



## Ellen Johnson

August 31, 1925 - December 13, 2013

Ellen (Conway) Johnson, daughter of Ambrose and Josephine (Wycoff) Conway, was born in Estherville, Iowa, in 1925, where she lived most of her life. She was married to Kenneth Johnson in 1946. After Kenneth completed his degree at the Chicago School of Optometry, they returned to Estherville where Ellen was a stay-at-home mother of five, something she claimed to be her greatest accomplishment.

Ellen was dedicated to the Lord. She was active in her church as cantor, youth choir director, organist, guitarist, and as music director at St. Patrick's Parish for 29 years. In addition, she assisted in a variety of roles in three other parishes, St. Mary's in Spirit Lake, Iowa, and St. Justin and San Pedro parishes in Key Largo, Florida. She worshiped the Lord all through her life. At the age of five, Ellen first began using her spiritual gift of music by performing Ave Maria for her brother's First Communion; and as a finale sang the Ave Maria for her last solo at the Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland in 2008.

As her children entered college, so did Ellen. She received her A.A. Degree from Iowa Lakes Community College in 1970, her B.S. Degree in Elementary Education from Mankato State University in 1973, and her M.S. Degree in Special Education from Mankato State University in 1976. She developed the learning disabilities program, and worked with elementary and middle school students at Estherville Lincoln Central Community Schools, and then went on to work with students at Iowa Lakes Community College. She assisted students of all ages in their learning, and inspired life-long learning in all who

knew her.

Ellen gave back to her community and showed her caring in a variety of ways. She did volunteer work for the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and other local causes. She was a charter board member for the Estherville Meals on Wheels and continued for many years. She started the Ecumenical Choir in Estherville in 1978.

In 1980, at the age of 55, Ellen began oil painting and watercolor workshops, taking at least one workshop every summer at the Pearson Lakes Art Center, and workshops each winter in Key Largo, Florida. Less than three weeks before her death, the Arts on Grand Jury Committee in Spencer, Iowa selected and displayed 50 of Ellen's paintings at a Special Art Exhibition. Ellen found joy in her church, music, art, education, nature (especially Spirit Lake), bird watching, reading, learning, technology (including her iPad), and especially her family.

Ellen is survived by her five children, Nancy (Bill) Sanderson of Spirit Lake, Gregory Johnson of Estherville, Constance Cloak of Denver, Colorado, Deb (Jim) Bastian of New Ulm, Minnesota, and Jeff Johnson of Louisville, Kentucky; sister, Pat (Don) Alcott of Belton, Missouri; nine grandchildren: Jen (Todd), Brad (Sheree), Jess (Matt), Cory, Nathan (Jenn), Kevin, Laura (Derek), Adam and Martha; and eight great-grandchildren: Alec, Jordyn, Ryer, Cail, Stella, Beckett, Sienna and Henry, and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband; brother, Clarence Conway; sister, Alice Koehler; grandson, Alyas Karem; and great-grandson, Gavin Donkersloot.

A funeral Mass will be held at 10:30A.M. on Wednesday, December 18, 2013, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Spirit Lake. Visitation will be held Tuesday, from 4:00P.M. until 7:00P.M., with a Rosary at 4:00P.M. and a Vigil for the Deceased at 7:00P.M. at the Schuchert Funeral Home. Burial will be at St. Patrick's Cemetery in Estherville. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be given to Iowa Lakes Community College or Estherville Lincoln Central Community Schools.



# Tribute Wall

DJ

“ Thinking of you all, as you say good bye to your Mom, grandma, and dear friend. We only had the privilege of being with Aunt Ellen several times, but those memorable times are cherished in our hearts. In the days ahead, It's our shared hope that you know others care. We trust that your memories of such an accomplished and amazing woman as Aunt Ellen, give each of you an inner peace of joy, and comfort, as you endure the transition ahead. We sincerely are sorry for your loss, and we ask our Lord, and saviour to abundantly bless you and yours as you realize your loss is heavens gain.

Wrap around hugs, from your okie family.

Love,

David (Bird I.) & Linda Johnson

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David & Linda Johnson - December 19, 2013 at 12:37 AM

RA

“ In my childhood, every year at about this time my mother would bring our family up to spend holiday vacations visiting family in Estherville. They were the days of Christmas break that I looked forward to the most, seeing my cousins and playing with them. Many of those christmas vacation evenings were spent at my cousin's grandma and grandpa's house (Ken and Ellen's). The house would fill with family and at some point it would inevitably fill with caroling. Music would fill the living room, and you could tell Ellen really loved that. I wasn't an actual grandchild of Ellen's, but I truly felt like one. I feel blessed to have known Ellen. She will be missed.

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Ross Albertson - December 17, 2013 at 10:36 PM

TJ

“ To our cousins in Iowa...so sorry to hear of the passing of a great lady...your mom. When we visited her in the summer of 2012, we were in awe of all the talents she had and wished that we had known her better. We were so fortunate to have the visits we did with her and her family! She will be missed dearly. Our sympathy.

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**Tom and Marlene Johnson** - December 17, 2013 at 12:46 PM

SK

“ Dearest CJ and Family - I am so sorry for your loss. As I sat here and watched the video of your Mom and saw her art work, I so wish I had had the pleasure and honor of meeting your mother Ellen. I have heard so many wonderful things about the family. I'm also so proud of you all for taking such wonderful care of your mother, letting her pass with dignity and grace with her family around her. How blessed you all are as how blessed your mom was to have all of you. Offering my sympathies and condolences and all the love and respect that I have for all of you. Thank you CJ for sharing this experience with me. I love you and always will. I'm truly blessed to know you. Your mom ROCKS with her art work! I love it and now her art work will live on because of you and your family. God bless you all. Much Love, Sue

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**Sue Kline** - December 16, 2013 at 04:01 PM

GJ

“ I enjoyed viewing the pictures and video. Thank you Constance. I will always remember Aunt Ellen as a great cook and a very loving person especially to children. I'm very sorry for your loss.

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**Gary & Kathy Johnson** - December 16, 2013 at 11:10 AM

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“ Please see the video for photo's of Ellen with her family.

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**Constance Cloak (Johnson)** - December 16, 2013 at 08:39 AM

CS

“ *Ellen Johnson*

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**Chad Schuchert** - December 15, 2013 at 05:37 PM

DJ

“ *To my cousins and their families, I am very sorry for your loss. Your Mother was a wonderful person and I will always remember her as we grew up with her being a big part of our lives and visiting your family for those Sunday Dinners after Church. You have my deepest sympathy.*

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**Dean and Karen Johnson** - December 14, 2013 at 03:12 PM

SK

“ *Lots of great memories of my Aunt Ellen. She was an amazing big sister to my Mom, Alice Koehler. She was a great example of unconditional sibling love! We will all miss her. Nephew Scott Koehler*

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**Scott Koehler** - December 13, 2013 at 11:21 PM

WB

“ *While we lived in Estherville, Dr. Johnson was our optometrist, but I didn't really get to know Ellen until they moved into Silver Shores where we had been wintering since 1985. Ellen was a great asset to the park and shared her singing and artistic talent with us. I am the proud possession of three of her watercolors that are framed and displayed on my bedroom wall. She has been and will continued to be missed in this community. Willy Bruce*

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**Willy Bruce** - December 13, 2013 at 05:59 PM

DR

“ So sorry to hear of Ellen's passing. She was a lovely lady and will be missed. My thoughts and prayers are with the family.

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**Dr. James J. Roberts** - December 13, 2013 at 01:15 PM