

1997

Eldon Elliott Johnston 1912 to 1997



Mass for Christian Burial for Eldon Elliott Johnston, 84, were held Monday, January 20, 1997 at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Wheatland. Father Charles Velasquez was the Celebrant. Vigil for the Deceased was held Sunday, January 19, 1997 at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church. Interment was in the Wheatland Cemetery.

Mr. Johnson died Tuesday, January 14, 1997 at Columbia Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

Eldon was born December 13, 1912 in Torrington, Wyoming, the son of William Andrew and Adah Fay (Smith) Johnston. When was seven, the family moved to Wheatland where Eldon was raised and educated, graduating from Wheatland High School. He married Josephine Keefe on April 14, 1939 in Wheatland at the LaRame Hotel. As a loving couple, their life's work was accomplished as a team. They resided in Wheatland all of their married life, and began spending their winters in Arizona in 1952.

Eldon began his trucking career with the purchase of a gravel truck in 1931. He then founded Johnston Fuel Liners, Inc. in 1939; first in Riverton, Wyoming and then he moved the offices to Newcastle, Wyoming in 1946. His company earned the Best Overall Fleet Trophy in 1986 in the annual fleet safety contest sponsored by the Wyoming Trucking Association Inc. and Trailmobile Inc. In 1942, he began his ranching career with the purchase of Bard Ranch in Wheatland, where he and Josephine made their home and raised their family. The purchase of this ranch began a legacy of business and ranching that continues today. In 1955, he drilled the first deep irrigation well in the Wheatland Irrigation District. In the early 1960s, he was the first person to assemble and use a center pivot sprinkler in the Wheatland area. He was the main proponent of the development of the Ringsby Project for the Wheatland Irrigation District, which brings water from the McFadden area to the Wheatland Flats. He was instrumental in re-developing the good relationship between Holly Sugar and the Wheatland beet farming community. Eldon was on the cutting edge of innovative ranching with his one of a kind machine inventions. He was always trying things no one else would try. He spent many hours at Druby's Machine Shop trying to bring his ideas to life.

Eldon served as president of the Wyoming Trucking Association in 1945-1946 and as Chairman of the Public Relations committee. He was the director of the National Tank Truck Carriers Association and a member of the safety committee for this group. He was awarded the American Truck Historical Society Founders Award; served as a Platte County School Board member in the early 1950s; was one of the founding members of the Wheatland Booster Club and its first president (this group evolved into the present Chamber of Commerce); he supported Little League and Babe Ruth baseball; he also supported 4-H by giving the Grand Champion Hereford Trophy for many years; he was an avid golfer and loved to press you on the 9th!

Eldon is survived by his wife, Josephine Johnston of Wheatland; four children, Judie and husband Kraig Brighton of Kimball, Nebraska; Mathew Johnston and wife Lorraine of Dayton, Wyoming; Jane Johnston of Casper, Wyoming; Michael Johnston and wife Vicki of Wheatland; a brother, Glenn Johnston and wife Josephine of College Station, Texas; eleven grandchildren, Megan Barber of Laramie, Wyoming; Kara Brighton of Cheyenne, Wyoming; Kenna VanPelt of Mitchell, Nebraska; Maureen Brighton of Laramie, Allison Johnston of London, England; Drew Johnston of Norfolk, Virginia; Dr. Mathew Ivory of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Christina Wade of Dry Prong, Louisiana; Jennifer Ivory of Casper, Wyoming; Shannon Johnston of Fargo, North Dakota; Amy Johnston of Laramie and four great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Doval Johnston on October 3, 1962.

Serving as pallbearers were Norman Hanks, Dave Prewitt, Vincent "Wink" Anderson, Lew Sullivan, Keith Brighton and Ron Davis. Honorary pallbearers were Joe Bowen, Dr. J.A. Jones, William R. Jones, Sam Carroll and Gordon Pecha.

A memorial education fund has been established at First State Bank, P.O. Box 39, Wheatland, Wyoming, 82201, for scholarships for graduates of Wheatland High School and would be appreciated by the family.

The Platte Funeral Chapel was in charge of the arrangements.