

Charles Edwin Johnson

June 15, 1936 ~ January 7, 2024

Charles Edwin Johnson passed away peacefully Sunday morning January 7, 2024 from a rare blood cancer. Charles (Chas or Charlie) was born June 15, 1936, in Grantsville, Utah. He was the first son of George McCoy and Alice Baker Johnson, joining three older sisters, Bernadine, Lorraine, and Betty Lou, and later, a brother named Larry. Charles grew up against the backdrop of the Great Depression and World War II. He credited Grantsville with giving him a great childhood. He graduated from Grantsville High School in 1954 and remained friends with classmates throughout his life.

Charles had a burning desire for education, and he was anxious to experience life in different areas. He left Grantsville to attend Brigham Young University. During that time, he married Susanna Brown on December 31, 1956, the “cute girl” he had been dating in Grantsville. By the time he graduated from BYU in 1960 they had welcomed two children, Douglas Charles and Wendy Susan, and Susanna joined Charles in becoming BYU football’s biggest fans. The family of four doubled with the additions of Brent Michael, Michael Alan, Kristin, and Lisa Ann.

He became a Certified Public Accountant, practicing in California, Salt Lake City, and New York City. He worked for Main Lafrentz & Co, which merged into Peat Marwick and then into KPMG. He became a partner, managing partner, and western region managing partner. His office in the Kennecott Building at One South Main street placed him in the center of downtown Salt Lake City where he enjoyed associations with business and church leaders. He witnessed the rise of downtown Salt Lake City as a business center. After he retired from KPMG in 1991, Governor Norm Bangerter asked him to work for his administration as the budget director. He would later say he was not looking for a job in government but the opportunity to have a direct, positive impact on the people of Utah was something he could not pass up. He served in capacities too numerous to name in a brief piece. He served as Chief of Staff for Governor Michael Leavitt, and as Chair of the Board of Regents. He was working as President of the Huntsman Cancer Foundation and Vice President of Huntsman, LLC when he was offered the opportunity to work as the CFO for the EPA and then the assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. A highlight of his career followed when he was privileged to work for the Global Fund in Geneva, Switzerland. The finale was his time at The Leavitt Group where he retired a few times but only finally stepped away in the last couple of years.

Charles achieved success in business and government, but family was his greatest pride. In addition to six children, he and Susanna have 29 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren (so far), and they include their children and grandchildren’s spouses as if they have always been family. Charles viewed his move to Washington D.C. as not only a career opportunity, but also as a chance for his family to have a base from which to explore and learn about the nation’s history. Each family had multiple opportunities to visit during their time in D.C. Charles also ensured

that his children and their spouses were able to visit Europe during his time in Geneva. He provided moral and financial support for the education of his children and grandchildren. He facilitated family trips to places such as Island Park, Moab, Bear Lake, and, most memorably Disneyland and the beaches of Southern California. Charles was a strong believer in family traditions. He promoted family gatherings on birthdays and holidays. Among his favorite holidays was the Fourth of July. He organized a grandchild sleepover and served them his special silver dollar pancakes for breakfast. The festivities culminated at night with the “Ring of Fire,” a ritual in which he formed a circle with his grandchildren and great grandchildren, and they danced and chanted around a blaze of fireworks. A spectacle that had to be seen to truly be believed.

Charles is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He is a faithful disciple of Jesus and believed strongly in welcoming people from all walks and from all quarters. He served in many callings, including as a beloved Bishop. Charles loved to serve others and was very generous with his time and financial resources.

Charles’ marriage to Susanna has been a model union. He expressed on many occasions that his love for Susanna was indescribably deep and something that he never realized was possible. Charles recognized that Susanna was a cornerstone for his success. They share a love for the Utah Jazz, the Grantsville Cowboys, the BYU Cougars, and college football. Susanna misses Charles deeply but she has firm and unshakeable knowledge that their union is eternal, and although they will be physically apart for a time, their hearts remain connected.

Charles is survived by his wife Susanna, daughter-in-law Michelle, daughter Wendy, son Brent and his wife Bobbi, son Michael and his wife Kate, daughter Kristin and her husband Keith, daughter Lisa and husband Nelson, 29 grandchildren and their spouses and partners, and 18 great-grandchildren.

Charles is preceded in death by his mother and father, his four siblings, his son-in-law Sterling Sumner, and his beloved son Douglas. He is also preceded in death by many dear friends. Although Charles is greatly mourned in this life, he has been welcomed and is being celebrated by innumerable souls beyond the divide.

The funeral service will be held January 13 at 11:00 a.m. Viewings will be held Friday January 12 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Saturday January 13 from 10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. The funeral and viewings will be at the Willow Creek Stake Center, 2350 E. Creek Road, Sandy.

Susanna has requested that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the humanitarian fund or to other organizations that serve similar needs.