



Sharon Johnson

December 7, 1943 - June 12, 2008

Sharon Johnson, age 64, of Bismarck, North Dakota, formerly of Glendive, Montana, passed away on Saturday afternoon, June 7, 2008 at her home in Bismarck with family at her side following a long battle with breast cancer. She was at peace and died gracefully. A Life Tribute Service for family and friends will be held at 7:00 P.M., Wednesday, June 11, 2008 at the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive. Funeral Services will be held at 10:00 A.M., Thursday, June 12, 2008 at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Glendive with Pastor James Hageman officiating. Interment will be in the Dawson Memorial Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive is entrusted with arrangements. Sharon was born on December 7, 1943 in Glendive, Montana, the daughter of Earl Andrew and Leona (Nagel) Young. She was raised and educated in Glendive, graduating from Dawson County High School. She was united in marriage to Larry Johnson on April 6, 1961 in Glendive. They made their home in Glendive until 1998 when Sharon and her husband moved to Bismarck. Mom lived her life with dignity and grace and we as a family were truly blessed to have had her in our lives and to have learned so much from her. She was so appreciative and humbled by all the love and support she received over the last several months from family and friends. However, nothing brought a smile to her face, showed the love in her eyes, or warmth in her heart like when one of her grandkids entered the room. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Jim Young. Survivors include her husband, Larry, of Bismarck; her sons, Rob Johnson

and his fiancée Kelly Brooks and their children Brooke, Hunter, Lauren, Jordan and Tyler of Bismarck, North Dakota and Kyle Johnson and his wife Julie and their children Jess, Kyla and Jordan of Glendive; her daughter, Kristi VavRosky and her husband Darrell and their son, Jace of Vancouver, Washington. Celebrant Service: Thirteen year old Sharon Joyce Young very neatly and precisely wrote the following paper: "I was born December 7, 1943, at the Northern Pacific hospital in Glendive, Montana. I have one brother that is married and has a family. I live with my mother and father in Lindsay, Montana. When I was seven years old, we began going to Glendale, California for the winter and Lindsay during the summer. I find it would be hard to decide which place is nicer. Although California has so many extra-curricular activities, my friends mean so much more to me here. I spend much of my leisure time sewing, painting, going to shows and doing many other interesting things. I am very interested in my clothes and appearance. I enjoy washing, pressing and sewing my own clothes. My favorite household task is cooking. As my mother doesn't like to cook, this works well and I have many opportunities to try out new recipes and to plan meals. During the time I lived in Glendale, I belonged to the Bluebirds, the Campfire Girls, and the Girls' Athletic Club for two years. Last fall I was a cheerleader for Eleanor J. Toll Junior High School. I have taken part in 4-H club work while living in Lindsay. Club work has helped me make many new friends and learn helpful things. All that I can remember of my thirteen years I like. I hope I can learn to meet problems of the future with good judgment and tolerance so that I may have a rich, full, enjoyable life." Quite the statements for a thirteen year old. And ones that remained true for Sharon throughout her lifetime. Family and friends were always most important to Sharon. Interests and activities were geared to learn new things and make new friends or enjoy with old friends. Sharon truly liked and enjoyed life, although she did make the comment at the funeral of a close relative that "there are worse things in life than death." As for meeting her problems with "good judgment and tolerance", Sharon seemed to get past most problems with her positive attitude. Upon learning she had cancer,

Sharon told her daughter Kristi, that at least she, Sharon, had been able to raise her kids, to get to know her grandchildren and was blessed to see the wonderful people they had grown into. That at least she had insurance and someone to take care of her. Sharon was overwhelmed by the care, compassion, love and support she received, and her wish was to be able to give back to others who suffered from cancer, by volunteering and assisting them with support from all she had learned from her experience. Given the opportunity, Sharon would have done just that. One of the many gifts Sharon shared with others was her spontaneity. Kristi recalls skipping school and going with her mother to Billings shopping and out to a favorite lunch at Papa John's for shrimp salad covered with a favorite dressing of Sharon's. Sharon's niece, Janine Nissley, was close to Sharon's age and they were more like sisters than aunt and niece. Janine recalls one of Sharon's favorite plans was a last minute call to Janine to "fluff up her hair, get to town, and they would play like rich ladies." A close friend, Mary Ann Knapp, went wig shopping with Sharon during the chemotherapy, and after trying on three unsuitable wigs, Sharon commented that she should just get a red, sexy one and see what everyone thought. That was another gift of Sharon's...her sense of humor. Living in a four level home and being in a wheelchair presented some problems. Larry was not always nearby when Sharon might need help, so they settled on a remote doorbell for Sharon to push whenever she needed Larry. Sometimes when others were visiting, Sharon would smile and say, "Watch this" and start pushing the remote so they could watch Larry react. And Larry, in turn, when asked how Sharon was doing, would give out some comment about how she was just sitting in her wheelchair and bossing him around. Sharon had a contagious laugh and besides giving out countless smiles, Sharon had a way of bringing a smile to your face, even when times weren't so great. And she often would say "it's going to get better, don't worry. Another phrase her daughter Kristi remembers her mother saying was, "to have good friends, you had to be a good friend, and that isn't always easy."

Sharon loved her friends and they loved her. She was always a good listener and was interested in what was going on in their lives. She would often end her conversations with an "I love you." Sharon loved to travel and was game for most anything, four-wheeling in Mexico, parasailing, a last minute hair perm, cooking for the hunters, camping. Some friends, such as Sherry Rakes, remained close over distance and 50 years of time. Sherry is single and Sharon made her kids and grandkids, Sherry's family. What a wonderful gift that has been for all. Sharon and Sherry traveled to so many of grandson Hunter's ball games, they dubbed themselves "Hunter's groupies." One of the important observations Sharon had made during life was, that people did not usually regret what they did; they most often regretted what they didn't do. Sharon had a caring nature, always looking out for the comfort and happiness of those around her. She was as Kristi put it, the "perfect mother", loving, supportive, fun, she gave good advice, but knew when to back off and let you experience life, and she was there when you needed her. Son Kyle has often been reminded of an incident illustrating the "mom" side of Sharon. As a young adult, the thing to do of course, was to go out on the town with friends. Sharon would always wait up just to make sure her kids were home safely. One such night, Kyle returned home about nine o'clock and no one was right there when he came in so he went downstairs and went to bed. Sharon, who had missed his entrance, came out to wait up and finally about 4 am, decided maybe she should check his room. Finding him there, she told him she was mad because she did not have anything to be mad about. This incident really stuck with her as she has laughingly reminded Kyle of it many times. A memory shared by Janine was just after Kristi, the first girl in the family, was born. Sharon had the mumps. She called Janine over to visit, and Sharon with huge lumps in her neck, had Janine get Kristi and all the cute little dresses they had received as gifts, and Sharon and Janine spent the afternoon dressing up Kristi in all the dresses just like they were playing dolls, totally exhausting Kristi. Son Rob once commented that his heroes were his grandpa Mike and his mom. And as Kyle's wife Julie, put it, Kyle inherited his mother's

love of spontaneity. Brad Nissley, wrote of many memories he has of Sharon and Larry and the family. The following are just a few of Brad's thoughts. "As time rolls by we have people come into our lives, that if you let 'em, become a very special part of each of our own life stories! We were lucky enough to have had that happen to us with Sharon and Larry and their family! I'm sure Larry, Rob, Kyle and Kris are thinking right now, 'you can't pick your relatives!'... Sharon always had this warm sparkle in her eye that just made you know she cared. That sparkle was never more evident than when her Grandkids were around...Sharon and Larry have always been so gracious and giving, always being there for us with our kids if need be and always helping out...You always wanted to be around them, and whatever you happen to be doing seemed more important somehow if they were there..." Brad goes on to say, "I will never be able to fully express how grateful I am for Sharon and Larry taking me in for my freshman year in high school. She and Larry always made me feel like I was part of the family and that was just the way it was...Rob made a great comment the other night; he said how much Sharon enjoyed life! And she did, but she also made others enjoy it too because of how easy it was to be around her and how she made you feel! What a wonderful, rare, quality in a wonderful, rare person! I feel lucky and privileged to have had someone like Sharon impact my life as she did!" Sharon's letter was signed,"Garrett, Logan, Ashley, Brad, and the entire Nissley family." As a grandmother, Sharon set a high mark. She and Larry have always been avid fans of their grandchildren and their activities, a loving and supportive presence in their grandchildren's lives. Sharon's sister-in-law, Betty Schmitt, recalls a family Christmas tradition started for the young children. Sharon made red and green sugar cookies, which Sharon and Betty found out, also made the youngsters diapers red and green. And Sharon loved to have tea parties with the young grandchildren. Grandson Jess, when quite young, made the comment when he sat on his Grandpa Larry's lap that it was hard like a rock, but his Grandma Sharon's lap was soft like a pillow. Sharon had a special relationship with each grandchild. She was also known

and loved by her children's and grandchildren's friends. When granddaughter Kyla played in divisionals for basketball, Sharon couldn't go because of her cancer treatments. To honor Sharon, Kyla and her teammates all wore pink shoelaces. And the local radio station set up a special link, so Sharon could listen to all the games. Kyla wrote about her grandmother and their special relationship. Please listen to her words: "My Grandma is the strongest person I have ever met. Not only was she strong, but she taught me how to be strong. There were countless nights when the two of us stayed up long after everyone else went to bed. We would talk and eat and watch movies. I could tell her anything, so I told her everything. She would listen and give me advice. And the main thing was that she was always interested. We'd always plan on waking early to go shopping the next day, but we both somehow managed to hit the sleep button on our alarms. We both know that our beds feel way better in the morning than they do the night before. Shopping could wait. I remember when I first found out that my Grandpa and Grandma were moving to Bismarck. I was young and devastated. I remember my Grandma telling me that it'll be okay because it was only three hours away and they could come see us whenever they wanted. At the time, I kind of doubted her because three hours was a LONG time when I was 7!! But soon I realized that she was right. They would come up for every event they could; football games, basketball, soccer, softball, birthdays. You name it, they'd be here. She loved her life and everyone in it. She was one who lived true to the saying, "life is short." I learned from her a whole different perspective on life. She showed me that the little things in life are not worth stressing about. She showed me that kindness has no limit. She told me that no matter how kind you are there is always someone who will still dislike you, but to be kind anyway. Cancer has a way of taking the ones we love. But it will never take away the love in her heart that she had for all of us. It can't take away all the memories that we made with her and will treasure forever. It can't take away her beauty within, and it can't take away the way she positively impacted all of our lives. I know

that she will always continue to shine through me, teaching her ways, so maybe someday I can become half the woman she was. I love you now, Gram, And I'll love you later. Love, Kyla" These past two years as Sharon fought her cancer, Larry was her biggest support and a wonderful caregiver, seeing to every need Sharon seemed to have. He even learned to cook, something that amazes his family. Larry had to buy new measuring cups, as he couldn't read the numbers on Sharon's they were so worn. And Sharon got Larry doing many household duties she had always don to prepare him for when she was gone. One day when Mary Ann stopped to check on her friend, Sharon told her that she wanted Larry to learn to cook an egg. Sharon ordered an egg, cooked "over-medium". Sharon told Mary Ann that Larry had brought the cooked egg and it was perfect. Sharon enjoyed many simple things. Some favorites were: sitting on her deck in the warm sun, reading a good book; enjoying a bonfire and eating 'smores; good music; and shopping, shopping, shopping. Sharon was a coke-a-holic. She drank Coke every day. During her treatments, the coke tasted metallic and Sharon quit drinking it. She made the comment to Mary Ann that she looked forward to the day it would taste good once more. Mary Ann hopes today is that day and Sharon is enjoying her Coke again. Last year, Sharon walked in Bismarck's Relay for Life. Joining her were family and friends, including grandchildren. They walked the track throughout the night. Sharon walked as a survivor. This year, Sharon was in the video of last year's walk shown at this year's Relay of Life. Sadly, Sharon died June 7, the day the 2008 Bismarck Relay for Life was held. There are a couple of special things the family would like to share with you. The quilt you see with Sharon was made by her granddaughter Brooke. Brooke cannot be here today as she is on an adventure to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Sharon encouraged her to go and take advantage of this opportunity. But at this time, Brooke's heart is here with her Grandma. The quilt features photos of Sharon's grandchildren, and squares featuring pink ribbons, symbolizing Sharon's fight with breast cancer, hearts, and the word "hope." This special quilt will be placed with Sharon. Around Sharon's neck is a special necklace.

At Christmas, Sharon gave her daughter, Kristi, her daughter-in-law, Julie, and her daughter-in-law to be, Kelly, each a necklace to thank them for being a part of her journey through life and especially through her fight with cancer. Larry, knowing Sharon planned to give the girls these journey necklaces, had Kristi get one for Sharon. All wear their journey necklaces today to honor each other and to honor and remember their shared journey. Sharon Johnson was greatly loved and will be greatly missed. A classy, and simply elegant woman, she set an example of how to love and enjoy those you care for, how to have and be a friend, how to face adversity with dignity and grace, how to always find the positive, how to give the best of yourself. Sharon has set an example of how a life can be lived. This time together is very important, as we have shared thoughts and memories of Sharon and the significance she has had in the lives of family, friends, and community. Her vibrant love of life will be greatly missed. Sharon Johnson will be alive as long as she is remembered and who could ever forget her? The stories her life created will keep her memory and her presence alive long into future generations. Granddaughter Brooke Johnson sent this to be read for her grandmother. "When we were scared, you taught us to be brave. When we were hurt, you taught us to be strong. When we were sad, you told us it is okay to cry. When we were embarrassed, you said it's okay to laugh. When we were happy, you taught us to smile. When we accomplished things, you taught us to be proud. When others were in need, you taught us to help. Whether we listened to your advice or followed your example, we were shaped by all you taught us. Because of this, no matter where we go, you are always with us." To conclude Sharon's life tribute service tonite, her son Rob will lead us in "The Lord's Prayer".

Tribute Wall



“ *Sharon Johnson*

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