

Robert O. Johnson (December 27, 1943 – March 3, 2015)

Known to many as ‘Robert O’ for the slightly mischievous sparkle in his eye, respected by friends and associates as ‘Trucker Bob’, and referred to affectionately by a *nameless* few as ‘The Mean Old Dad’, Robert Orin Johnson (1943 – 2015) will be remembered far and wide for his cowboy spirit, unsurpassed drive to *keep on movin’*, quiet but quick wit, and kind soul.

He spent many of his 71 years happy doing what he loved most, ‘hobby’ farming, in Hixton, Wisconsin (a.k.a. The Center of the Universe). Hixton was also the final base from which he operated his livestock-hauling business, Robert Johnson Trucking. After graduating from Osseo High School and the Farmers’ Short Course in Madison, he gained experience on others’ farms and worked in tractor sales at a Case Implement Dealer, before running his own dairy operation, a curly tail pig farm, and livestock farms primarily with beef cattle, and starting his trucking company. He always pursued the dreams he wanted, whether on the road, in the barn, or out riding horses.

He said he stood tallest when riding his childhood horse Queen in parades, and went on to break and train many horses and teach his kids to ride. He also taught his kids to drive, though few adopted his tendencies to take the ‘short cut’ through snow banks or the front lawn. He strove to instill the love of pigs into his daughters’ hearts. (It was automatically instilled in his son.) He would run races to test his daughters’ speed and arm wrestle any potential suitors. Having seen his son’s Arizona sweetheart tested by the one thing stronger than his arm – the Wisconsin winters – he was content to skip the arm wrestling test with her, saying that ‘all is as it should be’. He gave his children the confidence to enjoy a little teasing and to choose their own path in life, the integrity to be a genuine friend and neighbor and to be true to themselves, the drive to pursue dreams through both smarts and a voracious work ethic, and most of all, to approach each day with a sense of adventure.

Having put more miles on during his career than most do in their lives, Robert kept on truckin’ even in his down time, going to tractor pulls, finding deals on tractors across the country and hauling them all the way home, stopping at Yellowstone and other national parks, Wild West Spots like Wall Drug, South Dakota, soaking up country music in Nashville, Tennessee, paying tribute to unknown soldiers in Washington D.C., exploring WWII and other historical sites of France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Norway, and much more. Perhaps more importantly, Robert was happy at home. He loved life, loved his family, and loved his farm.

Staying true to his ‘tougher than the average man’ approach, Robert fought cancer for over 19 years with quiet dignity and true strength. Nearly a year and a half after the cancer had metastasized to the bone, he died at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, on Tuesday, March 3. He was surrounded by family, and his wife was at his side.

He is survived by his wife Eleanor, his 5 children from his first marriage: Jennifer Johnson (Rick Nelson), Kristen Radke (Ryan), Andrea Groen (Eric), Michelle Johnson (Lindsay Black), and

Robert N.N. Johnson (Cami Pew); 3 step-children: Wayne Bollinger (Julie), Darryl Bollinger (Kathy Strauch), and Jill Kitelinger (Paul Larson); 13 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. As the eldest child of Richard and Marie Johnson of Osseo, he has 6 younger siblings that have always looked up to him: Steven Johnson (Pam), Bill Johnson, Tom Johnson (Bonnie), Sigrid Crist (Dave), Eldri Westegaard (Jeff), and Lori Blabac (Mark). He is also survived by a brother-in-law Dale Easterson (Karen) and sister-in-law Karen Knutson (Larry); several nieces and nephews and great-nieces and nephews, an enormous and loving extended Johnson family, and 1 loyal, long-time trucking companion, his dog Daisy.

A memorial service will be held Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 11:00 a.m., at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Hixton. Reverend Mara Ahles-Iverson will be officiating. While his ashes will be buried in his family cemetery at the Elk Creek Lutheran Cemetery, Town of Hale, rural Osseo, WI, a few ashes may be caught up in the air so that Trucker Bob can *keep on movin'*.

Family and friends are invited for visitation Monday, March 9, 2015, from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., at Jensen-Modjeski Funeral Home, Hixton.

Family and friends are also invited for visitation Tuesday, from 10:00 a.m. until the time of the service at the church.

Jensen-Modjeski Funeral Home of Hixton is assisting the family with arrangements.

Online condolences are available at www.jensenmodjeskifuneralhome.com.