. A year later, Joanne moved with her family to Brentwood, California. She attended high school at the Westlake School for Girls, where she was a classmate of Shirley Temple and often took part in Shirley's schemes to ditch her bodyguard. After three happy years at Scripps College, Joanne transferred to newly coeducational Stanford University, where the ratio of men to women was 11 to 1, graduating with a B.A. in English Literature.

Joanne received her high school teaching credential from UCLA in 1951. That same year, she tied the knot with her lifelong sweetheart, Earl Johnson, to whom she was married for nearly 58 years until his death in 2008. Joanne taught senior English in Garden Grove until the birth of their son, Steve, in 1954 and daughter, Susan, in 1956. The family lived in Long Beach for eight years and Whittier for seven years while Earl worked as an executive at North American Aviation in Downey.

In 1966, Joanne and Earl decided to change the direction of their lives. Leaving the corporate ladder and smog belt behind, the family moved to Santa Barbara and started Johnson Construction Company, through which they built, remodeled and managed apartment houses and rental homes in town for over three decades. Earl handled the construction and finances, while Joanne took charge of the landscaping, decorating and tenant relations.

During her 44 years in Santa Barbara, Joanne belonged to numerous local organizations and volunteered with the Christmas Cheer food bank, the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens and the Family Service Agency. Joanne rarely turned down an appeal for help and contributed to dozens of humanitarian and animal causes. She and Earl were also very active members of the First United Methodist Church, where she served on the Board of Trustees and was involved in numerous volunteer work projects.

Throughout her life, Joanne was an avid gardener, and she liked few things better than tending the plants in her garden. Joanne also loved to write poetry, and graced many special occasions with her witty sonnets. She will be missed for her buoyant optimism, her sharp intellect and her very large heart.

A caring and devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother, Joanne is survived by her son, Steve Johnson of Malibu, his wife, Laura Ben-Porat and their two sons, Kale and Teage Johnson; and by her daughter,

Susan Ferguson of Boulder, Susan's son, Josh Ferguson, his wife, Jaime Ferguson and their son, Mason Ferguson, and Susan's daughter, Lila Ferguson, all of Denver.

A memorial service will be held at the First United Methodist Church, 305 East Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara 93101 at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6. In lieu of flowers, please send donations in Joanne's name to the church.

Previous Events

Funeral Service

DEC 6. 1:00 PM (PT)

First United Methodist Church
305 E. Anapamu Str.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101