

Lester R. and Ruth K. Johnson

Lester was born, April 27, 1912 on a ranch out of Tiger Butte, MT. He was the oldest son of Hugo Reinold and Elizabeth Dee (Howard) Johnson. Ruth was the first of three children born to George Stout Collings and Bessie (Shannon) Collings on May 7, 1919 in Harlowton, MT.

Lester grew up on the family farm in the Red Butte area, south of Great Falls, MT. He attended elementary school at the Red Butte School. He attended high school in Great Falls. Ruth grew up in the Sun River area. She attended school in Fort Shaw, Sun River and Simms.

Lester met Ruth at a country dance and box social at Pleasant View Hall. In 1935 Lester married Ruth Kathryn Collings at the Red Butte Church. They were married for 73 years. Ruth and Lester lived many places in Montana where Lester found work.

In his 96 years Lester worked a variety of jobs. As a young man he delivered milk with a team and wagon in the Eden Country south of Great Falls. He farmed and worked on road jobs using a team of horses. Lester worked at the 7-UP Gold Mine near Lincoln, MT. He worked on the Fort Peck Dam, and at the Emma Mine in Butte. Lester also ran a sawmill at Logging Creek, south of Great Falls.

In 1942, with two small children, a load of hay and a goat, Lester and Ruth moved by sleigh to Logging Creek, MT. They lived all winter in a two room log cabin where Lester ran a one man saw mill. In the spring they were not able to come out by sleigh so Ruth and both children rode on one work horse while Lester and the goat rode on the other.

During WWII, Lester went to Alaska on a Liberty Ship as a civilian working at Shemya building plane runways. He also worked in the Northwest Territories helping build the ALCAN Highway. His address while there was: Joe Graves Cat Train, Whitehorse, Northwest Territories. Lester was also a big game outfitter and guide in his later years. He loved to cook and cooked in the restaurant and in the hunting camp.



During the time Lester was in Alaska, Ruth lived in Great Falls raising the family. She enjoyed spending time with Lester's large family, the Howard's, attending many picnics and family gatherings held in the Eden area.

After the death of his father in 1944, Lester and Ruth returned to the family farm to help his mother. In 1946 Lester and Ruth along with their children moved to the Browning area where they ranched with Lester's cousin, Fred Johnson. They ranched for several years.

In the 1950's Lester and Ruth moved to St. Mary to open their own restaurant. Initially land was leased but when land became available, on the hill, Ruth and Lester purchased 160 acres.

This 160 acres is the site where Ruth and Lester established Johnson's of St. Mary. Ruth and Lester worked side by side creating a cafe, adding a campground and then adding cabins. Ruth and Lester loved the St. Mary area and were happy to make it their permanent home.

The Johnsons were lifelong Methodists. They were instrumental in getting the Methodist Church built at Babb, MT. Lester and Ruth served on various local and state church boards. For over 50 years they made popcorn balls for the church Christmas programs, much to the delight of everyone.

Numerous Glacier Park rangers and seasonal help found a summer home with Ruth and Lester. They fed countless young people at the "family" table showing care and interest in their life. No one was a stranger at the restaurant. Ruth loved to visit with her customers. Lester was a gifted storyteller and humorist. He enjoyed sharing stories with the many visitors at Johnson's Cafe and Campground.

During slow winter months Ruth was able to indulge in her passion for genealogy. Ruth was very proud when she joined the Mayflower Society. She had traced her ancestors in England back several generations.

Lester and Ruth are and will always be true Montana legends and will be missed by all who knew them. Lester passed away on November 19th, 2008 (age 96) and Ruth on August 5th, 2014, (age 95).

Johnson's Campground

Johnson's Campground is located at the eastern entrance to Glacier Park. Our campground is within walking distance of Glacier Park, with its beautiful mountains, lakes, waterfalls, wildflowers, wildlife and scenery. Scenic boat rides are available on many lakes. The campground has hot showers, grassy campsites, shade trees, picnic tables, and fire rings all there for your camping pleasure. Johnson's Cafe with great, homecooked family style meals, is within easy walking distance of the campground. The view you will see from our campground is of outstanding beauty, and is unsurpassed anywhere.

51 pull-thru sites; 40 electricity and water; 42 full-hookups; and 62 tent sites. All fees paid in advance. Reservations: One night's fee required. Monthly rates vary according to services required. Showers are included in the price of camping, and are also available for non-campers. We also have a full service laundromat.

We have fully furnished cabins, with air conditioner, microwave and refrigerator.

Our son, Hugo handmade all of the furnishings for these cabins. You will

enjoy the view of Glacier from your private deck. We have a pavilion, dining room with a kitchen in the campground.

We will be happy to cater meals in the campground for any type of gatherings. We have ample room for large groups.

For more information log on to our website: johnsonsofstmary.com



"Our Beloved Daughter Kristin"

Kristin was the youngest child of Ruth and Lester. She helped run the business for many years, even after being diagnosed with cancer in 1986. Kristin was a strong willed Montana woman who didn't let cancer stop her from her endeavors. She loved her friends and family, especially her grandchildren. Kristin was very active in the community and will be greatly missed. Kristin passed away in the winter of 2016. Please read Kristin's obituary located in the entrance of the Restaurant.

Johnson's of St. Mary

2023 – Our 73rd Season

Cafe 406-732-5565 • Campground, Cabins 406-732-4207 Mailing Address: 21 Red Eagle Trail, St. Mary, Montana 59417
LIKE us on Facebook at Johnson's of St. Mary and Rate us on Google & Yelp...Our website is johnsonsofstmary.com

How St. Mary Got It's Name

One of the many stories about how St. Mary got its name, is Father DeSmet, a Catholic priest, was caught in a heavy fog coming off of the Divide on the old Beaverslide trail. When the fog cleared, the first thing he saw was the face of St. Mary. He was able to use this as a landmark to help guide himself down to St. Mary Lake. The face of St. Mary appears in the rocks of Single Shot Mountain, which is the high mountain directly in front, across from us. The face can be better recognized when looking back at the mountain from about four miles north of St. Mary.

Answers to the most frequently asked questions:

What kind of soup is it?

We've served one kind of soup since 1950, it's called Good Soup! Please don't pester your server for a list of ingredients.

No: The wind has never blown like this before.

Smoking and cell phone section is located on the front porch. We usually open in late May and close in late September.

The bathrooms are in the lower dining room, down the stairs to the left.

No: There is no hunting here, except for tribal members.

Yes: You can fish on the reservation, you must have a tribal fishing license.

No: We don't serve alcohol nor do we allow you to bring in your own.

Most of the antiques belonged to our family. Over the years people have given us items.

Yes: We do have facilities available for large groups, either in the cafe or in the campground. Please talk to Kateri for details.

It is about 55 miles across Going To The Sun Highway. The Canadian border is about 20 miles. Calgary is 180 miles north, and Great Falls is south 160 miles. We don't know how far it is to New York or San Francisco, go to the bottom of the hill and turn left, ask when you get closer.

St. Mary

St. Mary is located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The reservation is approximately 1.5 million acres in size and is home to about 17,000 Blackfeet. The name Blackfeet, according to legend, was given to them because their moccasins were blackened from prairie fires. The Blackfeet or Piegans (Pi-kun-i) live here in Northern Montana. The Indian reserve to the north in Canada is the home of the Blood Indians (Kainah). If you are in the area in July, plan on attending the North American Indian Days Celebration. This celebration is held in Browning the second week in July.

This Pow Wow brings together Indians from many tribes throughout the U.S. and Canada. Native dances, a parade and a rodeo are just a few of the events in this four-day celebration.

How the Johnson Family Started in the Restaurant Business

We were small ranchers working in Browning to support a herd of cows and a bunch of kids. While on a Sunday drive with Ed Hilton, he mentioned he had leased a spot at St. Mary for a gas station. We had bought a temporary shop from a contractor just before this, to tear down. It was 40 feet square, and new lumber. We offered the building for a combination restaurant and gas station. It was crude, no electricity or running water. In 1952 we got electricity. We hauled our water in barrels from St. Mary River. We slept in a tent behind the restaurant for five years. We started the restaurant with no experience, 10 lbs. of hamburger and a loaf of bread. Ruth worked 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. I ran the ranch but gave it up after three years, and sold the cattle to buy this land on the hill.

In 1957 we made a deal to purchase this land. It was at that time just a bare hill. We rented equipment and made a level spot up here. We bought the original log building from Bob Garrow. It was built in the 1940s and was the caretaker's house at Sherburne Dam (near Many Glacier). We had the building moved in. The first few years, the dining room was only half the size of the present log structure, the kitchen took up the other half. We opened up here in May of 1963. The first years we hired a waitress or two, but Ruth and I along with some of our children did most of the work. Every few years we would try to add on. We added the campground in early 1970, and the lower dining room in 1977. We now have fully furnished camping cabins.

Lester passed away in 2008, Ruth passed away in 2014, and Kristin passed in 2016, and now our grandsons Nathan and Kyle St. Goddard manage the business. Our son, Hugo and his son, Hugo Jr., (Snicky) take care of maintenance for the whole place. Our late daughter Elizabeth Dee Ray's children run the Red Eagle Motel next to the restaurant.

Glacier Park

We are located at the eastern entrance to Glacier National Park. Glacier has about 25 glaciers. Going to the Sun Road, a 50-mile drive, crosses the Continental Divide at Logan Pass, and offers the most spectacular mountain scenery imaginable. Much of the park is accessible by car. Glacier has nearly a thousand miles of trails for hiking. One of the most photographed spots in Glacier is Wild Goose Island. Legend is that this island was named for a pair of wild Canadian Geese who returned to this island year after year. Another point of interest in this part of the area is Triple Divide. Triple Divide is one of the few places on the North American Continent where water flows to three different oceans. It flows to the Arctic Ocean, through the Hudson Bay, to the Pacific Ocean and to the Atlantic Ocean through the Gulf of Mexico. You will find the main visitor center for the park at the eastern entrance. It is the building across from us on the flat. This center opened in 1966.

Upper St. Mary Lake is on your left, and lower St. Mary Lake is on your right. Flat Top and Single Shot Mountain are directly in front of you. Divide Mountain is the furthest mountain on your left

Sandwiches, Soup and Salads

Johnson's Family Style Lunch Special \$15.00

All sandwiches come with homemade soup. Want fries or salad instead of soup, add \$4.00

The One-Eighty-Eight	115 years for Glacier, 73 years for Johnson's ~ Very Popular	\$16.00
Burger, bacon, cheese, BBQ sauce, onions, topped with our own tangy cole slaw on homemade bread.		
Divide Mountain Buffalo Burger	1/2 pound local Blackfoot Tribal free range Buffalo burger served	\$19.00
on homemade bread with deluxe fixins'		
The Red Eagle Fire!	Chicken breast seasoned and breaded with our own blend of "J" spices (not served after 4 PM)	\$17.00
The REF is served on homemade bread topped with pepper jack cheese, grilled onions, roasted red pepper, banana peppers, jalapenos. The REF comes topped with a spicy slaw. It's HOT & SPICY! Yes, just like the fire in 2006 this is a HOT ONE!		
The Hillbilly	Chicken Fried Steak sandwich served with deluxe fixins' on homemade bread (not served after 4 PM)..	\$17.00
E9 (Johnson's family brand from the late 1800s)	Bacon, swiss, mushroom, onion, burger, onion sauce	\$14.00
NJS (for Nathan)	Chicken breast, cheese with deluxe fixins'	\$14.00
Scott B's BLT	Bacon, Lettuce and Tomato (<i>For all of our hardworking friends from Glacier Park Boat Company</i>)	\$13.00
The Moose	This sandwich is loaded and piled high with thinly sliced ham, roast beef, turkey breast and Italian... salami. The Moose is topped with greens, tomato, red onion, cheese, mayo and dijon mustard, all on our signature homemade bread! (A favorite with the local bears as they swear hikers have never tasted better after this delicious sandwich).	\$17.00
The Johnson	Thinly sliced cold beef, provolone cheese, roasted red pepper, lettuce, tomato, purple onion	\$14.00
with Italian cream cheese spread on our homemade bread, of course!		
The Jammer	1/2 pound local free range Blackfoot Tribal buffalo patty on our homemade bread,	\$22.00
topped with our homemade huckleberry-bacon jam, pickled jalapenos, and Swiss-cheese.		
Hamburger	\$12.00	Cheeseburger
		\$13.00
P&D (Peyton & Dallas)	Grilled cheese on homemade bread ... \$9.50	with ham
		\$11.00
Tom Turkey Goes to Glacier	Turkey breast on homemade bread with greens, tomato, red onion and our own sweet and spicy sauce...	\$14.00
Homemade Soup - Bowl	\$6.00	Soup and Bread 3 slices
		\$12.00
Homemade Bread , 3 slices	\$7.00	French Fries
		\$6.00

Non-Cowboy Fare

For all of our Glacier-loving, mountain climbing, backpacking, tree-hugging, whale saving, vegetarian friends.

All vegetarian sandwiches come with a side of homemade coleslaw and honey poppyseed dressing.

Kampground Kyle	We make our own sensational, meatless black bean burger on homemade bread	\$14.00
Dinner Salad		\$5.00
Chef's Salad	small \$8.00	large \$11.00
The Triple "S" (The Single Shot Salad)	Spinach, spiced nuts, dried cranberries, purple onion, blue cheese crumbles.....	\$13.00
topped with huckleberry vinaigrette		<i>with Chicken</i> \$16.00
Huckleberry Blue	Wedge of Iceberg topped with bacon, diced tomatoes, purple onion, and blue cheese crumbles....	\$12.00
This amazing salad is finished off with blue cheese dressing and a splash of huckleberry vinaigrette.		
		<i>with Chicken</i> \$15.00
St. Mary Caesar Salad	Romaine lettuce, shaved Parmesan, dressing, and homemade croutons.....	\$12.00
		<i>with Chicken</i> \$15.00
Mediterranean Salad	Mixed green, artichoke hearts, capers, cannellini beans, sun dried tomatoes,	\$15.00
shaved Parmesan cheese and creamy garlic dressing		<i>with Chicken</i> \$18.00

Family Style Supper starts at 4 pm daily

Johnson's Family Style Dinner Special	Includes bowl of our homemade soup, bread, mashed potatoes and gravy,	\$22.00
coleslaw with our honey poppyseed dressing.		
Pork Chops	Two 6 oz. pork chops, bone-in-center, grilled and topped with our homemade apple	\$22.00
cinnamon sauce. Reminds you of dinner at grandma's!		
Chicken Fried Steak	One 8-10 oz. portion, hand-cut and breaded just the way Mr. Johnson liked it.	\$28.00
Cooked on our flat-top grill and topped with our delicious homemade gravy. (For you city slickers, it's a steak, not chicken).		
Buffalo-Chicken Fried Steak	One 8-10 oz. hand cut, local Blackfoot Tribal buffalo, free range, seasoned just	\$31.00
like the chicken fried steak, when available.		
Rainbow Trout	One entire whole-boned and butterflied rainbow trout, breaded in house and served	\$27.00
with lemon and homemade tartar sauce. (<i>Close your eyes and think about fishing on the St. Mary River</i>).		
Walleye	One fillet, hand-breaded and seasoned with our house blend of herbs and spices	\$29.00
then grilled to perfection. Flaky and tender, this mild tasting fish is wild caught. (For our Minnesota and other Midwest friends).		

*Family Style - Same proteins will be served on the same plate. Sides will come in a bowl which you and your party dish out (just like Thanksgiving Dinner). All dinner entrees receive the same side as the dinner special (no substitutions). If you have any questions please ask your server, but don't complicate the matter. Just sit back and enjoy your homemade food and indulge in a homemade dessert after...FAMILY STYLE! **Only reasonable modifications will be made.***

Drinks and Such

Coffee	\$2.00	Orange Juice 10 oz.	\$4.00
Hot Tea	\$2.00	Hot Cocoa	\$4.00
Iced Tea	\$2.00	Sack Lunch	\$11.00
Lemonade	\$2.25	Sandwich ON our Homemade Bread, fruit, chips, cookie, veggies and beverage)	
Huckleberry Lemonade	\$3.75	Soup to Go Pint	\$6.00
Huckleberry Creme Fizz	\$5.50	Soup to Go Quart	\$8.00
Milk 8 oz.	\$2.50	Pie	\$8.00
Milk 10 oz.	\$3.00	Pie a la mode	\$9.00
Milk Shakes (Chocolate, Strawberry, or Vanilla)	\$10.00	Huckleberry Ice Cream	\$3.75
Milk Shakes (Huckleberry)	\$12.00	Vanilla Ice Cream	\$2.75
Soft Drinks (Coke, Diet Coke, Dr. Pepper, Sprite, Root Beer)	\$2.75	Johnson's Famous Huckleberry ICE CREAM PIE	\$15.00
Orange Juice 8 oz.	\$3.00		

**Please ask your server about the daily Homemade Dessert selections • Remember...Vacation calories don't count!
Please keep your children seated at your table. • 20% Gratuity may be added to parties of 6 or more and
on to-go orders. Extra Condiments are 75 cents and up.**

LESTER-"isms"

- Being honest is like being pregnant either you are or you're not. • Home James and don't spare the horses.
- The only difference between the Republicans and the Democrats, one is in the other is out.
 - Take your time going but hurry back.
 - When someone would lament, "It isn't fair." Grandpa would reply, "Life ain't fair."
 - Your reputation is what others think of you. Your character is what you think of yourself.
- There is a fine line between being smart and too damn smart. • The difference between a good haircut and a bad haircut is two weeks. • It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than speak and remove all doubt.
 - Parents spend the first two years wishing their child would learn to talk and the rest of their life wishing they'd learn to shut up. • Dammit To Hell! (D.T.H.)