



## Helen Sheila Johnson

December 15, 1929 - June 5, 2020

Helen Sheila Wishart McGhee Johnson died peacefully on Friday afternoon, June 5th, 2020, at Addington Place in Northville, Michigan. She was 90. Sheila was born on December 15th, 1929, in Cardenden, Scotland, the only child of James and Christian (Livingstone) McGhee. The young family emigrated to America when Sheila was just six weeks old, settling near family on the east side of Detroit. She grew up there with aunts and uncles and cousins close by. The family found a home at Birkett Baptist church where she began serving as church pianist and accompanist when she was just thirteen years old.

She had complained to her dad that when eligible young men visited in church, all the other girls got to meet them first since she was delayed playing the service postlude. So, one Sunday dad was proactive and invited the latest visitor home for Sunday dinner before the other girls could pounce. As luck would have it, Paul Johnson's uncle just happened to be the church choir director. It wasn't long before Paul was singing bass and seeing Sheila twice a week.

They were married on May 5th, 1951, fittingly at Birkett Baptist Church, but only after Paul had graduated from college. No more had they set up housekeeping than he was drafted back into the service, sending Sheila home to live with her parents while he served with the Army in Korea for two years. Upon his return, he got a job, they bought a house, and they began a family, and all within the first year. Daughter Cheryl was born in 1955 and son Jim in

1958. Sheila's dad died then in middle age, just months before he could have met his namesake grandson. So it was that grandma Christian became an even closer part of the family.

Having settled in Redford Township, the family became part of planting the Dearborn Covenant Church, with Sheila taking her accustomed place at the piano and organ, and Paul in the bass section of the church choir. She continued there as organist, a faithful servant of the church for the next 42 years. Sheila had also found time to work at Parke Davis early on, and then as Cheryl and Jim grew up, at L.J. Griffin Funeral Home, first simply as organist, and then later as a more and more important part of the office staff as well.

Sheila and Paul made a dynamic pairing. While neither usually served as the life of the party, they were often its host and hostess, exercising wonderful gifts of hospitality and graciousness. They had a knack for cultivating friendships, something they exercised all throughout their lives. Together they were loyal to the generations before, continuing friendships with aging friends of their parents from Birkett long after all had moved away. They were generous with their time and abilities, enjoying involvements in the Swedish Club and ARPI Swedish Chorus, Paul among the basses with Sheila as always at the piano. Her ability to play almost anything, with or without music and in any available key, and with sensitivity and true musicality, made her everyone's preferred accompanist. "Nobody can play it like Sheila."

With Cheryl and Jim raised and starting families of their own, Paul and Sheila enjoyed expanding their horizons with international travel, over the years visiting China and Southeast Asia, Sweden, Mexico, and Scotland of course, cruising aboard the luxurious QE II and in the supersonic Concorde. Their favorite destination however was any place that included their grandkids, Eric, Linnea, Peter, Luke, and Caleb. They were doting grandparents with the energy, always taking the time, and ever ready to make the trip to be at their games and graduations. Luke and Emma were married the day after Sheila and Paul's sixty-sixth anniversary.

In retirement they built a condo on Lake Michigan not far from Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp. That getaway became the center of many family holidays with everyone together and remains the center of many memories to this day, part of the legacy of love and faith and music which are gifts both Sheila and Paul have bequeathed to their grateful family.

Sheila had suffered over the past ten years from various health conditions that made mobility and speech increasingly difficult and brought about a growing confusion as well. Paul cared for her faithfully until his own health issues became evident and help had to be brought in. They moved as their needs required with Sheila settling at Addington Place just before Paul's passing. Jim and Norma have been constant companions throughout, with Cheryl traveling in from out-of-state every three weeks or so, and Tom and all five of the grandkids present as often as possible and for most holidays and special celebrations. During the recent COVID restrictions, Sheila enjoyed seeing her loved ones on both Facetime and Zoom, with "patio visits" for two at a time in the courtyard having been allowed too in just the last week. She passed gently, with Cheryl and Jim by her bedside and the rest of the family keeping vigil outside in the shade of a tree, in keeping with ongoing precautions to protect other residents.

Sheila was preceded in death by her dad James McGhee in 1957, her mom Christian McGhee in 1997, her loving husband Paul Johnson in 2018. She is survived by children Cheryl (Rev. Thomas) Ek, and James (Norma) Johnson; by grandchildren Rev. Eric Ek, Rev. Linnea Ek, Peter Ek, Luke (Emma) Johnson, and Caleb Johnson; and by one great-granddaughter, Ada Johnson. A private family graveside service will be planned in the near future with other arrangements pending due to COVID concerns.

Update:

Livestreaming will not be available for the "Service of Music and Worship to Honor the Life and Memory of Sheila Johnson" this Saturday, June 5.

However, the service will be recorded and available for viewing next week. When the access information becomes available it will be forwarded via this app.

We look forward to seeing those of you who plan to attend the “Service of Music and Worship to Honor the Life and Memory of Sheila Johnson” this Saturday, June 5, 10:00am at Faith Covenant Church, Farmington Hills. Ushers will be available to assist with seating—for those fully vaccinated (2 weeks after the last injection) masks will not be required, you may sit with your family group and be distanced by 3 feet. For those not vaccinated, masks are required and will be seated accordingly, distanced by 6 feet.

There will be no visitation prior to the service. Instead you are invited to attend a 30 minute extended prelude of music, piano and organ (beginning at 9:30 a.m), in tribute to Mom’s many years as a church musician. A time of greeting and safe-distanced visiting will take place following the service.

Memorials may be directed to Angela Hospice, 14100 Newburgh Road, Livonia, Michigan 48154-5010 or to Portage Lake Covenant Bible Camp, 4158 Camp Delight Road, Onkama, Michigan 49675.

To share a memory, please use the share a memory tab on this web page.

A link is being added per the request of the family: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t-55Ql8qYdJXfmPWEm9BLxRof7av9VHG/view?usp=sharing>.



# Tribute Wall



“ *Helen Sheila Johnson*

---

December 07, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *Thank you so much for your letter and the information about Sheila having passed away. Dudley and I had fun times at church camp with them. She was so nice and loved all of you very much. My husband , Dudley just passed away three months ago, and I miss him,very much. He was 90 and had congestive heart trouble. Thanks again,Cheryl. Marie Moore*

---

**Marie Moore** - July 16, 2020 at 01:58 PM



“ *Sheila was a wonderful friend and mentor to me. Her many years of service to Dearborn Covenant are not forgotten. You are in my prayers.*  
*Cindy Alvarado*

---

**Cynthia Alvararado** - June 16, 2020 at 08:19 PM

KM

“ Sheila and Paul were two of the best people I've known. We didn't meet them until we joined the Swedish Club about 20 years ago, but, they were always gracious and welcoming. My dad, Art Elander, directed the ARPI Men's Chorus for a good number of years and really appreciated Sheila's talents on the piano as the accompanist. Dad was a pianist, a music teacher, and he knew talent and enjoyed the ease of working with someone as gifted as Sheila. Paul and Sheila were great friends of my parents, Marge and Art. After my dad died, mom would visit, with Arlene Palmquist, and Paul would help the ladies back to the car. Sheila and Paul - always gracious.

*I will think of them with a smile. They are missed, but because of the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, they are together again, and we can join them. I know the music in heaven is better now, than ever! Hugs to all the family.*

Love,

Marge Elander, Mike and Karen Elander McClain



---

**Karen Elander McClain** - June 15, 2020 at 12:23 AM

LM

*I know how much Uncle Paul and Aunt Sheila enjoyed this Swedish music chorus. They often talked about it and send us tapes and cd's to us in California.*

---

**lynne marcus** - June 15, 2020 at 02:27 PM

CE

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Cheryl Ek - June 14, 2020 at 07:01 PM

LM

“ I believe these pictures are from 1951 and 1952. I believe the pictures of the farm in Poplar Grove in 1951. My dad is in his Marine uniform and I think he was home on leave and there seems to be a family gathering. In 1952 my parents got married and Paul and Sheila and the rest of the family drove out for the wedding in California. They did a wonderful cross-country road trip and took great pictures!



Lynne Marcus - June 13, 2020 at 11:57 PM

LM

“ One of the things that I love to do is make a little movies! Aunt Sheila really enjoyed my films and this one is for her:  
<https://animoto.com/play/d6EyPr801KhJY5IRCXWskw>

Lynne Marcus - June 13, 2020 at 11:41 PM

LM

“ Absolutely loved my Aunt Sheila! She was such an amazing wonderful hospitable person. Plus she was a whole Lot of fun! One of the best times we ever had was at my daughter’s wedding in 2008 in Palm Desert California. She and Uncle Paul came out for a week prior to the wedding and we just had so much fun being together as a family!



---

**Lynne Marcus** - June 13, 2020 at 11:38 PM

BH

“ I was so sorry to hear about the passing of Sheila Johnson. My family and I have always had the utmost respect for Sheila, Paul, and their families as we always enjoyed going to their homes when we were in Michigan! Sheila and Paul always had more energy and empathy than any human beings I've ever known! Needless to say, we always felt welcome when staying with them. Our thoughts and prayers are with Cheryl, Jim, and their respective families during this difficult time. Found this picture of me and Sheila, I believe it was at Paul's funeral few years ago. Love, Barry and Jennifer Hancock



---

**Barry and Jennifer Hancock** - June 12, 2020 at 11:23 PM

SW

“ Sheila was so loved. She made a big difference in my life as I witnessed her love for others, great faith, tender sweet spirit and her grace. She had a presence about her where you felt you could be yourself and feel comfortable. She was a wonderful pianist. She accompanied me as I played my violin at Dearborn Covenant Church many many years ago as a teenager. Those memories are very precious to me.

*Sending much love and prayers to all of Shelia's family. She will be so very missed.*

---

**Susan Williams** - June 10, 2020 at 10:04 PM

KC

“ My dear Sheila. I'm so happy to have known you and been able to be a part of your life. I love you so much and will miss you tremendously. You have an amazing family that I will be connected to for a lifetime. I will hold you near to me.

---

**Kay Carter** - June 08, 2020 at 04:45 PM

JJ

“ 54 files added to the album Memories of Sheila's life



---

**Jim Johnson** - June 07, 2020 at 09:31 PM

SW

*Beautiful photos wonderful memories!*

Susan Williams - June 10, 2020 at 10:07 PM

RA

“ I am sending condolences on behalf of Lloyd Anderson and myself , Rolf Egeland from Rockford Ill. We thank the Lord for precious memories of a life well lived for the Glory of the Lord .

Rolf Egeland, / Lloyd Anderson - June 07, 2020 at 05:24 PM

DK

“ The Johnson family has been part of my life since first grade when I met Cheryl who would become my lifelong friend. I have beautiful memories of the Johnsons. I traveled with them, rehearsed music in their home, knew Grandma McGhee, and always felt welcomed. Sheila will always be Mrs. Johnson to me and saying "Goodbye" brings much heartache. She was a beautiful example of grace and hospitality, was a gifted musician giving her time and talent to the Lord, and had impeccable taste in all things. In general, she was one classy lady. To the Johnson family, I share your deep sense of grief and loss, for someone I loved has passed from this world but will remain forever in my heart.

Denise Karakashian - June 07, 2020 at 01:09 PM

JF

“ Our family was blessed to be part of the larger Johnson story as her first cousin Raymond (my husband) brought us together for the journey that is life. Our memories sustain us and we treasure their gifts to us as pillar and ballast throughout our lives. It is legacy that endures!

*Jeanette Field*

Jeanette Field - June 07, 2020 at 12:43 PM

SW

“ I Don't Know Where To Start You We're Sucha Loving Woman I'm So Glad I got The Chance To Meet You And Care For You. My Heart is In so much pain Knowing I Will Never Get The Chance To Hear Girl Bye or You Yelling my name. You We're One Of My Best Friendship I will never forget you 🙏🙏🙏 Prayers To The Johnson's Family



Shiniee Wright - June 06, 2020 at 10:20 PM



We're SO grateful for you! When we knew you were working, we knew Grandma was in good hands! Your amazing care for Grandma gave us such peace! -Linnea

Linnea Ek - June 07, 2020 at 01:03 PM

SW

Thank You 💜 She was one Of my favorite ladies I'm glad I got to meet her and take care of her.

Shiniee Wright - June 08, 2020 at 08:21 AM

CB

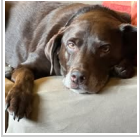
Shiniee--Cheryl would even talk about you here "at home" in Galesburg because you meant so much! So reassuring that there are caring people like you in the world!

Christine Stewart Bailey - June 03, 2021 at 03:15 PM

ED

“ It was an honor to be her pastor for about 6 years in the early-mid 90's. She was an accomplished musician and wonderful follower of Jesus.

Earl Dunbar - June 06, 2020 at 08:35 PM



“ *Sheila accompanied me in numerous Solo and Ensemble and other performances. She was such a gifted and gracious musician. If I made a mistake, she compensated immediately on the keyboard so that everything sounded wonderful. What an inspiration she was for me and many others who had the pleasure of making music with her!*

---

**Timothy Andersson** - June 06, 2020 at 07:54 PM



“ *Sheila always had a warm smile for us! She was a sweet gentle soul at Addington and a WONDERFUL BEAUTIFUL roommate for my mom. We could not have had a better situation at Addington. Sheila will be missed. Our thoughts are with you all. Jean & Joe*

---

**jean lindsly** - June 06, 2020 at 07:42 PM