

# Star Tribune

March 31, 2013

## Johnson, Robert W.

May 4, 1924 - March 20, 2013



Passed away peacefully at his Fountain Hills, AZ home surrounded by family. Proud first-generation American and lifelong Minnesotan at heart. Pre-

ceded in death by the love of his life, Betty Bremer Johnson, his parents, Axel and Evelyn Johnson, and his in-laws, Edward and Emily Bremer. Survived by adoring children and their spouses: Beth (Jack) Hult, Susan (Stu) Kantor, Leigh Johnson and Ken Kradle, Edward (Britt) Johnson, David (Mary) Johnson and Rick (Mary) Johnson; and thirteen loving grandchildren: Kristen, Bridget, Robert, RJ, Christopher, Scott, Kathryn, Kristina, Emily, Caroline, Matthew, Henry and Sam.

Educated at Grant Elementary and Johnson High School, he then attended the University of Minnesota on a Naval ROTC scholarship. Bob graduated from the U of M School of Business Administration and the U of M Law School. He proudly defended his country as a "Tin Can Sailor" on the USS Walker in the Pacific theater.

He started his professional career as a certified public accountant and tax counsel at Minneapolis Honeywell Regular Company where he made many lifelong, influential friends. He left Honeywell for private law partnerships. Eventually, he started his own firm, Robert W. Johnson, PA. He was also a lobbyist for Minnesota's Independent Telephone Companies, the Hotel/Motel/Hospitality Group, and the Sanitation Workers.

From 1963-1975, he represented the Highland area in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Some of his proudest accomplishments at the Capital included funding for the Moos Tower at the U of M Medical School; defining alcoholism as a medical disease; championing the "lighted schoolhouse" concept; and funding for the taconite industry. In 1978, he ran for Governor of Minnesota as an Independent Republican.

A hunting/fishing shack on Lake Lizzie near Pelican Rapids eventually grew into a lifelong passion, The Farm. Here, Bob raised prized polled Herefords, planted several hundred acres and enjoyed a home which provided an oasis for relaxation and enjoyment of the natural beauties of Minnesota.

He delighted in his service as a People to People Ambassador through which he visited several countries to share legal and business knowledge with developing businesses and governments. His civic involvement included leadership positions with The U of M International Center, American Cancer Society, MN Chapter of MS Society, St. Leo's (now Lumen Christi) Church, Arlington Hills Lutheran Church, Everybody Wins!, Lutheran Social Services, Director of the Festival of Nations and Commissioner of the St. Paul Port Authority. Several Minnesota-based companies benefitted from his knowledge as a Board member, including, Minnesota Mutual, ABI and Commercial State Bank.

He and Betty shared many interests like fishing at Lake Lizzie and Lac La Croix; golf trips from Hawaii to Banff to North Carolina; foreign travels to visit their children when they studied and worked abroad and the international students they hosted and parented; family gatherings. They deeply believed in and supported education as demonstrated through funding scholarships, housing foreign students and supporting their children through graduate schools. As only children, many dear friends became honorary "aunts and uncles" to the delight and benefit of all. Their greatest joys were their six children and spouses and 13 grandchildren.

Bob was a charismatic, caring man who often said his achievements and friendships and accolades were humbling "for a poor, simple, Swede from the Eastside of St. Paul." His stories of caddying at Keller Golf Course, being eye-to-eye with a kamikaze pilot and rescuing his most-loved, tick-infested dog, Blackie, still amaze. He leaves behind friends and supporters too numerous to name and from all walks of life and corners of the globe.

Funeral Service Tuesday, April 2, 10 AM at ARLINGTON HILLS LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1115 Greenbrier St, St. Paul. Visitation Monday, April 1, 4-8 PM at BRADSHAW, 678 Snelling Ave. S, St. Paul and one hour prior to service at church. Our family thanks Encore Senior Services in Excelsior and Arizona Professional Care Services in Scottsdale for their kind, respectful caregiving. In lieu of flowers, memorials preferred to the Robert and Betty Johnson Research Fund, U of M Foundation, PO Box 64001, St. Paul, MN, 55164 or on-line: [www.give.umn.edu](http://www.give.umn.edu).

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