



## Dorothy Jean Johnson

March 24, 1952 - May 19, 2019

Dorothy Jean Johnson played many roles in life. She was born to be a daughter, fortunate to be a sister, chose to be a wife, fated to be a mother, and was by nature to be a friend. This is her story.

### The Daughter

Dorothy was born in the rural farmlands of Kansas to her loving parents Mervin and Wilma Benshoof. She would often speak of her childhood, of having to pump water from the well and learning the literal origin of the phrase “running around like a chicken with its head cut off”. She would tell stories of running out of gas in her first car, a VW bug, and about how much her friends would complain about giving her gas money for school (a quarter!). Mervin and Wilma gave their children everything they could give and in her youth instilled in Dorothy that same sense of duty and honor which she would carry with her throughout her life.

### The Sister

Dorothy was the eldest but not the only Benshoof. She was followed by a pair of siblings in her sister Karen and brother Don. She was the consummate eldest daughter, supporting and protecting her younger siblings when they most needed it and getting them into trouble when they didn't. She would recount the time that the sisters locked their brother in the basement or how the family dog went running out the barn hay loft on the second story. Dorothy and Karen were especially close, as only sisters can be. They were lifelong friends and I can scarcely remember more than a couple years going by where one wasn't visiting the other despite the distance between them.

### The Wife

I cannot speak too much of how this part of her life began. That is a story for another Johnson, but I can speak of what I saw daily growing up and the last 42 years of a 44 year

marriage. What I saw was someone who was always trying to be a better version of themselves. She would read books and write down favorite quotes that spoke to her. She was always looking for ways to be a better partner. About my parents I would often say that they would argue of what their own names were just to be on the opposite sides of something but despite all that they would always have each other's backs. It might have been okay for one to argue with the other but good luck to anyone else who thought they could do the same. Being a partner meant being there to help one another and it was as simple as that for my parents. They might bicker or disagree about something but always they would help each other. One thing that would always stand out to me were the Christmases. She always made a special effort to get gifts that were both unique and meaningful and always took extra time to make each package special. For her, it wasn't about the gift as a thing, but about giving the gift as an expression and acknowledgement of the person that was receiving it. It was that depth and compassion that always stood out during the holidays.

### The Mother

Here finally is the area in which I can speak most confidently. On a cold December day in 1976 I was born. She would remark about the day because of the wintery weather and how she sent my father out to find food and all he could bring back was a convenience store candy bar because everything was closed prior to Christmas. Most of my younger days are gone in my memory but my mother would tell tales. Tales of how I toddled away in the heavy snow, oblivious, when she fell and hurt her leg. Tales of how I gave her a black eye with a thrown baseball which caused a friend to worry she was abused. I remember often being drafted into duty working in her garden which she loved so dearly. Working on this landscaping project or that redecoration. She found joy in the beauty of flowers and simple country creations that make a house a home. Her garden was her sanctuary, full of gazing balls and bird houses it was a place where she made her peace with the world. I remember when she came home from the rodeo past midnight and I showed her a bite I had gotten from the dog and how she insisted we go to the emergency room. How we went to the pancake house at 3AM after and went to tell my dad after that. How she was punch drunk from the lack of sleep but never hesitated in any of it because that is what mothers do. That is the single most defining quality of Dorothy as a mother is how supportive she was. It never mattered, through good ideas and bad, she was always there to support me. Although we didn't agree on many things she was never judgmental and her support never wavered.

### The Friend

This section may be the shortest but not the least. I will leave it to any commenters to fill in the story here. All I can say is that the people I either talked to or were mutually acquainted with, they all expressed the same admiration for Dorothy. In her steadfastness in stepping in to help others, in her insight in listening to and offering advice, and in her assertiveness by taking charge when things needed to get done. I always knew her as a person who tried to do the right thing.

Fin

Her life and her story might be finished but I can say without reservation that it was a life well lived and she did her part to leave the world a better place than she found it. Hours before she died the last words I spoke to her were "Thank you. Love you Mom". I think those words "Thank you" nicely sum up the life of Dorothy Jean Johnson and the kind of impact she had.

# Comments

---



“ We have been neighbors of Dorothy and Gene for over 30+ years. They have been great neighbors during this time. We will certainly miss Dorothy and her infectious smile as shown above. Jim & Dotti Goodwin

**Jim Goodwin** - July 04, 2019 at 12:00 AM

---



“ Though I hadn't seen Dorothy in several years, a light went out in my world when I heard she died. Sharing an office space meant we shared our lives; I knew you, Gene, and you, Jeremiah, long before I ever met you. I knew her sister and brother and folks though I never met them...family was important to her. Her stories were enthralling, her humor infectious, her artistry, whatever she seems to touch, enviable. During my time at Keyport, I was lucky enough to work, at different times, with three incredible women who I could call a friend as well as a coworker, and Dorothy was one of them. I am honored I shared her world.

**Rhonda Lieseke** - June 12, 2019 at 08:59 AM

---



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



**Rill Chapel's Life Tribute Center** - June 10, 2019 at 03:32 PM