



## Ellsworth L Johnson

August 30, 2015

Johnson, Ellsworth L. 1958 COMMODORE MINNEAPOLIS AQUATENNIAL  
Ellsworth Levine Johnson of Edina, MN, transcended life at age 97 on August 30, 2015, preceded by his cherished wife Lucille and their son Robert Ellsworth Johnson. Ellsworth was a devoted husband, proud father, loyal friend, trusted business associate and a real American patriot. A self-made man, Ellsworth was the personification of his personal mantra: "Pursue, persist and prevail!" He was born in Osakis, MN, on July 3, 1918. It was noted, "Ellsworth was almost a firecracker!" The first of three sons born to Beatrice and Bennett Johnson, his character was shaped by kind parents, Danish and Norwegian traditions of his Grandparents and the small town Americana of his childhood. Persistence soon emerged, from perfect attendance throughout Sunday School to becoming an Eagle Scout. He played his trumpet in the high school band and with his Uncle Alfred Meinstad's dance band. He was educated by fine public school teachers and graduated from Osakis High School in 1936. Ellsworth pursued further education at the University of North Dakota, University of Minnesota, Harvard University and St. Thomas University. Ellsworth was working at Osakis' Gamble Skogmo Store when he met his future wife Lucille Hanson. Simultaneous with their marriage was Ellsworth's job promotion. They moved to North Dakota where he progressed from Store Manager to Zone Superintendent while assigned to stores in Fargo, Harvey and Bismarck. In 1939 oldest child Bev was born at Ambrose. In 1944, son Robert was born in

Bismarck just before Ellsworth was drafted. Ellsworth was first stationed in Italy during WWII, then in Austria under General Mark Clark with the United States Special Forces. He was honorably discharged on Feb 2, 1946. When he returned, Ellsworth was assigned by Gambles to their Minneapolis home office as Assistant Vice President of Sales and Franchise. He moved his family to Richfield where daughters Joan, Barbara, Nancy and Jenni were born. By 1959 Ellsworth accepted the position of Public Relations Director and Sales Coordinator with Apache Oil Corp. followed by Executive Vice President of Western Land Corp. which developed shopping centers. He moved to Detroit, MI, as Vice President of Federals Inc., returning to Minneapolis in 1969 to develop nursing homes with Rembrandt Enterprises, Inc. He had found satisfaction in providing Quality Care for seniors through his work. So, in 1974, Ellsworth founded First American Companies which he owned until his life's end. First American owns and operates nursing homes and retirement housing. Ellsworth treated his staff with kindness and respect while teaching them principles of Quality Care. As a consultant he developed eldercare facilities for communities and church groups across the country. At the completion of each project, he especially enjoyed the process of hiring young administrators and mentoring them until those facilities would run smoothly. It was in 1977 when his own mentor, Bert Gamble asked Ellsworth to replace him on the Gamble's Board of Directors. Bert stipulated to his board that he would retire if the board would agree to Bert's appointment of Ellsworth. When Wickes bought Gamble's in 1980, Ellsworth advanced onto the Wickes Board where he enjoyed the challenges of serving for many more years. Ellsworth was committed to serving his community. Every project or organization became infused with the vitality of his enthusiastic leadership. Among numerous civic achievements he helped organize the Richfield Boy Scouts and the Richfield Jaycees. He prevailed to establish the community swimming pool for Richfield children. He led the Minneapolis Aquatennial as 1958 Commodore featuring the Minnesota Centennial year. He was a Mason, a member of the Scottish Rite and a Shriner in support of the Shriner's

Children's Hospital. He joined the Minneapolis Boys Club Board of Directors shortly after it was organized, serving twice as Board Chairman. He also became a Founder and a Board Chairman of the Boys and Girls Club of the Twin Cities Foundation. Ellsworth was a faithful member of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church. Ellsworth's steadfast devotion to Lucille was the quiet strength behind their long and loving marriage. He encouraged his children to believe in themselves and to pursue their individual talents. Ellsworth welcomed every grandchild and great-grandchild with his gentle loving touch. His dynamic leadership protected his family through the difficult passing of his only son in 1994. After 73 years together, Ellsworth lost Lucille in 2012. He sought comfort in the company of his daughters, the grandchildren who gave him their time, close friends and business associates who came by to acknowledge his influence. Ellsworth's greatest legacy may be his example of how to live a positive life. He was an honorable gentleman who stayed on the high road. A close friend and business associate described him well, "Ellsworth is a high-quality human being, a man with lots of moral fiber." His very presence was a blessing. WAS he a firecracker? Yes! "Pursue, persist and prevail!" Ellsworth L. Johnson is survived by 5 daughters: Beverly Anderson of Roberts, WI, Joan Berthiaume (John) of Mpls, Barbara Mace (Gene) of Eden Prairie, Nancy Johnson of Edina, Jennifer McLaughlin (John) of Wayzata; Bob's wife Mary, 12 grandchildren, 11 great-grand-children, 3 sisters-in-law, 1 brother-in-law and many nieces, nephews and cousins. A Celebration of Life will be held at the Lakewood Cemetery Chapel in Mpls on 36th St at Hennepin Ave S on Saturday, September 5 at 10 AM with visitation 1/2 hour prior. Interment at Lakewood Cemetery. Washburn McReavy.com Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

# Tribute Wall



“ *Heavenly Sentiments Spray was purchased for the family of Ellsworth L Johnson.*



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September 03, 2015 at 04:53 PM



“ *Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Ellsworth L Johnson.*



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September 03, 2015 at 04:27 PM



“ *Ellsworth was a great friend and mentor to me. I met him when I was about 22 and he taught me a lot about business but also instilled a healthy dose of optimism. He was a true gentleman and had an impact on many. Great memories.*

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**Sergei Shvetzoff** - September 02, 2015 at 08:30 PM

MM

“ *Ellsworth was the father of my best friend Nancy and so I have enjoyed his company for over 45 years. Although we didn't see each other often, he always seemed to remember me with an enthusiastic greeting " Well if it isn't Minnie Moore!" A retail entrepreneur myself, I loved to hear his stories. Ellsworth was one of the original retailers. He understood how to motivate people. He was quick to share his optimistic view of life with everyone. His wisdom, insight and kindness are rare in this world and he will be missed.*

*Prayers To All Of You!*

*Minnie Moore*

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**Mary Faith Moore** - September 02, 2015 at 12:33 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Ellsworth L Johnson.*



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September 02, 2015 at 10:27 AM

DM

“ *David and Gretchen Martin purchased the Basket of Joy for the family of Ellsworth L Johnson.*



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**David and Gretchen Martin** - September 01, 2015 at 09:57 AM