

Obituary

Richard "Dick" Dee Johnston, 78

Richard "Dick" Dee Johnston, 78, of Blackfoot, Idaho passed away on February 19, 2011 at Renaissance Assisted Living in Blackfoot.

Dick was born on June 1, 1932 at his grandmother's home on a farm near Logan, Kansas to Kenneth and Beulah Johnston.

Dick attended elementary and high school in Wyoming, graduating from Laramie High School in 1950. In 1948 he joined the Wyoming National Guard. From 1950 - 1952 he proudly served his country in the Army during the Korean War where he attained the rank of Staff Sergeant as a tank commander with the 141st Tank Battalion. Following his round of duty, he used his GI bill and attended the University of Wyoming where he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering.

On October 19, 1952, Dick married Louise Frisbie in Laramie. Together they had two daughters, Margaret (Meg) and Julie.

During his career, his focus was in research and design. In 1959, while at the National Reactor Testing Station (NRTS), he worked with other mechanical, electrical, and chemical engineers and physicists for Phillips Petroleum. This group was the predecessor to nuclear engineers. The security around their projects was very tight and together they developed and tested the first nuclear reactors.

In the mid 60's, Dick worked on "SNAP" which was located at the north end of the Site. He was a team member on a project that was dedicated to researching the new concept of satellites.

His work took him and his family to Oklahoma in 1966. The research department was charged with the development of machines using polypropylene to make plastic bottles. The first product to go into commercial production was for Palmolive and the second was for plastic milk bottles.

Three years later the family moved back to Idaho. His newest project was to help develop a machine that would re-hydrate potatoes, shape them into French fries and then drop them into a deep fat fryer for cooking. When completed their product was pitched to the military and the Navy wanted them immediately. The dehydrated potatoes were initially stored in plastic bags that would float to the surface to show a ship's location. Later they were stored in metals cans that could be stored on deck saving precious space inside of a ship or submarine. The cans were strong enough to be walked on so all of the deck was still useable.

Prior to his retirement from Basic American Foods in 1998, he was a project engineer and traveled to six plants in various locations around the United States and in Poland.

Throughout his life he enjoyed many hobbies, crafts and was an artist. Hobbies included restoring and showing antique cars, ice skating, water and snow skiing, fishing, hunting, and snowmobiling. He could draw and create maps, as well as design, cut and manufacture crafts that were donated to local charities.

Dick is survived by his wife, Louise (Blackfoot, ID); daughters, Meg Bushnell of (Spanaway, WA), Julie Percy and husband Jim (Blackfoot, ID); brothers, Alva (Cheyenne, WA), and Jim and his wife Linda (Aurora, CO); and grandchildren, Jeremy, Brittany and Cassie Bushnell (Washington) and JC and Chris Percy (Blackfoot, ID).

He is preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Harold.

The family would like to thank the staff at Renaissance Assisted Living and Blackfoot Home Health and Hospice for the outstanding care that they provided for Richard and the support that they gave to the family.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, February 23, 2011 at Jason Lee Memorial United Methodist Church, 168 South University Avenue in Blackfoot, with Pastor Gay Jeffrey, officiating. Family will meet friends and relatives for one hour prior to services at the church. In lieu of flowers, the family suggest donations be made to: Blackfoot High School Dick Johnston Memorial, c/o Donna Cox, 870 S Fisher, Blackfoot ID 83221 (To establish a scholarship fund to be given to a student wanting to enter an post high school engineering program), Alzheimer's Association, Attn: Donor Services, 225 N. Michigan, Chicago IL, 60601, or the Jason Lee Memorial United Methodist Church Building Fund, 168 S University Ave, Blackfoot, ID 83221. Family is under the care of Hawker Funeral Home in Blackfoot. Condolences may be sent to the family at condolences@hawkerfuneralhome.com.

