

## Harold "Swede" Emil Johnson, 79

July 1, 1922 - July 27, 2001

**HARLAN** – Harold Emil Johnson, son of Claus Emil and Esther Hannah (Borg) Johnson, was born July 1, 1922, in Red Oak. He was baptized and confirmed at the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Red Oak and graduated from Red Oak High School with the class of 1940. After high school, he attended Northwest Missouri State College where he played football until he enlisted in the United States Army in 1942. Harold enlisted in to the Army Engineering program then later was transferred to England where he served as a forward observer during the invasion of Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge and later to the Rhine River. After receiving his honorable discharge in 1945, he returned home and enrolled into the Engineering program at Iowa State University. After one quarter, "Swede's" football coach from Missouri State convinced him to return there and continue playing football. Swede returned to Missouri and graduated with a degree in Teaching and Coaching.



Harold married Marian "Gene" Keown in Gilman City, MO June 13, 1948. Two daughters were born to this union. After their marriage, they made their home back in Red Oak, but only for a month as "Swede" took a teaching position in Harlan. He was hired as the Industrial Arts Teacher at the Harlan High School in 1948, and was named the head football coach from 1950 to 1965. He coached the first undefeated football team in Harlan's history and also coached track. He started the Vocational Programs, "T & I" (Trade and Industry) and "O.E." (Office Education) where several hundred students have been employed during their senior year. In addition, "Swede" was also the Athletic Director for Harlan Community High School for 35 years when he retired in 1985. During his tenure, he was awarded the State Athletic Director of the Year, Regional Athletic Director of the Year and was runner-up for the National Athletic Director of the Year.

Following retirement, "Swede" continued to be active in the Masons, Shriner's and the Harlan Chamber of Commerce. He was a past president of the Harlan Golf & Country Club and served on the Harlan Community School foundation. He also served on the Board of Directors of Iowa Western Community College. Over the years "Swede" took great pride in Merrill Field where the Cyclones played football and ran track. He was also proud to help in the resurfacing of the track field with a state-of-the-art all weather surface and it was later named in his honor. He also helped in construction of the present press box at Merrill Field several years ago and spearheaded the fund-raising for a new replacement press box just this past year. Following a long battle with cancer, he died at his home July 27, 2001, at age 79 years and 26 days.

Harold was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Marv. He is survived by his wife, Marian "Gene" Johnson of Harlan; his daughters, Becky (Eldon) Rike of Corning and Amy Brown and her fiancé, Ken Drew of Brookfield, WI; his grandchildren, Lisa (Alan) Cummins, Dan Rike, Katie Rike, Chris Brown and Allie Brown; his brother, Wilbert Johnson (Pat) of Red Oak; sisters-in-law, June Johnson of Red Oak and Delores (Dr. William) Harper of Hugoton, KS; nieces and nephews and other relatives.

Mason and military rites were conducted by Parian Lodge No. 321, A.F. & A.M. and the Shelby County Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 941 and the American Legion Helmer Reyelt Post No. 150 of Harlan, in the Harlan Community High School Auditorium with the Rev. Paul Wilcox officiating. Speakers included Curt Bladt, Head Football Coach, Harlan Community High School and Bernie Saggau, Executive Director, Iowa High School Athletic Association. A private burial was held in the Harlan Cemetery. Pauley Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.