

Ralph Fredrich Johnson

8 July 1919 – 11 August 1945

Fighter Pilot lost 3 months after war in Europe ended

Ralph Fredrich Johnson was born 8 July 1919 in St. Mary Hospital in Astoria, Oregon to Karl F. and Gertrude May (Blake) Johnson. He was the couple's 4th child, however 1 passed away before he was born. They own a Dairy Farm on Tucker Creek Road in Chadwell, Oregon. Ralph joined Winnefred, 4 and Author, 2. The 1920 Census showed a busy house with Grandmother Robinette Blake, a Nurse at St. Mary, Cousin John Matson and boarder Walter Peterson, both laborers on the farm. Karl immigrated from Sweden in 1890 and was a Naturalized Citizen. Gertrude was born in Oregon. The 1930 Census showed the family moved to 577 Youngs River Road in Lewis and Clark, Oregon. Both are in Clatsop County. They own the home on a farm, valued at \$40,000, and they have a radio set. They still have a Dairy Farm. Grandmother Robinette is living with the family but is now retired. 11-year-old Ralph is in school, along with his siblings. In high school, he



was involved with the school newspaper for all 4 years. Ralph graduated from Astoria High School in 1937, and started college at Oregon State College in Corvallis, OR in 1938. Ralph was involved with the Sea Scouts in Astoria, with SSS Flying Cloud. He was the Art Editor of its newsletter 'Shipmates' in 1937-1938. In April 1940 the Army Air Corp is on campus giving tests to students for Air Force careers. Ralph passed these tests.

Ralph joined the Army Air Corp on 5 September 1940 at Vancouver Barracks, Washington. He is single with no dependents, and 2 years of college. His Serial # 19014564. He goes directly into the Pilot Training program, class 41-C. His Primary is at Santa Maris, California. This is where Aviation Cadets first learn to fly. He flies a PT-13, also known as a Stearman bi-plane. He flies a total of 59:43 hours and finishes in November 1940. Next was Basic Flight at Moffett Field, California. Here he flew BT-14s for a total of 75:00 hours, 29:45 dual, 45:15 solo. On 17 February he started Advance Flight at Stockton Field, California. Here he flies an AT-6 for a total of 70:25 hours. Aviation Cadet Johnson finishes flight training on 24 April 1941 with a total of 205:10 hours flight time, plus 12:15 hours in a Link Trainer and 12:15 hours instrument training. On that day he was awarded

his Pilot's Wings and a commission. His new, Officer's Serial # O-413598. After some Leave Time, usually 10 days, 2nd Lt. Johnson went back to Moffett Field as a Flight Instructor. He flies mostly BT-13s and BT-15s. In July he is transferred to a training base in Bakersfield, CA, as a Flight Instructor in BT-13s. At the end of 1941 he has over 560 hours of flight time. Then in February 1942 he moved again to the Air Corp Basic Flying School at Minter Field CA. He would spend the next 2 ½ years at Minter, rising to the rank of Major and becoming the Assistant Group Commander. In August 1942 he was promoted to 1st Lt., then to Captain in April 1943. At the end of 1942 1st Lt. Johnson had almost 1150 hours of flight time. In May 1943 he was checked out in a P-38 Lightning. Later in August he had some pilot time in an AT-17, the Cessna Bobcat, a twin-engine Advance trainer and an AT-20, a Canadian built version of the Avro Anson, a twin-engine trainer. Capt. Johnson was hospitalized on 15 November; reason was not readily available. He did not fly again until 9 December. At the end of 1943 he had almost 1750 hours as a pilot.

January 1944 is when he was promoted to Major. In March Major Johnson was checked out in a P-39 and had 6 flights. In April he was transferred to Harding Field, Baton Rouge, LA and had his first P-40 flight on 3 April. End of May another move to Woodward Airbase in Oklahoma for more P-40 training. In August Major Johnson was back at Harding Field for final preparation for overseas deployment. He was assigned to the 319th Fighter Squadron, 325th Fighter Group in Italy with the Fifteenth Air Force. He got checked out in a P-51 on 13 November and flew 3 combat missions later in the month. On 7 December 1944 he was named Commander of the 319th Fighter Squadron. When the war in Europe (V-E Day) ended, the 325th was kept in Italy in case it was needed in the Pacific. This was also a busy time with many of the senior staff being rotated home after spending 2+ years overseas, and newer personnel needed to be trained.



Major Ralph Fredrich Johnson was lost 11 August 1945 in a crash of a B-25. He was the pilot, with Lts Leo A. Gertin, Oscar L. Agee, Bland M. Barnes and T/Sgt. Hal F. Tomey on board. It looked like it suffered an engine failure during takeoff. All 5 on board were killed. The plane was a B-25 C, Serial # 41-13085. In 1950

Major Johnson was brought back to the US and is buried at Santa Fe National Cemetery in New Mexico.