



Richard J. Johnson

October 24, 1949 - April 23, 2020

Richard John Johnson, much loved dad, grampa, and friend, died in a tragic accident on April 23 in Minocqua, WI. He was born October 24, 1949, to John “Ragner” Johnson and Eileen (Meagher) Johnson in Iron River, Michigan. He graduated from Iron River High School in 1968 and often joked that he was kicked out of the marching band for intentionally making his tuba “Pah” when he was supposed to “Oomp.” His kids suspected there may have been other contributing factors leading to the end of his high school musical career...

After attending technical college, he moved to Wisconsin to work with General Telephone and Electric. He was a volunteer fire fighter for the town of Hazelhurst for over 20 years, and his 1976 Fire Fighter of the Year award still hangs proudly in his home. It was during his early years as a volunteer firefighter that he earned his nickname “Pickhandle,” because he could hold the trunk of a tree in both hands with his body horizontal to the ground like the handle of a pickaxe. His core strength also made him freakishly good at yoga; his daughter was furious when he popped himself into a perfect crow pose first try when it had taken her 5 months to master that pose!

Though much of his adult life was spent in Northern Wisconsin, he was proud of his UP Michigan heritage and was quick to turn on his Yooper charm, sprinkling his stories with “doncha knows,” “Oh yah heys,” and “uff-das” anytime Michigan was mentioned in his presence.

He loved being outdoors, either “neakin’ through the woods” exploring or

doing some project that involved fixing or building something. He was quick to offer help to friends and family, whether they were only in need of an extra set of hands or required the more intensive help of putting a life back together. It seemed there was nothing he couldn't fix. He was also an active member of Ascension Lutheran Church, serving on, of course, the Building and Grounds Committee.

He loved Johnny Cash and the Beach Boys, and his kids remember this was all that played on the 8 track in his pick-me-up truck when they were young. He was often the hit of the party and could dance circles around his kids. He is survived by his partner, Margaret Strong, and his three children: Karla Feindt, MD (Darrell Davis) of Salt Lake City, UT, Deanna Johnson (Tom Nowak) of Shawano, WI, and Jason Johnson (Nikki) of San Antonio, TX, and one grandson, Giovanni Johnson of San Antonio, TX. He is also survived by his "unofficial" kids and grandkids: Heather Kuechenmeister, Matthew Dodd, David (Rachel), Myria and Evelyn Strong, Chris (Heather), Preston, Cory, and Gavin Strong, and Andy, Jamie (Kayla), Brandi, and Waverly Strong. What his kids will miss most is his squealing laughter which involved much knee slapping and tears, along with comments that he was laughing with us, though we knew darn well it was at us...usually rightfully so.

After learning of his death, a friend stated it best: "Of course Dick died helping someone. He would not have wanted it any other way." His love, guidance, and laughter will be greatly missed by his friends and family. There is now a hole in the universe the size of our dad. A memorial service will be scheduled so all friends and family can celebrate his life, once social distancing has ended.

Tribute Wall

TG

“ We are deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Dick. He truly was one of the “good guys”. You are missed down here but we know you are in a good place. All our love Anne Marie and Todd Gunderson. Florida

Todd E Gunderson - January 07, 2021 at 02:11 PM

BS

“ Rick was a pleasant,kind human being,and my BEST FRIEND friend fo 40 years,and those memories made will always be in my heart

Barb Schuster - September 19, 2020 at 11:04 AM

DK

“ My brother Greg Johnson lived and grew up with Dick in Iron River, Mi. We lived on Ice lake and were kids in the water all summer. Greg played the Tuba in band too. My brother would talk about the fun they had together. They were jokesters. I was sorry to hear of Dick's passing. I would meet him at the Pharmacy when he lived back in Iron River for a time. He would talk about the only place we would meet at our age was the Pharmacy I worked for Michigan Bell as an operator and in the repair service center so we would swap stories. Your family is in our thoughts and prayers.



Diane (Johnson) King Iron River

Diane King - May 17, 2020 at 05:15 PM

MK

“ I've known Rich for about 50 years. A true friend. The kind of friend that would borrow a buck to give you a buck if you needed it. God now has him in His keeping. We have him in our hearts. God Bless.

Marty Kiepke - May 02, 2020 at 09:34 AM

JG

“ I so enjoyed getting to know Richard when he was living in Escanaba. He was a good friend and so kind to my family. My deepest sympathies to his family.

Justin Gluesing - April 29, 2020 at 07:01 PM

BD

“ Anyone who knew Richard knew he loved God, his family and his many friends. His obituary was written with much love and all so true. He will be missed by many. My sympathy to his family and many friends.

Barbara Denny

Barbara Denny - April 29, 2020 at 06:11 PM

BK

“ My heart aches hearing of Dick's passing. He was a righteous dude. He was the janitor at First Lutheran Church who could fix anything. He even pulled the Pastor out of a parishioners driveway when she got stuck! God bless his family as they grieve, God bless all you loved and cared for him as you grieve. This is an unusual time and you were all blessed to know Dick Johnson. Pastor Bonny Kinnunen

bonny kinnunen - April 28, 2020 at 11:39 AM

JM

From a classmate of 1968, he was a quiet young man, wonderful to see how much he was loved.

Jane Kostreva Maki - May 14, 2020 at 02:57 PM

TL

He was a great guy and good friend!,,

TJ Lach - August 24, 2020 at 09:10 PM