

## **Johanna Dorothea Johnson Riegel**



Our beautiful and gracious mother and grandmother, Joanna Dorothea Johnson Riegel, passed peacefully away at the age of 96 on December 8, 2017 at the St. Croix Valley Memorial Hospital in St. Croix Falls, WI.

She was born on September 9, 1921 in Canton, China, where her parents, Obed and Veda Johnson, were serving as missionaries. She grew up a happy child in Chicago with her parents and brother, Jim, before attending Carleton College in Northfield, MN, from which she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences in the early 1940s.

Following college, she married Fred Riegel of St. Croix Falls, WI and moved there with him to spend the next 30 years raising their 3 children while enjoying being an active community member. In 1974, after her children had moved out of the home, she moved to Sioux City, IA and started her career in chemical dependency counseling, for which her compassion and skills brought her great success and acclaim. In 1993, at the age of 71, she left her job to move to Seattle, WA to help raise her two granddaughters who had suffered the recent loss of their mother. She was a spectacular grandma, who provided great love and support for her family. She is recalled having said, "I remember early on following these two busy little girls around the house, cleaning up after them. Somehow, they've lapped me and now follow me around, messing up as I clean".

In late 1995, she moved back home to St. Croix Falls, where she rekindled past friendships and acquaintances and was finally able to enjoy a more leisurely life style with her family, friends, and pets. Following a fractured pelvis in April 2016, and after months of rehab, on Sept 3 2016 she moved in with her grandson, Jake L. Riegel and his wife, Brittany, of Dresser, WI, who lovingly cared for her until her recent passing.

Joanna is remembered for her compassion, forgiveness and eternal optimism. She was not one to hold a grudge, nor one to judge harshly. She believed whole-heartedly in post-traumatic strength: troubles endured and conquered would lead to greater strength and appreciation. She possessed a great sense of humor, which often turned wry when directed toward herself. She was not one to take herself too seriously, noting frequently, as her more mischievous plans would blow up in her face, "Oh, yes, God has a sense of humor". Never one to exhibit envy or self-pity, when asked in her waning years how she was doing, her invariable reply was, "life is very pleasant".

Joanna was preceded in death by her son, Lawrence; her daughter, Gail; her daughter-in-law, Jan, her daughter-in-law, Debbie and her granddaughter, Nicole.

She is lovingly survived by her son, Dan Riegel, his wife Cynthia; grandchildren, Jake L. Riegel and his wife, Brittany; Julie Riegel, Molly Riegel, Taryn Riegel and Jake FD Riegel, and great grand-children, Anthony Christensen-Riegel, and Emma Christensen and by other friends, relatives and the innumerable counselees whose lives were enhanced by her compassion.

A memorial gathering will be postponed until next spring to allow time for distant friends and family to gather for her remembrance and a celebration of a life well lived.

Grandstrand Funeral Homes was founded in 1939 when Millard "Ole" Grandstrand purchased the Westberg Mortuary in Center City. After WW II, Lyle Johnsen, a native of Lindstrom, came to work with Ole. In 1957 Ole purchased the Sprain Funeral Home in Chisago City when George Sprain retired. Lyle and his family moved to Chisago City to manage that location. In 1967, Ole's son John joined the firm after attending the University of Minnesota and graduating from the Milwaukee Institute of Mortuary Science. In 1969 Ole, John and Lyle formed Grandstrand - Johnsen Funeral Homes, Inc. and they purchased the Malmquist Chapel in North Branch when Vince Malmquist retired.