

Teacher was big fan of kids

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

Betty Ellen Johnston, born in Farmington 60 years ago and for a long while "teacher to every little girl growing up in Farmington who wanted to dance," died Sunday afternoon in Sinai Hospital of Detroit after a massive heart attack.

The quote comes from Diane Hoffens, now a co-

lumnist for The Detroit News, one of the many "little girls" who took after-school and Saturday lessons in the Betty Johnston Dance Studio from the dancer, whose teaching career spanned 36 years.

Johnston knew she wanted to be a dance teacher after her own first lesson in Farmington, and was proud that some students who started their lessons with her at age 3 stayed with her through high school.

She taught tap, jazz and ballet in her studios on Grand River for 22 years and owned and operated another studio in Birmingham. She turned the business over to her son, Eric, when the studio in Farmington was moved to Farmington Road and she announced her semi-retirement in 1984.

As part of her semi-retirement, she served as co-entertainment director, with Eric Johnston, for the Farmington Founders Festival in 1984 and 1985.

Johnston was an active member and past president of the Nada Musical Association of Dance Teachers, and a member of St. Martin Episcopal Church in Detroit.

and Myrtle Goetz. Graduating from Farmington High School in 1942, she studied dance in New York and Chicago before returning home to begin teaching. She was married to William Johnston Sr., who died in 1976.

She is survived by two sons, Eric and William, and one brother, Robert Goetz.

Eric Johnston returned to teach in his hometown and carry on in his mother's tradition after a successful career as a world-class ballet dancer with the National Ballet of Mexico and the London Ballet Theater.

William Johnston is an English and speech teacher for Milford Public Schools.

Services were held Wednesday in St. Martin Episcopal Church. The Rev. Robert Miller officiated. Burial was in Oakland Hills Cemetery, Novi.



Betty Johnston and her son Eric in 1984, in their then-new dance studio on Farmington Road.

Signs draw spotlight

In considering two sign variance requests, Farmington City Council voted March 17 to table one application and deny the second.

Ray Lucas, 23290 Farmington Road, requested a sign variance for a proposed 18-square-foot, four-foot-high sign to replace the existing, rotting pole sign. The building is owned by John Anhut of Farmington Hills.

The request was discussed and tabled, according to Farmington City Clerk Josephine Bushey.

Mike Nikolowski, 23350 Farmington Road, owner of Mike's Cleaners and Tailors, asked that he be allowed to place a 1-1/2-by-2-foot sign advertising shirt service in front of his business for three months. Nikolowski also requested the council assign specific parking spaces for his business.

"Prior to the current sign ordinance, the downtown district and other commercial districts were filled with real estate-type and A-frame signs," according to an administrative report to the council. "Council elected — by ordinance — to prohibit this type sign. To grant the variance as requested would be a major departure from council's previous position."

Both the sign variance and parking designation requests were denied by the council.

JOHNSTON was born June 26, 1925, to Elmer

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