



James W. Johnson

James W. "Red" Johnson

Seventy-four years after the B-17 he was piloting was shot down over Germany, James W. "Red" Johnson peacefully passed away in Dallas at the age of 95 on April 27th. The only son of Archie "Guy" and Lue Ella Marsh Johnson, Red was born near Lancaster, Texas on June 8, 1921. He lived in Dallas most of his life and graduated from Sunset High School where he met his future wife, Janell Baker, whom he married on November 14, 1942 in Sebring, Florida.

A master storyteller, Red entertained family and friends with his many adventures. After graduation Red was hired as a runner at Linz Brothers Jewelers, where he was working when he enlisted in the U. S. Army Air Corps in January 1942. He piloted a B-17 Flying Fortress over Europe as part of the 306th Bombardment Group of the 8th Army Air Force. His plane was shot down in June 1943 and he spent the next two years as a prisoner of war in the famous Stalag Luft III camp. After the war he continued to serve in the U. S. Air Force Reserve, returning to active duty during the Korean War. In 1959, on summer duty, he was officer of the control tower at Barksdale AFB when a transport plane carrying nuclear bombs crashed on takeoff creating a "broken arrow" incident that was kept secret until 1982. Red retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1964.

After the war Red returned to Linz Brothers, where he refined his skills as a salesman and caught the attention of Rolex Watch USA. Joining Rolex as a

sales representative, he set many sales records as his Rolex territory grew to include ten states, to which he traveled first by car and later in his personal airplane. He represented Rolex at many sporting events including the Cotton Bowl, Indianapolis 500, the Calgary Winter Olympics, and the Davey O'Brien Awards. Perhaps the highlight of his career was taking possession of his office to supervise sales at Dallas' new Rolex Building in 1984.

In retirement he and Janell traveled to many senior amateur golf tournaments in his Cessna 421. They acquired a getaway townhouse in the Hill Country of Kerrville. He flew until he was 89, when diminishing eyesight finally grounded him. Red was a member of the Oak Cliff Jaycees, Dallas Athletic Club, the 24 Karat Club, Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, and Riverhill Country Club at Kerrville.

Preceded in death by his older son, Jerry, and sister, Nava Jean Hubbard, Red is survived by his son, Brian, daughter-in-law, Anita and their children, Alex and Janell Ann "Nellie"; and daughter-in-law Rox Ann and her sons, Wyatt and Neal, Neal's wife, Kathy, and Red's great grandson, Asher.

Funeral services will be held at the Dallas-Forth Worth National Cemetery at Mountain Creek Lake on Tuesday, May 9 at 1:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Alzheimer's Texas at www.txalz.org/donate, or mailing address 3520 Executive Center Drive, Austin, TX 78731.