



Varina Powell Johnson

July 24, 1926 - August 30, 2020

Varina Powell Johnson passed away peacefully on August 30, 2020.

She was born in Tyler, Texas on July 24, 1926, to Lee Powell and Varina Garnett Powell. Her father was the City Manager of Tyler who oversaw the laying of Tyler's famous red brick streets, and her mother was one of five sisters born to Varina Yarbrough Garnett and John Wickliff Garnett.

After graduating from high school in Sherman, Texas, Varina attended North Texas State Teachers' College (UNT) in Denton majoring in Music, where she met her future husband JW, or Jubby. He was her piano teacher, and after many invitations, she finally agreed to a date. They married in June of 1949, and were married for 66 years.

Varina was a wonderful violinist and music teacher. She studied at Julliard from 1948 through 1949, and taught the string program at Gladewater High School for two years. When she and JW decided to move back to Tyler in 1957 to raise their children, Varina taught music at many public schools before going to Hubbard, where she and Beverly Harrison were instrumental in starting the string program for TISD. Varina also played violin in the East Texas Symphony for 20 years and was a member of Marvin Methodist Church, the Junior League of Tyler, the First Literary Club, and the Tyler Garden Club. She was also an avid bridge player. Varina and JW devoted

themselves to music education. They will be honored by TJC in January 2021, when the orchestra pit at the new Arts Building will be named in their honor. They spent many wonderful hours playing there.

Varina was preceded in death by her husband JW, her mother and father, and her younger sister, Martha. She is survived by her children, Tina Johnson and her husband Mark Hattan, her son JW Johnson Jr. and his wife Gigi Gould; her beloved grandchildren, Alice Hattan and Cameron Johnson; her niece, Nancy Mogle; nephews, Silas Johnson, Matt Wilkins, Steve Wilkins, Tim Wilkins, and Andrew Wilkins; and brother-in-law, Ron Wilkins and many cousins.

In Varina's memory, donations may be made to the Naming Opportunity in honor of JW and Varina Johnson for the TJC Rogers Palmer Performing Arts Center through the TJC Foundation, PO Box 9020, Tyler, TX 75711; to The Hospice of East Texas Foundation, 4111 University Blvd., Tyler, TX 75701; or to the music fund at Marvin Methodist Church 300 W. Erwin St., Tyler, TX 75702.

For the safety of her family and friends, there will be a celebration of Varina's life in the future.

Tribute Wall

JM

“ *Many memories from Clarkston. She actually recognized my talent in 6th grade and set me up with Daisy Highfill for voice lessons. Sweet lady!*

Jana Mueller - January 09, 2021 at 01:23 PM

MB

“ *One of my most admired teachers from Clarkston Elementary. Our class musicals were so fun.*

Marilyn Simmons Brown. - September 08, 2020 at 02:01 PM

MJ

“ *Ms. Johnson was my violin teacher at Clarkston Elementary in 1974-1975. She even arranged for me to play with the East Texas Symphony. I was a challenge to train because I would not read the sheet music. I wanted to play everything by ear, (snickering). She was so patient and cheerful at every lesson, and a master violinist! She was an amazing talent and teacher. I loved and respected her dearly. When she would (occasionally) use one of our violins to demonstrate the proper technique for a few bars, it was always enchanting and magical, and made us all smile from ear to ear. I still remember how beautiful and cheerful she was in that music room over 45 years ago. Rest with Jesus, Ms. Johnson. I'll see you there when I'm done with my work here. M.K. Jones*

M.K Jones - September 04, 2020 at 05:23 AM



“ *Lovely picture & looks just like her! Remember years ago working on the elementary school string programs. Varina was always so helpful + being creative. We all miss her.*
Dave & Carolyn Halbrooks Bain

Carolyn Bain - September 02, 2020 at 04:55 PM

GW

“ *I have known Mrs. Johnson all my life. Tina and I started first grade together at Andy Woods and became fast friends. Mrs. Johnson taught us music and helped with our Blue Bird/Campfire Girl meetings. She also was a wonderful listening ear and advisor. She and my mother were dear friends. She was a precious lady and will be dearly missed. Tina and JW, you have my deepest sympathies. Rest in Heaven, dear lady.*

Greta Gregory Watkins

Greta Watkins - September 02, 2020 at 02:12 PM

MG

“ *She was a giant in the music area of Tyler and had a profound influence on all of us that love music. To know her was a joy and she blessed me personally, playing her beautiful violin for my mother's service 20 years ago. We loved the encouragement of the Johnson duo - they are both playing for the angels in heaven to enjoy.*



Mary Gammell - September 02, 2020 at 08:56 AM

GD

“ Tina, I don't know if I ever told you that at Gary Elementary Mrs Powell and Mrs Garnett were my teachers! Your mother was a great Southern lady and I'm glad to have known her and you!

Gretta Davis - September 01, 2020 at 04:51 PM