

Dr. Louis Johnson (1908 – 2003)

Tribute to Dr. Louis Johnson
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Dr. Louis Johnson, one of the founders and continuing board member of the Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association, died July 10, 2003, at the age of 95. During his longtime residence in this community, he played a significant role in the history of the city and Tennessee Technological University where he was professor and dean of the College of Business Administration. In addition to upgrading the curricula and initiating the Master's degree, he built amicable relationships with civic, industrial, and business elements within the community. He was chairman of the charter Commission that established the city manager form of government for Cookeville.

Pictured Left: Source – Tennessee Technological University, by Mancil Johnson & W. Calvin Dickinson, pg. 50: Louis Johnson joined the Department of Business in 1936, becoming chair during World War II. When the College of Business Administration was created in 1964, Johnson was appointed the first dean. He retired in 1978. Johnson had attended TPI as a student, receiving his B. S. degree from Bowling Green (Kentucky) College of Commerce. He earned his L. L. B. degree at Cumberland University in 1934 and his M. A. degree at Northwestern University in 1941. Johnson Hall was named in his honor in 1971.

We at UCGA remember him in other ways. He had a remarkable memory for names and genealogical connections, and after his retirement could be found on Tuesday afternoons in the Tennessee Room at the Putnam County Library where he participated in the informal meetings of the UCGA Board of Directors, giving assistance to searchers, and entertaining all with anecdotes. His life was a model of honorable conduct and integrity, with a dedication to honesty and fairness. He loved people; he loved good stories and conversation. He was a true “southern gentleman.” He will be missed and we wish only that we can emulate and maintain the standards that were his gift to us.

In Loving Memory, Thema Johnson, Board of Directors, UCGA

Dr. William Louis Johnson Jr. Obituary
services Sunday

Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN
b. 3 July 1908, near Buffalo Valley. Putnam Co., TN
d. 10 July 2003, TN
s/o William Louis Johnson Sr. & Mary Lula Johnson
Wm. Louis Johnson Jr. md Virginia Wilcox

Dr. Louis Johnson, who played a significant role in the history of this city and of Tennessee Tech University, died yesterday, July 10, 2003, at the age of 95.

He was highly respected and admired for his work and public service and was loved for his wit and charm.

He had served as dean of the TTU College of Business Administration for many years, had served on the Cookeville City Commission in the late 40's and early 50's, and chaired the charter commission which drafted Cookeville's present city charter, moving the city from the commission form of government to the city manager/council form.

Funeral services for Dr. William Louis Johnson Jr. will be held Sunday, July 13, at 3 p.m. at Cookeville First United Methodist Church with Rev. Jim Rogers and Dr. Robert Bell officiating. Burial will be at Crest Lawn Cemetery.

The family will receive friends at Hooper-Huddleston & Horner Funeral Home on Saturday, July 12, from 5 to 8 p.m. and on Sunday, July 13, from 2 p.m. till time for the services at the church.

He was born July 3, 1908, near Buffalo Valley to the late William Louis Johnson Sr. and Mary Lula Johnson. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Florence Martin and Elizabeth Cullen; four brothers, Harold, Bernice, Hubert, and J.T. Johnson.

His family includes his wife of over 72 years, Virginia Wilcox Johnson; two sons and daughters-in-law, William Louis Johnson III and Jennifer Johnson of Atlanta, John Wilcox and Claire Johnson of Spartanburg, S.C.; his brother, Willard Johnson of Baxter; four grandchildren and spouses, William Louis Johnson IV and Emily Johnson of Marietta, Georgia, Allyson Lea and Clare (CHIP) Hodge III of Atlanta, Charles Wilcox Johnson and William John Glover Johnson, both of Spartanburg; and a great-grandchild, Clare C. Hodge IV.

Active pallbearers will be Tom, Harold, and Chuck Johnson, Sandy Stanton, Chuck Neely, and Dr. Ray Troop. Honorary pallbearers will be current and former members of the Cookeville Evening Lions Club and the Noonday Rotary Club, present and retired faculty of Tennessee Tech, Dr. Don Cook, Dr. William P. Goodman, Judge John Maddux, Nick Carter, Dr. Buddy Reynolds, Dr. James Barger, and Dr. Joe Thorne.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Dean Louis and Virginia Johnson Fund for Excellence, which the couple established to provide scholarships and other help to the TTU College of Business Administration. Those wishing to make contributions may do so by contacting the funeral home.

Dr. Johnson's life was memorialized in the following tribute from the university he served for many years:

The bricks and mortar of Tennessee Tech University's Johnson Hall stand solid in honor of Louis Johnson Jr.'s long-term commitments to his work, his relationships and his community.

Johnson, regarded as "Mr. Business Administration" by several generations of students, served from 1942 until 1975 as dean of Tennessee Tech University's College of Business Administration. He continued to teach as a faculty member until 1978.

"Dean Johnson was the foundation stone of the college," said TTU President Bob Bell. "Beyond this, he was the most beloved representative the College of Business ever had."

Johnson's credentials included a bachelor's degree from Bowling Green College of Commerce (now Western Kentucky University), a master's degree from Northwestern University and a law degree from Samford University. But his value to Tennessee Tech and the community could not be measured only in terms of academic credentials.

He is credited with upgrading the curricula, laying the foundation of the master's of business administration program, teaching with dedication and expertise, and building relationships between the university and the business, industrial and civic sectors of the community.

Committed to public service as well as academia, he used his expertise and knowledge to shape local government and to support it with his participation.

He served as Cookeville's Commissioner of Finance and Taxation from 1947-1953. Johnson also served as chairperson of the charter commission that drafted the Cookeville charter establishing the current city manager and council form of government.

Still, Tennessee Tech faculty, staff and alumni remember Johnson for a spirit and attitude rarely found in an individual with so much influence, responsibility and education.

"Dr. Johnson would tell us stories and jokes," said Candy Norris of the college's Division of External Relations. "He talked about dollar dates when he and his wife, Virginia, could each have a hamburger and a coke, go to the Princess Theater to watch a picture show and still have a nickel left over to buy popcorn."

TTU economics professor Whewon Cho, a longtime friend of Johnson's, says that kind of story is what made the dean different. He valued chit chat, a good joke, and a personal story.

"He was the best I've ever seen at remembering names of students," said Cho.. "At homecomings, he could remember a graduate's name from 30 years ago as well as one from five years ago. That motivation came from the compassion he had for everyone."

President Bell agrees, saying "his daily interactions with people gave me an example of what a good dean does. Actually, it was more than interaction, it's what I'd call 'loving on people,' a genuine concern and fondness for everyone around him."

Johnson Hall was named and dedicated for him in 1971 because of the mark he left on the university in his 35 years there. When he met the current College of Business Administration Dean Bob Niebuhr, he gave him a charge to "take care of my building."

But Johnson's real legacy is only represented by the building. The life of his work was about people. The Dean Louis and Virginia Johnson Fund for Excellence was established to take care of students and faculty who will use the building in years to come. It honors Johnson and wife Virginia, who earned a bachelor's degree in English from TTU and taught business communications there for 23 years. The fund will support student scholarships and graduate assistantships, faculty travel to professional meetings, publication expenses, summer research grants for faculty and graduate students, and seed money to begin new programs.

Christine Jones, TTU's regional history librarian in special collections, wrote a description of Johnson that reflects Johnson's ultimate accomplishments.

"He realized and appreciated the value of sincerity of conviction, honor of conduct, integrity of purpose, and fulfillment of promise," she said.

"He had the friendship of men, the respect of women, and the tender love of children. And he believed in getting things done."

Published July 11, 2003 12:21 PM CDT – Herald Citizen Newspaper, Cookeville, TN

Louis Johnson Sr. was a Baxter Seminary student in 1924-25, earlier than his siblings. Louis and Virginia Wilcox Johnson are benefactors of the Seminary.

*See The Johnson Family In Putnam County Tennessee at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>



70 Years Together

Dr. and Mrs. Louis Johnson celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 4. Both have had longtime careers at Tennessee Tech; he served as dean of the College of Business, and she taught on campus. They continue to be active in church, community and Tennessee Tech affairs.

Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN: 10 June 2001.

MR. BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

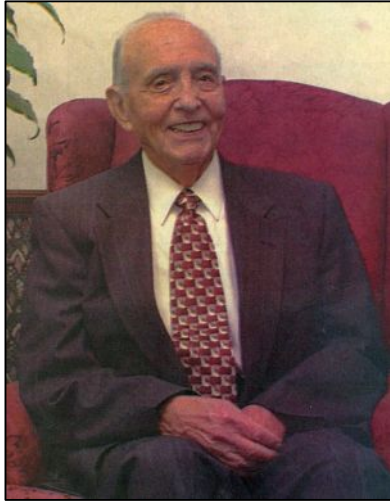
Putnam Morning Light
Sunday, 8 October 1995

Business Section

By Kristie Phillips: Business Editor

Louis Johnson has been influencing Cookeville for nearly 60 years.

Dr. Louis Johnson, as he prefers to be called, has had an impact on Cookeville that has spanned six decades. His family's history in Tennessee traces back much farther. Louis was able to research his ancestors back to William Boyd, who was in the territory before Tennessee was declared a state in 1796. This discovery makes the Johnson's members of Tennessee's First Families, which is a program sponsored by the East Tennessee Historical Society, as part of the state's bicentennial celebration.



William Louis Johnson Jr. was born near Buffalo Valley. He first came to Putnam County in 1918 when his family moved to Baxter. After graduating from Burritt Prep, a high school department of Burritt College, Johnson went to Bowling Green College of Commerce, which later became Western Kentucky University. After receiving his bachelor's degree, Johnson attended Northwestern University, where he studied for his master's degree. To round off his education, Johnson decided to attend law school and received his doctor of jurisprudence from Cumberland School of

Law and Samford University.

Dr. Johnson is probably best known for his work as dean of the College of Business Administration at Tennessee Tech. Johnson was recruited to Tech by President Q. M. Smith. When he arrived, there were only three people teaching business education courses at the University – himself, A. L. Campbell and Hazel Wall, who was President Smith's secretary.

Johnson joined the staff at Tech in 1936. Other than two leaves of absence, Johnson remained a member of the faculty for the next 52 years. Grandfathers, fathers, and sons can remember having Dean Johnson for class. Johnson became dean of the College of Business in 1940, and 35 years later, a new building for the college was named in his honor.

"Really, I had three titles while I was at Tech. The first was chairman of the Department of Business Administration. The second was director of the School of Business Administration, and finally, it was dean of the College of Business Administration, but it all meant the same to me," said Johnson, who still keeps an office in the building bearing his name. On the second floor, around a corner and behind a fairly simple looking door, is the former dean's office.

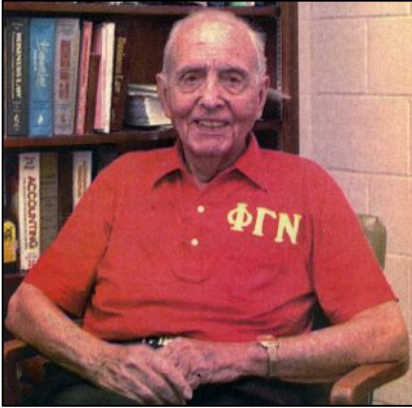
Two manual Royal typewriters are perched on spare desks. The chairs and the desk look as they did when he was still residing over the halls and classrooms of the College of Business. Even though it's been 20 years since Dr. Johnson carried the title of dean, he still comes to his office several days a week, and he still enjoys visiting with professors and students, who may not appreciate who he is but nonetheless enjoy visiting with him.

COMMUNITY – If there is an organization or club in Cookeville, Louis Johnson has probably been a member, held an office or been president of it. He is a charter member and was the first president of the Cookeville Jaycees. He has served as president of the Tennessee Municipal League, Cookeville Lions Club and Cookeville Rotary Club (now noonday), of which he is still a member. He is a charter member of the board of directors for the Chamber of Commerce, board of trustees of Leadership Putnam, and the Upper Cumberland Genealogical Association.

In 1947, Johnson was elected commissioner of finance and taxation in Cookeville. At that time the City Commission was a three-man organization, and Daly Mahler was mayor. Johnson served as commissioner until 1953.

“The time I served was right after the war, and most cities were run down at their heels – including Cookeville, so we had to start trying to rebuild streets. The electric department was in a terrible condition, so we hired a young man named Don Mitchell to head up the department and Holla Burgess to head up the water and sewer department. We brought gas to Cookeville during my tenure, and we hired Luther Mathis to head up that department,” Johnson said.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS – Johnson said one of the accomplishments during his tenure as commissioner he is most proud of is the building of the water plant at Cookeville City Lake.



“We got some criticism later on because we didn’t build at Center Hill Lake as they did years later. Well, there’s a reason for that,” Johnson explained. “We explored Center Hill and it was going to cost us approximately \$3 million to get down there, and we didn’t have it. Our tax base was not that much at the time, we couldn’t finance it, and there were no federal grants available. By the time they finally built it down to Center Hill, they were able to get federal grants.

“Another big project we had during our six-year period was building the (city) hospital,” Johnson continued. “I ran on a platform that we were going to build a hospital because people needed a hospital. We found that whole block where the hospital is now – a complete city block – for \$30,000. We didn’t even have the \$30,000 available to us immediately, but we were afraid it would get away from us. Fortunately, Claude Darwin, who was a successful businessman, let us have the \$30,000 interest free until we could sell bonds or do whatever it took to finance the project. I guess that would be pretty unusual today.”

A few years after Johnson’s tenure on the City Commission, then Mayor-Jack Mann asked for Johnson’s guidance in drafting a city charter and new city government system. On April 29, 1961, the citizens of Cookeville voted on it charter. The charter was approved, and other than a few amendments, it is still in its original form. This charter established a five-member city council with city manager.

“The objective was to take the management out of politics. Unfortunately it still gets into politics once in a while,” Johnson said. “We set up the council so that it could lay down broad policy and not try to run the business of the government on a day-to-day basis.

“I consider that one of my major accomplishments,” Johnson stated. However, Johnson says that developing Tennessee Tech’s College of Business Administration ranks as his biggest accomplishments.

Johnson and his wife, Virginia, are members of the First United Methodist Church in Cookeville, and he has held several leadership positions over the years.

*See more history items at: <http://www.ajlmbert.com>