John Wallace Johnston was born to John and Nora Johnston at Dazey, North Dakota on April 4, 1915. He came to McKenzie County in 1916 where his parents homesteaded five miles west of Banks on the Missouri River bottom. He was baptized at Banks Lutheran Church, received his elementary education at rural schools, and attended Watford City High School. He was a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps until he volunteered for the army where he served in the 20th Infantry Sixth Division as a cook.

Wallace married Theresa Bertinuson on March 24, 1942 while he was on furlough. They enjoyed residing at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri until his discharge. They returned to farm the Johnston homestead until the land was purchased for the Garrison Dam Reservoir. A daughter, Sue Anita, was born in 1945 and a son, John Wallace, was born in 1951. In 1946 they established a home in Watford City where Wally owned and operated Independent Oil Company and delivered bulk gas and oil products to his customers, whom he considered family. He sponsored the Oval E Softball Team composed of his farmer customers. They had a lot of fun and he was very proud when they remained unbeaten. Wally got into hot water when he took household funds to outfit the team with new uniforms. He maintained a great affection for the Banks, Garden, and Grassy Butte communities. After 39 years of business, Wally sold the Independent Oil Company and additional businesses he owned.

He considered Watford City a good place to live and raise a family. Being great supporters of the community, Wally and Theresa, along with two other families, mortgaged their homes to obtain seed money for the city’s first swimming pool. Wally served on the City Board for 12 years, saw the streets paved, the first city hall built, and the swimming pool completed. He was an active member of First Lutheran Church. He served on the Airport Authority, was a member of the Association of Commerce, Lions Club, Sons of Norway, the Wildlife Club, Rifle Club, and American Legion. He was a charter member of the Drill Team, which he considered an important service to the community and took part in hundreds of military funerals for over fifty years. An excellent cook, Wally chaired many steak fries for the Wagon Train, Chamber of Commerce, Legion, and Drill Team. He loved to help the Boy Scouts sell Christmas trees and cooked at their pancake suppers. He was a loyal fan at many high school sports activities especially those in which his grandsons participated. Wally was a long time official at Legion Baseball games.

He loved the outdoors and instilled the love of nature in his children and grandchildren, who were the most important people in the lives of Wally And Theresa. He would announce the arrival of the first crocus of spring and report where the wild tiger lilies were blooming. During their 66 years of marriage, Wally and Theresa enjoyed traveling extensively throughout the United States and abroad. They took great pride in their yard and home but chose to sell in 2001 and move into the Horizon. Wally entered the Good Shepherd Home in January of 2005 where he resided until his death on September 17.

He is survived by his wife, Theresa; daughter, Sue of Tacoma, WA; son, John (Janet) of Watford City, ND; grandsons, Eric (Tanya) Platt of Renton, WA; Christopher of Minneapolis, MN; Steven of Sheridan, WY; great grandchildren, Morgan and Blake Platt, Renton, WA; a niece, Carol Nicholson, of Lakewood, WA; and several cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Nora Johnston; his sister, Myrtle Doherty; niece, Darleen Morris; and nephew, Jim Gamache.
Fill not your hearts with pain and sorrow,
but remember me in every tomorrow.
Remember the joy, the laughter, the smiles,
I’ve only gone to rest a little while.
Although my leaving causes pain and grief,
my going has eased my hurt & given me relief.
So dry your eyes and remember me,
not as I am now, but as I used to be.
Because, I will remember you all,
and look on with a smile.
Understand, in your hearts,
I’ve only gone to rest a little while.
As long as I have the love of each of you,
I can live my life in the hearts of all of you.