

Clara Lou Johnson

January 1, 1925 - July 9, 2014

A funeral service for Clara Lou Johnson, 89, will be held at 10 a.m. Friday, July 18 at the Memorial Baptist Church in Wheatland with Pastor Craig Cagle officiating. Interment will be in the Wheatland Cemetery.

Clara Lou Johnson passed away Wednesday, July 9 at the Platte County Memorial Nursing Home in Wheatland.

Clara Lou was born Jan. 1, 1925 in Barnsdall, Okla., the daughter of Elmer L. and Elizabeth M. (Ludwig) Rhodes.

She graduated from Barnsdall High School. After high school and during World War II, she worked for the United States Postal Service and then as a fingerprint specialist for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington D.C. She then enrolled at Oklahoma State University and obtained a degree in Home Economics.

While at OSU, she met Joseph Porterfield Johnson at the Baptist Student Union. He was the man of her dreams. Joe and Clara Lou were engaged to be married when they made a trip to Wyoming to see the ranch Joe's family was in the process of purchasing. Another ranch, the Chet Thompson place on the North Laramie River, was also available for purchase. They fell in love with this ranch (at least Joe did) – cut their trip short – and immediately left for Oklahoma to get the needed financing. They were married on Nov. 2, 1947 and graduated from OSU in the spring of 1948. Clara Lou was pregnant when they took possession of the ranch on May 1, 1948. At the time they were married, Clara Lou, a city girl, knew nothing about ranch living.

From 1948 to 1969, Clara Lou devoted herself to raising their six children, taking care of Joe and providing brainpower and wisdom to the ranching operation. Joe attributed any success he achieved in business to Clara Lou.

During these years, she taught Sunday school and played the piano/organ for the church. She was very active in the 4-H program, the Republican Party, and many other local organizations.

Longing for adult conversation, Clara Lou became the Platte County Home Extension Agent in 1969. She held this position until 1987. During this time she presented daily radio talks and wrote



weekly newspaper articles in addition to her other responsibilities. She was especially proud of the Platte County Heritage Book Committee, which completed and published the Wyoming Platte County Heritage book. Along with other recognitions, she was awarded the distinguished service award from the National Association of Extension Home Economists. She was President of the Wyoming Extension Home Economics Association

and co-authored the Wyoming 4-H citizenship manuals.

Clara Lou's youngest son Taylor passed away on Sept. 29, 1977. Her oldest son Joe Jr. (Jody) passed away on April 12, 2002. She was a pillar for the family during these times.

Clara Lou is survived by her son Richard (Bonnie), daughter Charlene, son Rex (Peggy) all of Wheatland, son Bob (Kathy) of Grosse Pointe Park, Mich. and brother-in-law Ray (Jo) Cappel. She has nine grandchildren: Trey and Matt Johnson, Eydie (Ben) Trautwein, Shelley, Kevin, Brandon (Shelby), Adam, Emily and Alex Johnson. She has four great grandchildren: Chloe Johnson, Stephen Mills, Taylor Rae and Blake Trautwein.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Joe on July 7, 2011; her parents; and two sisters, Virginia Cappel and Margaret Crane.

Clara Lou believed in gender equality. Consequently, she chose Carol Cook, Julia Farris, Elvira Call, Helen Rutherford, Nancy Curtis, and Sandra Johnson as her pallbearers. She requested that her grandchildren pitch in and help these friends carry her casket.

Memorials may be made to the Platte County Public Library Foundation Endowment Fund, 904 Ninth Street, Wheatland, WY 82201 (every dollar donated will be matched three to one by the State of Wyoming) would be appreciated by the family.

Arrangements are under the direction of Gorman Funeral Homes – Platte Chapel of Wheatland.

Condolences may be left for the family at <http://www.gormanfh.com>.