



## Mary Eleanor Johnson

December 8, 1917 - September 29, 2017

Surrounded by loving family, Mary Eleanor Johnson died on Friday, September 29, 2017 in Turlock, California from complications sustained in a fall over the past weekend. She was 99 years old.

Eleanor was born in Omaha, Nebraska on December 8, 1917 to John and Mary McQuillan. Her older brother, Clement was tragically struck by a milk carriage and died at age 7. Her father John, who worked for the Bell Telephone Company, died when Eleanor was 13, so she and her mother moved to Providence, Rhode Island to live with relatives. Upon completing high school, Mary Eleanor went to work for the Bell Telephone Company, supporting her mother and herself. She became a supervisor, and after the war moved to Southern California, bringing her mother with her. Eleanor soon met and married Chester Johnson in Glendale, California in 1950.

Pursuing opportunity, they moved to Turlock, California and entered the poultry business, opening Turlock Hatchery located next to Youngdale's on Market Street. Eleanor worked in the business alongside Chester, raising chickens and turkeys at their home on Walnut Road, for many years.

Eleanor became a licensed pilot and was named the State Flying Farmers Queen in 1959. Chester was also a pilot and Eleanor was motivated to be his backup, as they often carried precious cargo in the form of their four children. She was a dedicated mother, motivating her children to learn dance at June

Jane McVey's dance studio. She made all their dance costumes, drove them to practice, and encouraged them to perform at the many service clubs and social events in the Stanislaus area.

In 1969, the entire Johnson family began an international adventure by moving to Brisbane, Australia. This remained their home for the next five years and Eleanor embraced the new culture, making lifelong friends whom she would return to visit in subsequent years and maintain correspondence. Eleanor and Chester returned to Turlock in the mid-1970's and eventually moved to Los Angeles in the 1980's. They finally settled into retirement in Deming, New Mexico, building a home from adobe blocks. Chester and Eleanor spent the next twenty peaceful years playing bridge, traveling, and spending time with their children and grandchildren. Chester died in 2003, and as Eleanor began to lose her eyesight, she moved back to Turlock in 2009.

For the last seven years, Eleanor lived at St. Thomas Retirement Center in Turlock, where the talented staff took exceptional care of her. She enjoyed spending her time listening to audio books, visiting with her expanding family, and enjoying Sunday dinner at her daughter Sharon's home. Eleanor was still dancing with her great-granddaughter just two weeks before her fall.

Mary Eleanor has left quite a legacy. She lived through two World Wars, the Great Depression, was a self-supporting woman before it was fashionable, and eventually became a wife and mother of four. She revealed on her 97th birthday that her secret to a long life was "having a sense of humor", and have one she truly did. She had an incredibly positive spirit that shone through the most beautiful blue eyes, and she was a terrific role model for her children.

Her spirit will remain alive in the hearts of her surviving family members - son, Alan (Kristina) Johnson; daughters, Elaine (Phil Roman) Johnson, Mary (James) Linhares, and Sharon (John) Jaureguy; nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A celebration of her life will take place in December, marking her 100th birthday. Details are forthcoming.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Mary Eleanor Johnson*

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January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM



“ *Sharon and family, so sorry to hear about your mom. She was a great lady and she and Chester were great friends with my parents. Over the years they went on a lot of great trips and had a lot of good times together. They will all be sorely missed.*  
*Jackie Niemeyer and family*

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**Jackie Niemeyer** - October 07, 2017 at 01:29 AM



“ *So sorry for your loss Sharon. I lost my mother when I was twelve, what a wonderful lifetime of memories you must have had together.*

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**Melinda Tripp** - October 06, 2017 at 09:54 PM



“ *Sharon & Family*

*What a great life story, full of adventure and fulfillment. Anytime I saw her she had a smile. She will be missed.*

*Liz*

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**Elizabeth Doerksen** - October 06, 2017 at 10:41 AM

BE

“ Sharon and family,  
Your Mom was so special, I remember the first time I met her, a luncheon at the Turlock Golf Club, a few of her friends, Bonnie Stinson and others, all to enjoy Eleanor who was in town for a visit from New Mexico. I was flabbergasted when you told me her age. She had such high energy. Needless to say, that was several years ago. I loved watching her dance with each of your sons at her birthday party. Those are a few of my memories, I can imagine that all of you have your life time of memories of a first class act. RIP, Miss Eleanor.

Betty Ann

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**Betty** - October 05, 2017 at 10:00 AM

TH

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



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**Turlock Funeral Home** - October 03, 2017 at 05:41 PM