



Thomas L. Johnson

JUN 6, 1935 - SEP 20, 2014



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Big Rapids - Thomas (Tom) L. Johnson, 79, of Big Rapids went to be with the Lord on September 20, 2014. He was born to Harry and Joyce Johnson on June 6, 1935 in Belding, MI. He was raised in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Tom joined the Navy during the Korean conflict in 1953 one day before his 18th birthday. Therefore he served a 3 year "Kiddy Cruise". He was stationed on the aircraft carrier, USS Hornet. He crossed the International Date Line on his 20th birthday. The calendar went from June 5 to June 7, 1955. He learned to love traveling while in the Navy. Mark Twain said "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness." When he returned from the Navy he attended Central Michigan College on the G.I. bill. There he met Barbara (Barb) Winterfield who became his wife in their junior year. After graduation Tom continued on in graduate school. Tom accepted his first teaching job in Alma, MI, teaching geometry and physics to an exceptional group of students, several going on to the National academics. Tom participated in the National Science Foundation for more graduate work. He attended Bellingham Washington State University and Temple University in Philadelphia, PN. In the fall of 1964, Tom came to Ferris to teach physical science and physics. Tom continued applying for graduate classes as opportunity arose, earning 80 hours beyond a master degree to better prepare himself for quality teaching in the classroom. He pursued class work in astronomy and visited many archaeoastronomy sites around Mexico City and Oaxaca. He was also given the opportunity to rework and repair the Ferris telescope. When the observatory was reopened and astronomy was taught again at Ferris, Tom held monthly "observatory Open Houses" for students and towns people "weather permitting" until his retirement in August of 2000. Tom always liked what the English scientist Isaac Newton said; "I don't know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem like a boy finding a prettier shell or a smoother pebble, while the great ocean of truth lay



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all undiscovered before me." Tom tried to impart this awe to his students. He and his wife Barb joined the United Church in the 1990's and enjoyed singing in the choir. Tom tried to pay life forward for their many blessings. He helped build 17 Habitat houses, numerous other homes and buildings and went on several mission trips through the United Church to Wounded Knee Indian Reservation, and Katrina reconstruction in Pearlington, Mississippi. His last volunteer construction job was the office room of the Animal Rescue Coalition (ARC) building. After retirement Tom and Barb spent their winters in Mesa, AZ. There Tom taught stained glass classes and monitored helping many people with their projects. Recently Tom learned to play the harmonica and enjoyed playing weekly with the Harmonica Group at Art Works. Last year he began carving with Betty Hartig's Carvers and made several palm crosses. Many years ago Tom attended an Emmaus Walk and has attended a weekly Men's Group at the Methodist Church. He enjoyed the friendship of all these people. Tom and his wife, Barb, enjoyed traveling and saw each State and many other countries. They also enjoyed Round and Square Dancing and met many friends through these activities. He enjoyed golfing to be with friends. He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife's parents and his grandson Alex. Tom will be missed by his wife Barb of 55 years, their children Craig (Pam) Johnson, Samantha (Alex) Pulice and Danielle Myers of Holt, MI; Kerry Johnson of Midland, MI; Steve (Geri) Johnson of Big Rapids, MI; two brothers David (Shirley) Johnson and Mike (Linda) Johnson all of Independence MO; and a special neighbor Arya Rau gave Tom and Barb an honorary Grandparents India Blessing the day before her 13th birthday. A celebration service of his life will be at the United Church located at 120 S. State St., Big Rapids, MI with Pastor Jon Fleming officiating at 11 am, Saturday, September 27, 2014. Visitation will begin at 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. prior to the service. Tom has donated his body to science so there will be no viewing. The family wishes to thank their neighbors, friends, health care professionals, Hospice, Pastor Jon Fleming and Dr. Sushila Rao for their love and support through this journey. In lieu of flowers, please pay life forward as God directs you. God Bless.



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RS

Rebecca Smith posted:

Kerry, I was saddened to hear of the loss of your wonderful father. I thought about the travel stories you shared about him. Please know you are in my heart, thoughts and prayers. Love, your friend, Becky

September 25 at 8:00 PM

JW

Janet (Hansen) Whitney posted:

I graduated with Tom in Belding in 1953. My condolences to his family. Janet

September 24 at 8:00 PM

JB

Jim And Joyce Boss posted:

(No Guestbook Text Available)

September 24 at 8:00 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thomas by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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