CARL WILLIAM JOHNSON

Dr. Carl W Johnson, devoted husband, loving father, grandfather, and friend passed away peacefully on April 17, 2023 with his family at his side. He was a humble man who demonstrated kindness, integrity, compassion, intelligence, and honesty. He loved to talk, made people laugh and was always interested in hearing other peoples’ stories. Carl cared deeply about the welfare of people throughout the world as evidenced by his passion for improving quality and quantity in rice varieties. He led by example and emphasized the importance of hard work, lifelong friendships, and loyalty to principles.

Carl was born at home near Mound Valley, Kansas, in the southeastern part of that state. He grew up as an only child to Mildred C. and Harold M. Johnson. At an early age he was tasked with responsibilities that included milking cows each morning before school and driving a grain harvester at age 5. He attended Mound Valley public schools, graduating in 1960 with a class of 10 students.

Carl matriculated from Coffeyville Junior College (AA), Kansas State University (BS), North Dakota State University (MS), culminating in a PhD in Agricultural Genetics and Statistics. In the time between his MS and PhD he served 3 years in the US Army. He underwent Basic Training at Fort Lewis in Washington state and later attended courses in Meteorology at Fort Monmouth, NJ. Soon thereafter, he was notified that he had received a direct commission to become an officer in the Chemical Corp. He underwent further training in Fort McClellan, Alabama and upon graduation was assigned to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Denver, Colorado. It was at this time that Carl and Faye married.

Carl and Faye met at the Lutheran Student Center in Fargo, North Dakota. Their initial meeting ended with a spirited discussion “disagreement” regarding Jonah and the Whale biblical story. They embodied the principle that you can be in disagreement with someone’s opinions but love the person they are. They married on September 28, 1968 at the Oak Park Lutheran Church, rural Oklee, MN. Following his military service they lived in Lincoln, NE and attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where they both attained graduate degrees; Carl earned a PhD. Their first daughter, Catherine was born during this time. Brenda was born a year later.

Carl began his 34-year career at the Rice Experiment Station in Biggs, CA for the California Cooperative Rice Research Foundation (CCRRF). He was instrumental in the release of 38 rice varieties to the growers; particularly exceptional ones include: industry standards M-202, M-205, M206 and M-208. He was instrumental in obtaining USDA Plant Variety Protection for CCRRF varieties and was investigator for multiple utilities on rice cultivars. Additionally, he played a major role in the release of 10 premium-quality medium grains and waxy varieties, as well as contributor to 10 long-grains and several germ plasm releases. The return to California rice growers during his tenure at CCRRF is conservatively estimated at more than $1 billion.

Carl received numerous recognitions and awards on the state, national and international levels for excellence in rice breeding throughout his career. Some of these include Sigma Xi, Science Honorary Society, Distinguished Service in Agriculture from Kansas State University; Genetics and Plant Breeding Award from the Crop Science Society, the California Rice Industry Award; and the Distinguished Service Award from the Rice Technical Working Group.

The family enjoyed numerous trips to the Midwest over the years. Travel for Carl and Faye expanded to include several cruises; of particular interest were the ones to the Panama Canal, Hawaii, and Mexico. They also traveled to Normandy, France as well as several other European locations. Carl and Faye visited Australia and New Zealand where Carl was a Visiting Professor.

Carl is survived by his wife, Faye, who will miss him making morning coffee, filling water bottles and the multiple Hallmark cards to mark any occasion. Cards included his prolific reflections, written in his hard to decipher, but rewarding writings. Daughters include Catherine (Sheryl), grandchildren Lily Vallombrosa and Maeve Catherine; and Brenda (Chris), grandchildren Adam Carl, Matthew Michael, and Luke Nolan. Also surviving are a niece Debbie (Matt) and nephew Daniel as well as several cousins. He was predeceased by his parents Mildred C. and Harold M. Johnson; step-mother Mildred I. Johnson; parents-in-law Malcolm and Opal Stucy and Nancy Teigland, sister-in-law and Gene Teigland, brother-in-law.