

Fact Sheet

1. Complete name- William Herman Johnson
2. Place of birth- Hickory, North Carolina
3. Places of employment- Auto garage (high school), United States Navy, General Motors (engineer), Douglas Aircraft (engineering manager), General Electric (engineering manager), Walker Manufacturing (plant manager), Shenandoah Manufacturing (vice president and retired there)
4. Job title- Engineer
5. Current address- 109 Glendale Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802
6. Relationship to author- Granddad (mother's side)
7. Interests and hobbies- Fishing, golf, do-it-yourself projects, and rebuilding/remodeling houses
8. Favorite TV shows- *American Idol*, news, old westerns, *Bonanza*, and historical shows
9. Favorite food- Chocolate pie, likes all kinds of food, at one time liked spicy food but not much anymore
10. Favorite type of music- 60's and 70's music, despises rap, likes some country
11. Favorite song- *In the Garden*—hymn but other than that he doesn't really have a favorite song
12. Pets- Cat named "Pippin" which is solid black and his best pet was a dog named "Princess" which was a Golden Retriever
13. Favorite places to travel- Any places that are warm: Texas, Nashville, Florida, Myrtle Beach, Hawaii (Navy), Guam (Navy), Quadulan Islands (Navy), Mexico (cruise), Bahamas (cruise), Belize (cruise), Canada (cruise), and Israel (work)

If you wanted to talk with someone who has seen technology go from outhouses to outer space, whom might you ask? You could ask William Herman Johnson, because he has seen it all happen during his lifetime. Bill Johnson was born in Hickory, North Carolina on August 17, 1929. His mother was Gertrude Leona Hill Johnson and his father was Herman Edwin Johnson. He has two older sisters, Geraldine Hill Johnson Lomax and Hilda Mack Johnson Cranford. During his childhood, he lived in several places before settling in Denton, North Carolina in 1940. He grew up during the Great Depression and WWII. There are not many things that are similar in today's childhood as in the childhood of my granddad. When he was young, most of his activities took place around town. If he wanted to go to the next town, he would hitchhike. Everything that was done around town was community based. There was no television, little radio, people seldom went to movies, and there wasn't much technology either. Nowadays, there is a lot of technology and kids are further exposed of the world around them.

Even though there were a lot of things different in my granddad's childhood, there were some things that were similar to today. Things that are similar include children having goals and dreams for when they grow up. Family and school are still important to most young people. With all the

technology changes, there aren't near as many similarities as there are differences.

William Herman Johnson began elementary school in Hickory, North Carolina and then moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. He didn't like English or the first grade, but he liked math. One of his favorite teachers was his 4th grade teacher, Mrs. Gettes. He had a lot of fun in her class. He attended high school in Denton, North Carolina. He stayed out of trouble and got along with all of his teachers. He enjoyed sports, but he liked to watch them rather than play them. One reason is because he was very small. After high school he enlisted in the Navy, spending three years, eight months, and eleven days in the service. When he joined the Navy, he was 5'4'' and then came out at 5'10''. After serving in the Navy, he went to North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina and studied engineering. He graduated in 1954. He later took graduate classes in management at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

With all the jobs that he has had in the past years, he has enjoyed all of them. While in high school, he worked in an auto garage. After high school, he joined the Navy. After the Navy and college, he had many jobs. With each position he was given more and more responsibility. First, he went to work at General Motors as an engineer. Then he went to work at

Douglas Aircraft as an engineering manager. After that, he went to work at General Electric as an engineering manager also. Next, he went to work at Walker Manufacturing as a plant manager. Finally, he went to work at Shenandoah Manufacturing in Virginia as a vice president and then retired eighteen years later. After all those years, he considered himself “lucky” because he enjoyed all of his jobs.

William Herman Johnson got married just before his senior year in college in 1953 to Lorene Earley Thomas. He then moved to Indiana after college and lived there until 1957. He moved to Charlotte, North Carolina where my mom, Elizabeth Leigh Johnson, was born. Shortly after my mom was born, Lorene became ill. He moved from Charlotte to Columbia, South Carolina in 1960 and then from Columbia to Harrisonburg, Virginia in 1962. Lorene died in 1963. In 1964 he married Carolyn June Fisher. They had four children: Neil Fisher Johnson, William Marshall Johnson, James Arthur Johnson, and Carolyn Jane Marie Johnson.

There have been many major changes in his lifetime. Some of these changes were: the Model A Ford was built, toilets and electricity in all homes, telephones, space travel, television, cell phones, jet planes, modern commercial aircrafts and flights, modern cars, atom bomb, computers, carpet and other building materials, video game systems. Thirteen United States

presidents were elected and many wars were fought during his life. His favorite president is Ronald Reagan because Reagan demonstrated many things that he thought were necessary for our country. The new technology affected him by making life complicated in some ways, but it made the world more visible, and easier for travelers to go from place to place. However, this technology created a dependency and changed the way people think about one another.

Even though he is retired, his days are still full. He does many things on a typical day. First, he gets up, has breakfast, reads the paper, and then he hangs out around the house until noon. Then he goes to work helping my uncle Bill at his physical therapy practice, where he works with the computers and gives assistance in the management of the office. He describes his main duties as **General Operations For Efficient Response (GOFER)**. He also enjoys fishing, golf, fixing things around the house, meeting with family members and friends, and traveling, especially any place warm. He has re-modeled almost every house he has owned.

When asked, “If you could live your life over what is one thing you would change?” He said he has nothing in particular to change about his life. He appreciates everything that has happened to him even though there

has been some tragedy. In all, life has been good to him. Not many people can say that about their lives.

When asked, “What advice would you give to me?” he told me, “Count your blessings, make good choices, and be mindful of the things and people around you. Set good goals and persevere and don’t forget what the Lord is doing for you. Think of what influence you can have on others.”

I learned many things conducting this interview with my granddad. I learned that he went into the Navy and that he is a hardworking man that has had much success with his jobs. It is hard to imagine all of the things that have changed during his lifetime. I also learned a lot about my mom’s side of the family. This interview has affected me a lot. It let me talk in depth with one of my grandparents and has let me learn more about them and how their lives have been. William Herman Johnson is a great man.