

A Celebration of Life

in loving memory of

William Dennis Johnson



Sunrise

June 2, 1944

Sunset

May 3, 2017

Metropolitan Funeral Services

7246 Granby Street
Norfolk, Virginia 23504

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

11:00 a.m.

Obituary



William D Johnson, a resident of Virginia Beach, VA, died on May 3, 2017. He was born in Durham, NC on June 2, 1944 to the late Karo Smith Johnson and William Eugene Johnson. He was better known by family as Dennis, by classmates as Johnson, by business associates and neighbors as Bill and Mr. Bill, respectively.

Dennis attended elementary and high school in Durham and graduated from Hillside High School in 1964. He played Trumpet in the band and saxophone with the Jammers and Viceroy's musical group. After high school, he studied French at Norfolk State University and University of Burgundy in France. He also attended Royalton College in Royalton, VT. Dennis was a lover of music. *Phantom of the Opera*, *Jesus Christ Super Star*, and *Fiddler on the Roof* were favorites. While stationed in New York City at the Military Post Office, he enjoyed many Broadway plays and musicals.



Dennis served in Army from 1968-1971 and was stationed in Izmir, Turkey for two of those years. He and his wife traveled to Greece, Morocco, Senegal, the Canary Islands, Addis Abba, Ethiopia, and many areas in India.

As an entrepreneur, in 1972, Bill started GEM Drywall and Paint Company in Norfolk, VA. The company contracted work with RG Moore and Co.; ESG Companies for the Oceans Condominium on Atlantic Avenue, and the Celsa Del Mar Hotel, VA Beach.

Outstanding in the reading blueprints, job specs, and determining cost estimates, he won bids and performed work in many projects in Virginia. Some of the large projects included painting six Chesapeake City Schools; painting piping system in the Norfolk Federal Building; and the application of outside coating on the Omni Hotel in Norfolk, VA. After becoming an 8-A contractor, he was awarded contracts by NASA Langley in Hampton, VA; Norfolk Air Station to paint ships; and with the state of Virginia to paint bridges. One of the bridges was the old Gilmerton Bridge on Military Highway in Chesapeake. He later expanded into electromagnetic applications of painting metal products, such as office furniture and appliances.



During the early eighties, this expansion led to a company name change, WD Johnson Powder Coating, Inc., the first powder coating facility in Hampton Roads. This new method coated metal parts with powder paint by an electromagnetic process applied using heat which revolutionized painting in the auto industry. An avid reader, a self-taught chemist and a visionary during his time, in the early nineties, he moved the business, at the request of Ford Motor Company, to Southfield, Michigan.



In the mid-nineties, one of his proudest accomplishments was earning the Ford Q1 Preferred Quality Award which represents certifications and enhancements beyond the industry's standard for Outstanding Quality Production and Control. In recognition of this achievement, Ford Motor Company presented him a Ford Q1 Flag that flew over his facility. This was the highest honor awarded to Ford Motor Company suppliers.

He returned to Virginia in early 2000's due to health problems; however, he continued to work as a Housing Inspector for HUD and various mortgage companies. The last few months, even during declining health, he was about to take the test to become a notary. When asked "why don't you take a break from studying," his reply was "because I want to pass the test the first time I take it." To the end, he really did do it "His Way."

He leaves to cherish his memory: his wife of 47 years, Carolyn Chesson Johnson; daughter, Shara Denise Johnson; sisters, Marie "Dot" Outen, Janice "Nessie" Carrington, Andrea "Annie Rose" Bolden, and Linda "Bright" Johnson; and a host of nieces, nephews, and many, many friends. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, John Henry Smith, Hubert Smith, Daryl "Fats" Johnson, and Russell Smith; and sisters, Barbara Jenkins, Joan Johnson, and Vivian "Fequia" Johnson.





William Dennis Johnson ...

A Life in Pictures

