

**A VISION LOST**  
**Editorial for May 26, 2005**  
**By Jesse Burkhardt**

We'll probably never know what happened in the mountain biking incident that took Jeffrey A. Johnson's life on May 15, as there were apparently no witnesses.

What we do know is that Johnson, who was 48, was a dedicated servant of the city of White Salmon and a progressive voice in the business community.

For the past two years, he served as chair of the White Salmon Planning Commission and had a reputation for being able to work, productively and fairly, with people on all sides of an issue in order to forge a workable consensus.

His business endeavor was representative of his progressive, problem-solving outlook. He opened the New Buildings Institute, Inc., in downtown White Salmon in April 2001. Johnson's primary goal with the business, which was set up as a not-for-profit company, was to create energy efficient buildings that would be better for the environment and healthier for the people who lived and worked in them.

In an era of dwindling natural resources, Johnson was a visionary who saw a better way to do things and strived to share his knowledge with others. It was his unique way of making the world around him a better place.

It was obvious he cared passionately about the future of the nation and the planet, and he had a vision of how to lead in an innovative new direction in the energy field.

In an interview with *The Enterprise* in September 2001, Johnson explained that he believed people could work locally to solve larger problems. Johnson's stated business objective at that time was to contribute to nationwide efforts to conserve energy. One way he did that was to show "the actual, rather than the perceived, differences between the design intent and the actual energy performance in commercial buildings."

In one of his first local projects, Johnson offered to help the White Salmon School District.

"The goal is to give information to [Superintendent] Dale Palmer and the school board, to make them aware of which energy projects at the school would be good for the school and save them money," said Johnson.

Amazingly, Johnson provided the energy audit -- which had an estimated value of \$40,000 -- at no cost to the school district.

Beyond that, we'd see him at The Creamery or elsewhere around town, and he'd share some proud news about his family. He always seemed to have a friendly smile, a warm demeanor and a positive approach. He was a gracious guy, and his tragic passing serves to provide the phrase, "The good die young."

**JB**