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## In Memoriam: Dennis L. Johnson

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# In Memoriam

## Dennis L. Johnson

### 1932–2016

My first contact with *Dennis L. Johnson* was after I had read an article by him “From Brålanda to Bernadotte” in SAG 1992/1. In the article he mentioned a woman, that I thought might be a relative of mine, so I wrote to him. It turned out that I was not correct, but that we shared a great-great-grandfather, Anders Persson of Gestad, born in 1762, who was a church verger. He was married twice and Dennis came from his first marriage, and I from his second, which made us some kind of half-cousins.

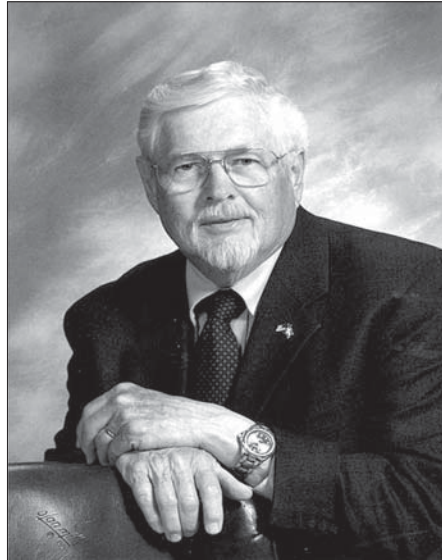
We started a conversation by letter (no e-mail at that time) and became fast friends. I visited with Dennis and LaVonne in their home in Mount Airy, PA, and also got to visit the American Swedish Historical Museum for the first time. In 1997 my husband and I took part in a bus tour to the Old Swedish Churches in the Delaware area, and met the Johnsons again. We got to see *The Norseman*, the Viking ship that Dennis and LaVonne were involved with.

Later on, in 2007, the Johnsons invited us to come to their summer home at Deer Lake, MN, and then join them in their RV and go to Lindsborg, KS, for the “Svensk Hyllningsfest,” a biannual celebration of the Swedish traditions of the area. And so our contacts have continued through the years.

In 2004 I became editor of SAG, and at the same time Dennis became the book review editor after his retirement from a life as an architect. During all these years he wrote more than 86 good book reviews. Even after retirement from this he wrote a few more, as he could not resist reading and writing about the Viking time (SAG 2016/1) It was such a great thing for me as the editor to have such a good writer, who always delivered on time.

There are so many good memories of Dennis, and I am certain that he will be gratefully remembered by all his SAG friends. Our thoughts also go to LaVonne and the rest of the family!

*Elisabeth Thorsell*



**Grand Rapids Herald Review, MN, Obit, 16 Aug. 2016.**

“Dennis L. Johnson, Architect and Planner, of Bucktown Crossing, PA, and Deer River, MN, died on Saturday, 13 August 2016 at St Mary’s Hospital, Duluth, MN.

“He is survived by his wife of 61 years, LaVonne Stonefelt Johnson, five children; Eric, Pottstown, PA, Randy (Ruth) Grapevine, TX, Jeffrey (Amy) Chalfont, PA, James, Ambler, PA, and Denise (John) Staub, Royersford, PA, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

“Dennis, 83, was born in Fairmont, MN, October 30, 1932, graduated from West High School in Minneapolis, and from the University of Minnesota, BA (Arch) in 1954. After two years in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Dennis returned to the University for a B. Arch. Degree in 1958. He married LaVonne on July 2, 1955 and the couple moved to Philadelphia in 1958 for graduate work at the U. of Pa. While going to Penn, and for 15 years thereafter, he worked and became a Partner with Architect Oskar Stonorov, where he designed many buildings in the Philadelphia area and elsewhere. Dennis formed the firm of Johnson/Smith Architects in 1975, not long after the death of Oskar Stonorov. He maintained this practice for 30 years,

retiring in 2005. During that time he designed many buildings in Northwest Philadelphia and the region.

“On retirement, Dennis and LaVonne divided their time between their condominium in Chester County, PA, and their lake home near Grand Rapids, MN. This home was designed by Dennis and built by him with the help of his family over a 20 year period beginning in 1991. It was called “Myggebacke” (Swedish for Mosquito Hill).

“A lifelong Christian, Dennis served many non-profit and community groups during his long career, including East Mt. Airy Neighbors, Carson Valley School in Flourtown, The American Swedish Historical Museum, The Leif Ericson Society and several Lutheran and Presbyterian churches. He enjoyed his family, his beloved Norwegian Elkhounds, flying, classical music, politics, and designing and building his own furniture.

“Honors and awards included “Volunteer of the Year award in 1977 from WCAU Radio which included a trip to Europe, “Viking of the Year” from the Leif Ericsson Society, Edgar Baker Community Service award from East Mt Airy Neighbors, and the Amandus Johnson Award from the American Swedish Historical Museum. The latter in company with LaVonne, his wife.”

