

One Day Short

His classmates held him in high regard. His *Taps* profile stated:

He is a hard worker and we bespeak for him great success.

Richard Hughes Johnson was born the same year the first class of cadets enrolled in Clemson Agricultural College. He moved into the barracks in 1911, just twenty-two years after Thomas Clemson's will had established the college. Johnson made an impact on the nascent campus, serving as vice president of the Clemson Agricultural Society, editor of the Clemson Agricultural Journal, member of the Calhoun Literary Society, and secretary-treasurer of the Agronomy Club. He also served as president of the Union County Club and played on his class football team.



Johnson graduated from Clemson in 1915. He must have impressed more than just his classmates, for on December 11, 1917, Johnson married Harriet Catherine Frazier of Walhalla, a recent graduate of Winthrop College.

Less than a week earlier, at Camp Wheeler near Macon, Georgia, the 7th Division had been activated as the United States continued to mobilize its forces to battle the German invaders in France. In January 1918, the 7th Division, including Johnson's 56th Infantry Regiment, sailed for France aboard the SS *Leviathan*.

The 56th Infantry Regiment's first contact with the enemy came in October 1918, as it endured artillery shelling and later a chemical attack. While probing toward Prény near the Moselle River, the regiment captured positions and drove German forces out of the region. As part of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the 7th Division was ordered in early November to prepare for an assault on the Hindenberg Line, a series of fortified German defensive positions. In preparation for the attack, the division launched a reconnaissance in force.

While leading his men in an attack near Metz, on November 10, First Lieutenant Johnson was struck down by German machine gun fire. The following day, the attack was halted as news of the signing of the Armistice spread through the ranks. Johnson



had fallen one day short of victory.

Johnson's comrades recognized the same strengths of character his classmates had noted three years before. "He was ever willing, true, brave, and courageous, and had won for himself the admiration and esteem of everyone in the regiment," wrote Major P. B. Parker.

Johnson received a Certificate of Heroism signed by General John J. Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, as well as a diploma from the French government. He was survived by his widow, who went on to direct the 4-H Girls Clubs in the state and in 1945 became the first woman elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Johnson was buried at Bur Bois Rappes in the St. Mihiel American Cemetery.