

In Loving Memory



Thelma R. Johnson

1924 ~ 2026



Thelma Rose Matthews Johnson was born in St. Louis, Missouri on November 20, 1924 to Alfred and Jenny Matthews. She was born the eldest of 10 children, and lived on a farm in Artesian, SD and attended school in Forestberg, SD until the 8th grade. As the oldest of 10, she stopped attending school to help raise the other 9 children.

On March 20, 1942, she married Samuel Johnson, and their first daughter, Carole, was born while Sam was serving in the Army during WWII in Korea. Their first daughter, Carole, was born the following June of 1943. Thelma continued to raise Carole alone until Sam returned from war in September of 1945. After that, three more daughters, Sonja, Pamela, and Roxanne, were born in quick succession. The family lived in various communities on the eastern side of the state.

In 1958, the family made the move to Western SD, and made their home in Whitewood, and Thelma began working at the Dorsett home in Spearfish and she would continue this work for the next 25 years, providing nursing care until her retirement in 1989. This was work that was difficult and challenging, but was work that she was very proud of and work she spoke about often. It was also something she made her daughters promise to never commit her to for care as she aged, and until the last few weeks of her life, she took great pride in the fact that she could do most things independently and in her own home. It is here that I will mention her two daughters and thank them for their tireless commitment to their mother over her last months and weeks.

To Sonja and Roxanne: You definitely upheld your promises made to your mother in her final days.

Thelma is survived by the following family members; daughters, Sonja Nonnast and husband, Eugene of Whitewood, SD and Roxanne Cooper and husband, William of Whitewood, SD; brother John Matthews and wife, Monica of Beeville, TX; sister Dottie Degen of Mitchell, SD; many assorted nieces and nephews; 17 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; 17 great-great-grandchildren; 3 great-great-great grandchildren (these total 65 at last count).

She was preceded in death by her husband Samuel in 1990; daughters, Carole Auer in 2006 and Pam Harman in 2013; step daughters, Ione Ferguson and Nadine Meyer; her parents, Alfred and Jenny Matthews, brothers, Joe Matthews, Jim Matthews and Jerry Matthews; sisters, Jean Liddeke, Edith Hanten, Laura Flowers and Kitty Wittenhagen; grandchildren, Cody Cooper and Tige Cooper.

A memorial has been established. Interment will follow at the National Cemetery immediately following the service and a fellowship and luncheon will be held at the Whitewood Senior Citizen's Center after interment.

Thank you for your presence and condolences.

In Loving Memory Of

Thelma R. Johnson

Date of Birth
November 20, 1924

Date of Death
March 9, 2026

Funeral Service

Monday, March 16, 2026 12:00 PM
Kinkade Funeral Chapel
Sturgis, South Dakota

Officiant
Luke Clement

Musical Selections

“Dancing In the Sky”
“Coat of Many Colors”
-Sang by Granddaughter, Dani Geis
“See You Again”
“Old Rugged Cross”

Pallbearers

Clavin Degen, Troy Geis, John Cooper,
Patrick Auer, Lane Barden and Laban Clement

Honorary Pallbearers
All Grandchildren

Final Resting Place
Black Hills National Cemetery
Sturgis, South Dakota