



Walter Ross Johnson was born in 1928 to Julius and Trina (Fagerli) Johnson. The youngest of nine children, Walter's family lived in Miscol, a short-lived settlement north of Firesteel. The family farmed, ranched, and mined coal in the years that followed. As Walt's brother Loyd said, "We worked in the mine in the winter to get enough money to farm in the spring."

In 1945, Walter returned to help with the Firesteel farm after several years of high school at Augustana Academy in Canton, SD. He finished his senior year at Timber Lake and graduated in 1946.

After Walter's brother Ralph returned home from the Army, they began a partnership that lasted the next 30 years, ending with Ralph's death in 1978.

It was while living with Ralph's family that Walter met Lois Kratzer. Lois came to South Dakota to teach Bible School to the four churches in the Lutheran Air Parish. During that time, she also boarded with Ralph's family. In the fall of 1949, Walter and Lois were married in Lois's home state of Ohio.

Walter and Lois's first house did not have electricity. "Lois learned to like this country," Walt said, "And we had so much snow she couldn't leave." After surviving the winter of '49/'50, their home was connected to the new Moreau-Grand co-op line.

In 1958, Walter and Lois purchased what became their permanent residence from Andor and Karen Pederson. At the time, Andor told Walt, "I lived here for forty years, now you can live here forty years!". Indeed, for the rest of his life, the farm was never far from Walt's mind. Together, Walt and Lois raised two sons, Kevin and Terry, and a daughter Laurel.

Walter was a member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, which later became the Timber Lake United Parish. He served in all offices on the church council. He worked with the Dewey County Crop Improvement Association Board, participated in the State Crop Improvement Association, and helped the county FSA board. Walt also contributed to the Mobridge Regional Hospital board for eight years, overseeing a clinic move and a new hospital addition. Later, during his many roles with the Timber Lake Historical Society, he helped see the town's library/museum built and the larger area museum expansion.

The South Dakota winters eventually drove Walter and Lois to spend some time in Apache Junction, AZ. Together, they enjoyed the activities and people just as much as the weather. Walter was known for his wry sense of humor. Referring to him and his wife in 2010, he wrote: "The Bible says that I shall become one flesh. We find at the age of 80 that it takes the two of us to make one." In the same piece, he added: "The Johnson history will continue with the next generation."

Walter died late on Tuesday, October 19th in the Walworth County Care Center in Selby, SD. He is survived by his sister, Ella Borge, sons; Kevin (Margie) Johnson, Terry (Alyce) Johnson; a daughter Laurel (Gene) Reinbold; nine grandchildren; and 16 great-grandchildren.

In Loving Memory of:



Walter Johnson

April 21, 1928 ~ October 19, 2021



Close The Gate

*For this one farmer the worries are over,
lie down and rest you head,
Your time has been and struggles enough,
put the tractor in the shed.
Years were not easy, many downright hard,
but your faith in God transcended.
Put away your tools and sleep in peace.
The fences have all been mended.
You raised a fine family,
worked the land well under the hot, summer sun.
Hang up your shovel inside the barn;
your work on earth is done.
A faith few possess led your journey thru life,
often a jagged and stony way.
The sun is setting, the crops are harvested
and here now is the end of your day.
Your love of God's soil has passed on to your kin,
the stories flow like good beer.
Wash off your boots in the puddle of rain,
for there is nothing more to fear.
You always believed that the good Lord
would provide and He always had somehow.
Take off your gloves and put them away,
no more sweat and worry for you now.
Your labor is done, your home now is heaven;
no more must you wait.
Your legacy lives on, your love of the Land,
and yes Dad-we will close the gate.*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF:

Walter Ross Johnson

93 Years ~ 5 Months ~ 28 Days

BORN:

April 21, 1928

Miscol, South Dakota

PASSED AWAY:

October 19, 2021

Selby, South Dakota

FUNERAL SERVICES:

10:30 AM, Monday, October 25, 2021

United Parish Church

Timber Lake, South Dakota

CLERGY:

Vicar Teri Gayer

PIANIST:

Fauneil Keller

CONGREGATIONAL HYMNS:

"It Is Well With My Soul" ~ "How Great Thou Art"

USHERS:

Roger Lawien ~ Dan Booth

CASKETBEARERS:

Allen Johnson ~ Jack Bickel ~ Mark Johnson

Bob Jackson ~ Will Reinbold ~ Mitch Zeug

HONORARY CASKETBEARERS:

All Walter Family & Friends

INTERMENT:

Timber Lake Cemetery

Timber Lake, South Dakota

Arrangements Entrusted to Kesling Funeral Home, Mobridge, South Dakota