



James Jerry Johnson

December 22, 1933 - April 7, 2025

James Jerry Johnson was born December 22, 1933 in Gloversville, New York. After an adventurous if not at times rough childhood (bread and ice trucks missing inventory, orphanage experience, etc.) James (Jim, Jimmy) joined the Marines in 1951 at 18 years old. After three tours in Okinawa (Korean War Veteran), getting married (E. Catharine "Kittie" Langworthy) and the birth of two children, Michael Lewis 1954 and Anne Elizabeth 1959 (baby Steven lost in 1957) James retired from the Marines after 10 years of honorable and distinguished service in 1961.

The 1960's was an incredibly busy and productive decade for James, graduating from the California State University Fullerton in Public Administration (delaying law school to pursue the quicker path for supporting the family) and then holding several positions in city management in Southern California, eventually landing in Escondido as the Assistant City Manager. James' success allowed he and his wife Kittie to then adopt brother and sister toddlers Donald Edward and Lacy Jill in 1970. And then James & Kittie had their 5th child, Matthew Christopher in November 1970.

The 1970's were not exactly less eventful as James accepted a position in East Aurora, New York as their first Village Administrator in 1970 and the entire family (Kittie, 5 children, a cat and a Minah bird) moved East during Christmas Break that year. By Christmas of 1971 the career in City Administration was retired from and James took the family on the next adventure, a cross country trip in a Volkswagen Vanagon full of everyone,

every being and all the possessions that could be packed inside or tied on top. In the spring of 1972 James and family landed in Pittsburg, California, bringing them together again with James' youngest brother Ronald Roy Johnson, who James had brought back with him from New York back in 1956 when Ron was only 15 years old. Now it was time for James to pursue his earlier delayed life time goal of becoming a lawyer, so he started night school at Lincoln Law School in San Francisco. While in law school James took on a variety of jobs to keep the family afloat, including a brief stint back in public administration for Alameda County. With law school completed, James decided another big move was in order so he joined with his 2nd youngest brother, John Herman Johnson (who predeceased James in 2013), and bought a ranch in Big Springs, California. The move may have been influenced by the ongoing desire of all of the Johnson brothers to be together as life progressed (they had been together as young men in Orange County, California before each setting out in a different direction to pursue their various goals but always remained extremely close regardless of the distances). Ron, who had himself become a lawyer, had moved his family to Siskiyou County a year or so before James & John followed so the move made sense for James. In fact, James' 3rd youngest brother, Gary Johnson, relocated to Yreka to bring all 4 of the brothers together for a few years in the 1980's. James settled into Big Springs, then tackled the bar exam, achieving the goal of becoming a lawyer, and James was sworn in with the California Bar Association on June 1, 1979. Turning to the decade of the '80's and recognizing that although ranching was a good match for James' first wife Kittie, it was not a fit for James' desire to have an active rural law practice. They sold the ranch and bought a historic Victorian in downtown Yreka where James converted the front area of the house into a law office and the rest of the family figured out how to all fit in. And so it was, The Law Office of James J. Johnson was established. The twists and turns that were James Jerry Johnson did not end in the 1980's. James married his second wife, Janet Louise, in 1990 and they had James' 6th child, Hannah Bell, in 1991. James also became a father figure for Janet's

three young sons, Joshua Eugene, Matthew Stanley and Paul Michael. James' first 5 children were well on their own by this time so now the Victorian became a home for a new James Johnson family as well as continued to be a thriving law practice. In fact, James practiced law until the very end April 7, 2025, at the age of 91: 46 years, more than half his life!! Some of his last wishes were to make sure his clients were taken care of. His dedication was incomparable. James did many Pro Bono cases for women and their children and was known as a fierce advocate, if not at times an exasperating one. James is survived by his sister Marilyn Mulligan, brothers Gary and Ron Johnson, wife Janet, children Michael, Anne, Donald, Lacy, Matthew and Hannah, Janet's sons Joshua, Matthew and Paul, a number of grandchildren, many nieces and nephews and the dog Ariana (Ari). The adventures are too many to detail, the challenges mostly overcome, James did have a life well lived and those fortunate enough to have been a part of his life are definitely better for it. A celebration of life will be planned for later this year.

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *Obituary Wall*



Girdner Funeral Chapel - April 27 at 03:28 PM

AJ

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ *Girdner Funeral Chapel*

A Memorial Tree was planted for James Jerry Johnson - April 22, 2025 at 12:00 AM

GC

“ *James Jerry Johnson*

Girdner Funeral Chapel - April 22, 2025 at 12:00 AM