

CLARENCE JOHNSON



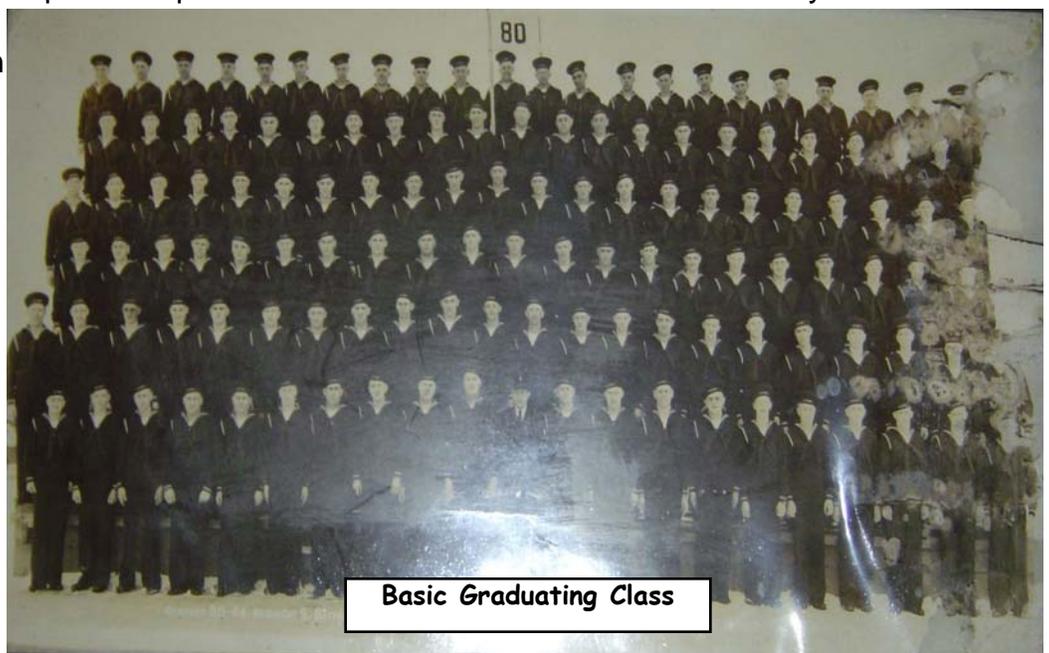
Clarence Johnson (8711965) was married and living in Paynesville Minnesota when the war came to the United States. He recalled being out in the garage, working on something, when he heard about the Pearl Harbor attack on the radio. After the war declaration, Clarence and his wife, Lydia, had just lost their infant daughter in child birth, which changed Clarence's draft status.

Prior to being drafted, Johnson had worked as a machinist at Cold Spring Granite, and had worked as a diesel mechanic. This experience proved beneficial for Clarence when the Navy needed him.

Johnson had one brother in the Navy, one in the Army, and a sister in the Army serving as a nurse.

He was drafted into the US Navy on 17 January 1944. He was sent to boot camp at Farragut Idaho where he served in Company 80-44, Regiment 5, Battalion 19.

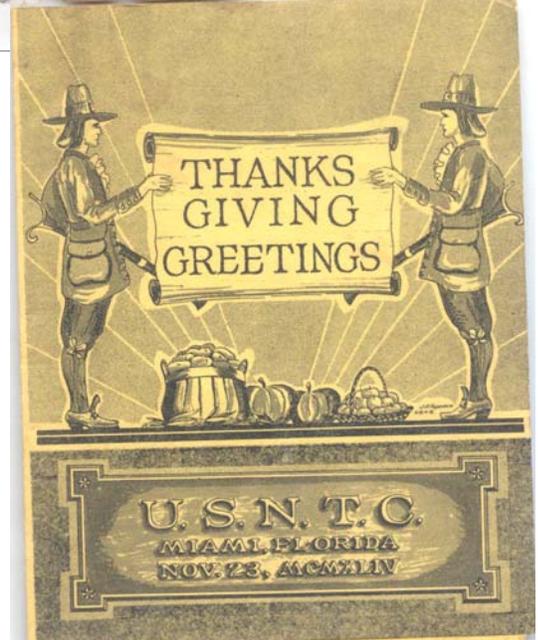
He was then sent to school for Basic Engineering Training in Gulf Port Mississippi. He was assigned to Company I - 44 graduating on 25 May 1944.





Clarence was then sent to Miami Florida. Here he continued with training and drilling. Clarence recalled that at times, he would see other sailors sitting near the shoreline, watching ships coming and going. Sometimes, non military ships were forced to turn away. Although Clarence never saw it happen, he heard that at times some of those ships were fired upon.

The weather in Miami was terribly hot and humid. He remembered times going out to the drill field to stand inspection the heat could be overwhelming. The men would get full of dust and dirt just walking out on the dry barren drill field.



Some men, to try to easily pass inspection, would coat the collars of their white uniforms with chalk, from the pool halls, so the sweat stains wouldn't show on their collars. If they would get caught, it could mean major trouble.

0735

STANDARD TRANSFER ORDER

4 December 1944.

Authority: BUPERS ltr. Pers-1015-11A over Fill-1 of 19 May 1944.

TO: JOHNSON, Clarence (n). 871 19 68, MARIETTA, VA, USNR.

NOTE

1. Proceed as your transportation may direct, and report as indicated below:

ULTIMATE DESTINATION AND NATURE OF DUTY

Receiving Station, Frontier Base, Galveston, Texas, for duty in the USN ADRIA (AF 30) detail and on board when commissioned.

INTERMEDIATE REPORTINGS AND DEPARTURES

Report to: _____ Signature: _____

Reported: 0730 12-4-44 Signature: [Signature]

Report to: Personnel Com (NS), MNS, New Orleans, La. Signature: [Signature]

Reported: 1100, 6 Dec. 1944 Signature: [Signature]

Reported: 0630, 13 Dec. 1944 Signature: Personal Office.

ULTIMATE DESTINATION REPORTING

Reported: 0718, 14 Dec. 1944 Signature: [Signature]

Johnson stayed in Miami until he received orders telling him what ship he was assigned to. He received his orders on 4 December 1944 to head to Receiving Station, Frontier Base, Galveston Texas.

Clarence left Miami on 4 December and reported in New Orleans on 6 December where he stayed until 13 December 1944. At New Orleans, he did one week of Gunnery Training.

He arrived in Galveston on 14 December 1944 to report for duty on the USS Adria. Johnson joined the crew of the USS Adria on 26 December 1944 when the ship was commissioned in Galveston Texas.

He served as a Machinist Mate 3rd Class. He would become a member of the "Black Gang" as the members of the engine room were called. They earned the nickname because of the area of the ship they worked in was dirty, and oily, causing the men to get dirtier than most of the other crew.

The Adria was the first of 18 refrigerated stores ships of the type to operate in the United States Fleet. They did a 5 day shakedown cruise off Galveston before leaving to pick up its cargo in Mobile Alabama on 15 January 1945.



The Adria departed Mobile on 19 January 1945 and headed to Balboa Canal Zone with 1645 tons of cargo. The trip was 1367 Miles.

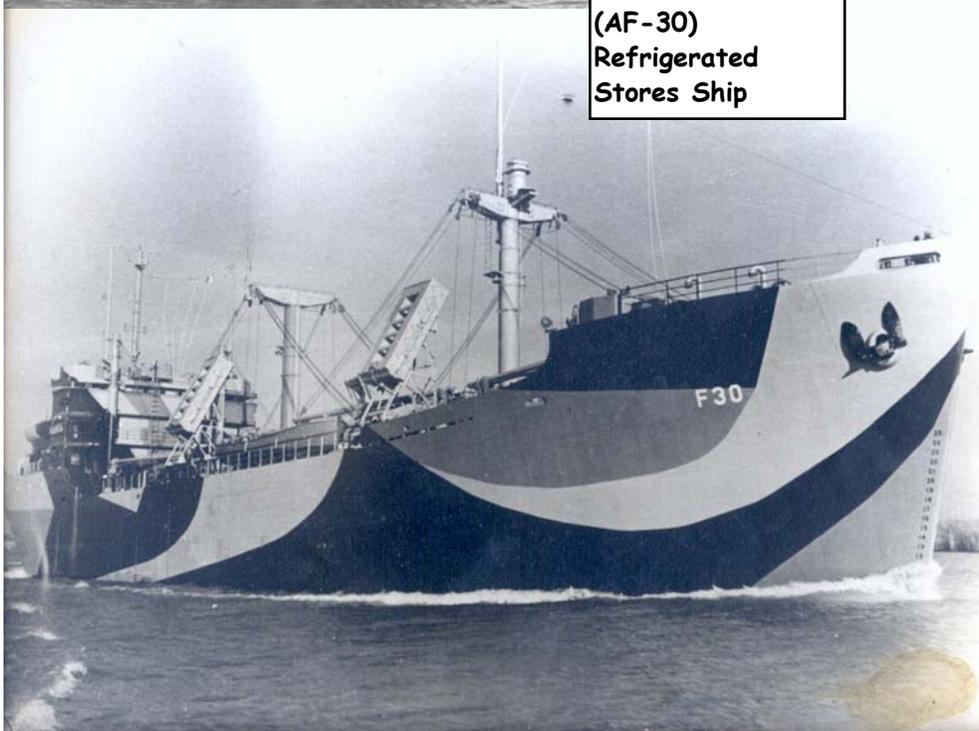
Clarence and the crew passed through the Panama Canal on 25 January 1945 in 6 hours and 49 minutes. They arrived and unloaded by 25 January.

**The USS Adria
(AF-30)
Refrigerated
Stores Ship**

Clarence remembered watching, as the ship made its way through the lock system at the Canal, it was an impressive site as he recalled.

On the next day they departed Balboa to Pearl Harbor with 1645 tons of cargo on a trip of 4760 miles.

Enroute, Clarence watched another sailor standing on the deck of the ship, reaching into the air and back down, over and over. When asked what he was doing the man replied, "Picking Cherries!" The man was trying for a Mental health discharge, but didn't succeed.



Johnson and the Adria arrived to Pearl Harbor on 14 February 1945.

At Pearl, Clarence's Engineering Officer came up to him and

asked him if he fully understood the reverse system on the ship, to which Clarence replied, "Yes". The officer asked him if he could fix it if something happened. Clarence told him, "Yes, if I have the parts, it's easy." The officer confided to Clarence, "I don't understand it, that's your job if there is problems. To fix it." Clarence recalls that the system was pretty basic, and if the officer had gotten the opportunity to pull it open and see it, he would have had no problem understanding it. Clarence took on the responsibility. The reverse system on ship could change the direction of propulsion in a mere seven seconds.



The Adria stayed in Pearl Harbor until 18 February when it left for San Francisco California unloaded (2053 miles). They arrived on 28 February. On March 11 they left San Francisco for Eniwetok, Marshall Islands with 2011 tons of cargo and 100 sacks of mail (4589 miles) arriving on 30 March.

On the way Clarence was awarded a certificate for passing into the "Realm of the Golden Dragon" on 24 March 1945. This signified that Johnson had passed the International Date Line.



Johnson's Certificate for passing into the "Realm of the Golden Dragon" Aboard ship, there was a small initiation ceremony that he had to go through to receive the honor of being part of the group. It was a fairly calm initiation compared to what some men went through for similar awards.

On 31 March they left Eniwetok for Saipan, Marianas Islands with 1000 tons of cargo (1123 miles). They arrived in Saipan on 5 April and stayed until 8 April when they left for Guam with 1000 tons (135 miles).

They arrived the next day and stayed in Guam for four days. Clarence and the crew departed Guam on 13 April to Ulithi, Caroline Islands unloaded (358 miles). They arrived on 14 April 1945. On 20 April they departed Ulithi to Kerama Rotto Islands with 1469 tons of cargo (1223 miles). They arrived on the 26th and unloaded.



Money brought back by Clarence from World War II.

Throughout their travels, they had reminders that they were still in a war zone. Clarence recalled passing through the water, they would see oil slick on the water from time to time. After checking into what they were, they found out they were what was left of the ship sunk deep below the water.

He also remembered a time watching his ship resupply another ship, a destroyer. Looking at the ship they were loading, he noticed that there was a huge hole in the side of the hull, just above the water line. Although the ship was damaged, it was being resupplied, and on full duty.

The Adria was engaged in the Okinawa Campaign from 26 April until 6 May. During the battle the Adria suffered one casualty during an enemy air raid on 30 April. Seaman First Class Harlan Baliman suffered injuries from a small caliber shell in the gun tub. He died later. Clarence said, "I'll never forget the picture of him in my mind."

Due to the battle the crew was continually interrupted by alerts and action, however, they were still able to issue fresh stores to 200 ships in 6 days. Clarence told me that one night during the battle the tracer rounds were so thick in the sky a person could walk across them. As he remembered, every tenth round was a tracer round. "You didn't have to worry about what you did nights!" he recalled 60 years later.

At one point during the battle, the engineering officer was down in the engineering room with the men. He noticed one of the subordinates had something in his mouth. The man chewed snuff. The officer asked the man, "What's in your mouth?" Clarence couldn't recall what the man replied, but laughed as he remembered the Officer's response of, "Give me some of that!"

As an engineer, the men in the engine room could at times have twelve hour or longer shifts. So, to ease the pain of being stuck in the engine room that long, the men got a hold of an electric fry pan, that they used to heat their own "special" dinners. The men had found a way, with the help of a "refurbished" pin to open up the coolers that held the better food, including some of the Officer's food. Clarence chuckled as he noted, "We ate good!"

During the Okinawa campaign, the Engineering Officer came up to them and asked, "Where you guys keep that fry pan?" He knew that they had been getting into the officer's stash of food. After they brought out the pan he asked, "Could I get one of the Officer's steaks?" They obliged the officer, who later brought down to them a cooler, and told them to keep their stuff in there. Clarence recalled that the men really liked that officer.

They stayed at Kerama Rotto until they departed on 6 May 1945 for Okinawa, Nansei Shoto unloaded (22 miles).

In the years following the war, Clarence and his wife, Lydia, moved from the Paynesville area to the Willmar area. Johnson began working as a carpenter and built numerous homes in the Willmar area. In 1972, the couple moved to Kandiyohi. Later he retired from carpentry work.

He enjoyed deer hunting, yard work, and gardening. He became active in various community aspects including serving on the city council.

In retirement, he continued to work on smaller projects in his woodshop in the basement of his Kandiyohi home.

The couple enjoyed visiting with friends and neighbors, and always had coffee ready for guests.

Clarence's siblings all made it home after the war, although his brother, Ed, in the Army was seriously wounded in the leg in the European Theater.

In 2002, Clarence and Lydia left their home in Kandiyohi and moved back to Paynesville.



Clarence's Uniform and Leggings donated November 2001.



Clarence was awarded this certificate for Continuous Membership of the American Legion in Willmar. He was a member for over 50 years.



Clarence passed away on 5 June 2003, his wife Lydia, preceded him in April 2003.

Clarence Johnson

Oct. 3, 1913 – June 5, 2003

PAYNESVILLE — Clarence Johnson, 89, of Paynesville, formerly of Kandiyohi, died Thursday at Koronis Manor in Paynesville.

The service will be at 10:30 a.m. Thursday at Grace United Methodist Church in Paynesville with the Rev. Dan Hair officiating. Burial will be at Zion Cemetery in rural Paynesville with military honors provided by Willmar American Legion Post 167.

Arrangements are with Johnson Funeral Home in Paynesville. Memorials are preferred.



C. Johnson

He was born Oct. 3, 1913, in Chicago Heights, Ill., to Hjalmer and Barbara (Hackman) Johnson. He grew up and went to schools in Sergeant County, N.D. He graduated from State Normal and Industrial School in Ellendale, N.D., in 1931.

He married Lydia Knebel on July 25, 1940, near Paynesville. They lived in Paynesville. He worked at the granite sheds in Cold Spring, owned a dray service in Paynesville and was caretaker of Lake Koronis Assembly Grounds. He also served in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1945, during World War II in the Eastern Pacific region. In 1952, they moved to Willmar where he worked as a carpenter, building many homes in the Willmar area. They moved to Kandiyohi in 1972, where he served on the city council. They moved to Paynesville in 2002. His wife died this past April.

He was a member of United Methodist Church and American Legion Post 167.

Survivors include brother-in-law, Arnold (and Mildred) Knebel of Paynesville; and other relatives.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife; infant daughter, Norma Peggy; three brothers; and one sister.