



Edith Johnson

February 7, 1914 - November 24, 2015

Edith Keller Page Johnson died November 24, 2015 at age 101. She was predeceased by husbands William O. Page Jr. and subsequently Clive Johnson. She will be lovingly remembered by her two sons, Earl Page whose late wife was Norma (granddaughter Susan Girbach and grandson Robert Page and wife Linda) and Tom Page and wife MaryLou Troutman (step granddaughter Kim Brafford and husband Rob), stepdaughter Cherri Mitchell and husband Jerry (step granddaughter Jennifer Simpson and husband Wayne, step grandson Jerry Mitchell Jr. and wife Nicole, step grandson Ryan Mitchell and wife Michelle), and stepson Steve Johnson and wife Gloria. Edith also had 11 great grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to her home church of many years: Cheverly United Methodist Church, 2801 Cheverly Ave., Cheverly, MD 20785 (Attn. Rev. Theresa Thames).

A memorial service will be held at the Henry Ford Village retirement center in Dearborn in the chapel at 11:00 a.m. on Friday January 22, 2016, preceded by a memorial concert by her son Tom and wife MaryLou ("Dust and Ashes") at the same location at 7:00 p.m. Thursday, January 21, 2016.

Edith Keller Page Johnson

(101 years in a nutshell)

Edith Johnson was born in 1914 in the Bronx of New York City. Her father was a well known illustrator, Arthur I. Keller. When about two years old, Edith's family moved to a very nice Tudor style home especially built for Keller in Riverdale, NY. (That home was subsequently bought by Mayor LaGuardia as his retirement home in the late 1940's.) But after a few years Keller exchanged that house for a more modest dwelling nearby. This is the childhood home Edith remembers best. They also gave up their Pierce Arrow auto. When Edith was just 10, her father died. This necessitated a severe change in lifestyle for the Keller family. No more living in a large house with chauffeur, cook, governess, etc. Her mother had to get a job, and with the help of a doctor friend (former suitor), she became the first librarian for the New York City Post Graduate Medical School.

Edith moved to Bronxville with her mother and siblings where she went to high school. Somehow she managed to graduate at age 16, go to secretarial school for a year and lie about her age to get a job in a Wall Street bank at age 17. At 18 she met and married William O. Page Jr. (Bob), a show business singer. She spent her wedding night in the Hotel New Yorker since Bob had just sung in the last Broadway performance of Jerome Kern's "The Cat and the Fiddle" before going with it on the road to Boston.

Her history now gets a bit blurry, but Edith lived for awhile in New York City where at age 19 her first son (Earl Page) was born. The New York connection was interspersed with various stays in Orlando Florida and North Carolina due in part to Bob's singing activities, and the fact that NC was Bob's home. Some of these moves seemed to involve enjoyable long train trips replete with Pullman sleepers and dining cars with linen finery.

World War II forced her husband to work as an electrician in the shipyard in

Wilmington, NC. The family's initial housing was in a small fishing cabin with a real ice box and kerosene cooking stove on the grounds of Ft. Fisher pier near Wilmington. Here she found herself waiting on tables in the seafood restaurant attached to the fishing pier, both managed by her father-in-law. Then the family moved to Maffitt Village, a war housing duplex for shipyard workers for some two years. Her second son Tom was born while living here. There seemed to be detours to Staten Island and Queens, NY, followed by two more Wilmington, NC addresses as her husband tried to replace a promising show business career with a myriad of other jobs. In 1947 a final legitimate show business lead took him to Panama (taking off from Ft. Fisher in a 2-seater WW II trainer piloted by his friend Joe) where he stayed for several months. The Panama venture had promise and included live radio appearances on the "Lucky Strike Show", but Edith did not think Panama to be a good place to raise two school age children; thus Bob returned to Wilmington. While her husband continued to struggle to find meaningful employment, Edith found work as a secretary at the Sunset Park Baptist church and then at First Baptist in Wilmington where her husband had been the church soloist for a number of years.

A promising job as an apartment building maintenance manager took them to Arlington, VA in 1955. Here, she had the foresight to get special training and took a job with the National Security Agency (NSA). Not long after, her husband lost his job due to a management change, and NSA moved from Arlington to Ft. Meade, Maryland. They of course moved and bought their first house in Landover, MD in 1958, some 25 years after they were married. Her husband Bob died in 1963 at age 55, and she moved to a nearby apartment. These post NC events validated her decision to get a driver's license at age 40 before leaving NC despite her husband's objections.

She married Clive Johnson in 1970, a retired government worker with two

grown children, Steve and Cherri, whom she lovingly accepted as family. They bought a home in New Carrollton, MD and did some “fun traveling”. But she took an early retirement after 20 years of NSA service because of Clive’s worsening health. He died in 1979. She lived alone in her New Carrollton home for another 16 years maintaining a very active role in the Cheverly United Methodist Church and various volunteer activities. This was occasionally punctuated by some trips and visits with friends and family. She then decided it was time to move to a retirement complex near Baltimore, but was given the idea by her older son’s wife, Norma, to consider such a place in Michigan. This brought her to Henry Ford Village (HFV) in 1995 where she took full advantage of the opportunities for both service and recreation with emphasis on the former. She was chairman of the Fine Arts Committee for eight years, helping to expose residents to concerts, opera, etc., helped conduct sit down exercises, conducted Bingo games and began weekly “sing and share” activity for rehab and assisted living residents, etc. etc.

She suffered a bleed type stroke followed by three abdominal surgeries in a period of just a few years. But it took a broken leg to finally necessitate a move to Assisted Living in 2011. This cut her inventory of Keller paintings in half, but her Assisted Living walls still contained some striking examples of her father’s works. Despite the lingering effects of her stroke and the onset of macular degeneration, she continued to enjoy and learn from the Talking Book program and took advantage of the musical entertainment and local travel opportunities available to Assisted Living residents. The former included the annual concerts given for HFV by her son Tom and wife Mary Lou for each of the 20 years Edith had been a resident. The singing duo are better known as Dust and Ashes.

At age 100 she still continued her Friday visits to Happy Hour and enjoyed her gin and tonic with a twist of lime. She seemed to enjoy having It All Started with Columbus read to her on many family visits. When it became too difficult

to dial on her own, she requested that someone place a long distance call now and then to those she wanted to keep up with. She even took part in the HFV annual care conference, clearly identifying problems that the HFV representative could not evade and thus had to agree that they needed to be fixed. Her mind remained sharp as ever, just a bit slower.

Eating pureed food and drinking thickened liquids because of her swallowing difficulty, wasn't much fun. This led to dehydration and subsequently low blood pressure and pulse rate. A short stay in Oakwood Beaumont hospital momentarily remediated these symptoms, but she became bed ridden upon her return to HFV, and Hospice help was obtained. Then, on November 24, 2015, about two weeks after her return from the hospital, Edith died at age 101. This brought to a close a very long and remarkable life.

Earl Page 2016

Previous Events

Memorial Concert

JAN 21. 7:00 PM (ET)

Henry Ford Village Chapel
15101 Ford Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Memorial Service

JAN 22. 11:00 AM (ET)

Henry Ford Village Chapel
15101 Ford Road
Dearborn, MI 48126