

Wendell Bird Johnson

Early on the morning of March 19, 1996, Wendell Johnson of Mapleton, Utah was taken home to that God who gave him life. He has fought the good fight through many years of struggle and triumph.

Wendell was born on March 26, 1948 in Provo, Utah. He married Susan Edmunds on August 8, 1975, in the Provo LDS Temple. On January 1, 1977, he witnessed the birth of their daughter, Wendy Sue. They have a special bond of friendship as well as their father-to-daughter relationship through these 19 years.

In the summer of 1964 after a hot day of working in the fields of Mapleton, Wendell and some friends went swimming in "the flume." On one of his dives, Wendell broke his neck, and for the past 32 years has been paralyzed from the neck down.

His life has been one of extraordinary accomplishment. From his youth he showed a natural ability in art. He earned many awards through the years. One of his favorite pastimes was to visit the Springville Museum of Art, perhaps never dreaming that in June of 1994 there would be a special exhibit of 20 of his more than 200 outstanding paintings. Following the accident, Wendell worked extremely hard to gain a limited amount of use of his shoulders and triceps. This along with a special hand brace enabled him to hold pencils and brushes as well as special tools for typing (one letter at a time). Because of this limited movement, he had to learn to draw and paint all over again - upside down and sideways. At first it was difficult and often frustrating, but eventually he was able to work not just with pencils but with watercolors and oils.

Wendell graduated from Springville High School in 1966 and continued to study and learn all his life. He was well versed on a wide variety of topics, from music to architecture to history and all the arts and sciences. He helped write a book on Mapleton's history with his friend Kay Harner. He read constantly, expanding his knowledge and deepening his wisdom. Many went to Wendell for the unforgettable experience of having someone really listen and then help them discover their own answers.

He was an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, having held many different callings. He was an especially gifted teacher. His Sunday School class would come to his place rather than the other way around.

He was much involved in community service. He was Justice of the Peace for Mapleton for six years, and then served as Mapleton's Mayor from 1982-1986.

Many will miss Wendell and look forward with a perfect brightness of hope to being with him again. He is survived by his loving wife Susan, who was a companion and helpmeet to him in a remarkable, singular way through the years. He is also survived by his precious daughter Wendy, who is so much like him in many ways besides her talent for art. Other loved ones are his dear parents, Frank C. and Orpha Dee Johnson of Mapleton, and his next-door neighbors, Susan's parents, Paul K. and Ella Edmunds; his brothers and sister, Brenda, Paul and Morris and families; all of Susan's brothers and sisters and their families; and many other friends and loved ones. He was preceded in death by his baby sister Sylvia.

Funeral services will be held Friday, March 22, 1996, at 2 p.m. in the Mapleton Stake Center, 970 North 400 East, Mapleton, Utah. Friends may call Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. at Wheeler Mortuary 211 East 200 South, Springville, Utah or Friday from 1 to 1:45 p.m. at the church. Burial will be in the Springville Evergreen Cemetery.

Thank you, Wendell, for your eternal influence in our lives - for helping us to live better every day, to reach up to the stars and search for the end of the rainbow. We'll see you soon.

The soul shall be restored to the body and the body to the soul: yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame (Alma 40:23).

