

JO (SHAFER) JOHNSTON

June 14, 1924 ~ July 21, 2022 (age 98)

A graveside service for Gertrude Josephine “Jo” Johnston, 98, will be at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, July 30, 2022 at the Wheatland Cemetery in Wheatland, Wyoming with Pastor Chris Furl officiating. Jo Johnston passed away peacefully on Thursday, July 21, 2022 at the Platte County Legacy Home in Wheatland.

She was the second child born to her parents, Wayne A. Shafer and Anna Marie (Schlef) Shafer on Saturday, June 14, 1924 in Torrington, Wyoming. Her brother, Wayne A. “Jack” Shafer was two years her elder.

Following graduation from Morrill Nebraska High School in 1942, she attended the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming to study education. After one year of school at UW during WWII, a teacher shortage prompted her being put into service as an elementary school teacher in Huntley, Wyoming where she lived in the ‘teacherage’ on campus. In the following years, she met her future husband, Glenn D. Johnston of Wheatland and they were married on June 16, 1946 at the Wheatland United Methodist Church. She continued her elementary teaching career at the current ‘Old Junior High’ building in Wheatland.

In 1949, Glenn took a job at the Socony Mobil refinery in Casper, Wyoming and Jo continued teaching at Park, Willard, and University Park Elementary schools. In 1951 she had her first son, W. Andrew and in 1955, her second son, Eric D. She was a caring mother to her boys and made a concentrated effort to read to them, take them to the library and cultivate education. Perhaps this is why she had such a good vocabulary and command of the language. She finished her UW education and received a BA degree in 1960.

In 1966, the family moved to Beaumont, Texas where she continued her teaching career. She found the teaching climate of the civil rights era south very different from what she left in Wyoming but, adapted and continued to be successful. Upon Glenn and Jo’s retirement in 1982, they relocated to College Station, Texas. In College Station, she continued her teaching career, although this time as a volunteer as an adult literacy volunteer. She received letters from some of these adult students thanking her for teaching them to read. Jo was certainly called to teaching and she was blessed with the gift of being good at it.

In 2000, Glenn and Jo moved back to Wheatland where they retired again. Glenn passed in 2005 and Jo continued to be active in educational organizations such as Delta Kappa Gamma. As dementia crept into her life, she relocated to the Platte County Legacy Home. Even in her later years, her two sentences may not have been linked by subject matter, but they were individually grammatically correct with exquisite vocabulary.

A memorial to the Platte County Early Literacy Program, C/O First State Bank, 1405 Sixteenth Street, Wheatland, Wyoming 82201 would be appreciated by the family.

