

MILITARY SERVICE RECORD

-Personal Record-

Name in full: Robert Conover Johnson  
Date of birth: February 8, 1896  
Place of birth: Cooperstown, Griggs County, North Dakota, U. S. A.  
Color: White  
Birthplace of father: Norway; of mother: Norway

Nearest Relatives:

John N. Johnson, Cooperstown, North Dakota--Father  
Mrs. John N. Johnson, Cooperstown, N. Dak.--Mother

-Military Record-

Previous military service or training: None  
Occupation before entry into service: Farmer  
Employer: Father  
Residence before entry into service: Cooperstown, Griggs Co.,  
North Dakota.

Inducted into the service on May 24, 1918 at Cooperstown,  
North Dakota as a private in the Infantry section of the  
National Army. Identification number 3125875. Assigned  
originally to 25th Co., 7th Battalion, 166 Depot Brigade at  
Camp Lewis, Washington.

Trained or stationed before going to Europe:  
Camp Lewis, Washington-----May 28 to June 18.

Transferred to:

Company B., 159 Inf., 40th Division, June 21, Camp Kearney,  
California.  
Co. F., 308 Inf., 77th Division, Sept. 24, Argonne Forest.

-Discharge-

Discharged from service at Camp Dodge, Iowa, May 18, 1919,  
as a Private.

-Overseas Record-

Embarked from New York on Theresias (English), August 7, 1918,  
and arrived at Liverpool, England, August 20th.

Trained or stationed abroad:

France--Nerondes, France; From August 28 to September 21.

First went into action September 25, 1918 at Argonne Forest.  
Participated in the following battles: Meuse-Argonne, Offensive.

-Casualties-

Taken prisoner at Argonne Forest, Sept. 29, 1918. Prisoner  
No. 81638, Camp Ukrainerlager, Rastatt, Germany.

Arrived at New York, April 28, 1919.

Resumed former activities in civil life under much the same  
conditions as before?--Yes. Home address: R.#1, Box 31, Coopers-  
town, Griggs, N. Dak.



Letters Written by Robert C. Johnson

(Letter)

To Otto M. Johnson:

Camp Lewis, Wash. June 17, 1918

Dear Bro:-

Received your letter a few days ago, thanks for same. Saw in your letter that you have been all alone. Did you have to do your own cooking, too? Gee, I wouldn't like to be in your place now when all young people are leaving.

Down here the time goes so fast that I can hardly keep track of the days in the week. Every morning after mess the whole company gets together and sings all kinds of songs. Some pretty tuff ones about the Kaiser too once in a while. They got a piano in one of the barracks so in the evening there is some pretty ruff and tumble dancing going on. You can just about imagine how it is when a big bunch of crazy fellows begin to dance and sing. Well, so far I can say that I like it pretty good, altho the drilling is pretty hard because they try and push them thru as fast as they can. To-morrow at 1:20 P. M., the 25 Co. is going to leave for Camp Kearney, California, about 14 miles from San Diego. So we'll soon be down in the sunny south. We got everything packed up and ready to leave. Well, old top, how would you like to be along with us on these long trips; it sure is fun.

Well, I suppose I better finish my letter now. They made up a vaudeville show for us, that is the bunch that is leaving tomorrow. They had it fixed up outside between the barracks. Believe me it was a good one too. Mentz came over to see us again last night. He said he was going to leave this week sometime, too, but he didn't know where he was going. Well, I can say that we are feeling fine and jake to go any place, even to Berlin after the Kaiser.

I'll write you as soon as I get my new address again. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it would be in France.

Greetings from all. Your Bro.,  
Robt.

(Card) To O. M. Johnson:

Somewhere in Cal., June 28, 1918

Berlin or bust this time. Just stopped in San Barnardino and got off for exercise. Was treated grape juice by the Red Cross. Gee, it tasted fine. It sure is a fine country around here. Left camp at 10 P. M. this morning. We are all together and feeling fine. Write the same address when you write. We'll get it.

Robt.



Letters Written by Robert C. Johnson (Cont.)

(Card) to Mrs. John N. Johnson:

Somewhere in Ill., Aug. 1, 1918

We are now in Illinois. Went thru Kansas City last evening. They raise a lot of crab-apples down here. And every time we stop you ought to see the women go after them trees and pass the apples along the cars. Am almost seasick from crab-apples. Will be in Springfield soon. Everything O. K.

Robt.

(Card) To Otto M. Johnson:

August 1, 1918

Oh, Man, we are now in Springfield, Illinois! We went off the train and marched up to the capitol and back.

R. J.

(Card) to Otto M. Johnson,

New York, N. Y., Aug. 5, 1918

Well, we are now at the Atlantic Ocean. It took just eight days to go from coast to coast. Some traveling we are doing, eh? Have seen some of the big skyscrapers of New York. We have to turn in all our clothes here and get different ones. I just turned in my hat now. I got your letter today from Camp Kearney. We had a big rain shower last night and some fellows pretty near drowned. Their tents were full of water so they had to swim out.

Robt.

(Card) To Mrs. John N. Johnson:

The ship on which I sailed has arrived safely overseas.

Pvt. R. C. Johnson, Co. B. 159 Inf.

(Letter) written on Y. M.C. A. stationary.  
To Mrs. N. Johnson:

"Somewhere" in France  
September 5, 1918

Dear Mother:

Well, it is raining today so we can't do squads right and left, so I'll do some writing.

Everything is O.K. and feeling fine. We are now stationed



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Letters Written by Robert C. Johnson (Cont.)

in a town in France, we sleep in a big building on the Main street so we haven't far to town. And we drill every place we can find a space big enough to do squads right and left. Well, it sure was some trip from Camp Kearney to here, but still I didn't mind it. And when we came to land here we had a (two days' ride in box cars) which was the first (hobo ride) I ever had so I just enjoyed that too. You see we are getting so tuff that we can stand almost anything. They are threshing around here now. They sure have some funny threshing outfits too. I s'pose you know about how it is in England, it is about the same here. We (went across the whole country) in (England). It is kind of difficult to write letters now as what I want to write about, we are not allowed to write about, so I don't know what to write. But one sure thing is that the Huns run so fast that they lose their shoes and all. I might take a crack at them most any day now.

Last Sunday we (the Cooperstown bunch) went out in the country and picked blackberries. There is all kinds of them here. I picked about a half a gallon and then we got sugar from the cook to put on them, so they sure tasted fine. I ate till I pretty near busted. Think I'll go out and pick some next Sunday too.

Did Albert get the Kodak picture I sent home from N. Y.? Bex got seven letters the tother day. It sure kept him busy for some time. Everybody is going down to dinner so I s'pose I better go too. So this will have to be all for this time. With best greetings from us all to yourself and all.

Your Son,  
Röbt.

Parts in paranthesis were delated by the censor but just readable from indentations in the paper.

(Card) To John N. Johnson

I am now a prisoner in Germany.

Name, Johnson  
Christian name, Robert C.  
Rank, Private  
Regiment, 308

Sound

Date Oct. 2, 1918

Do not reply to Limburg, await further information.  
Nickname for neighborhood, friend Elmer O. Anderson.

Card received Jan. 21, 1919, by Mrs. John N. Johnson:

Reply to-- Name - Robert C. Johnson. Prisoner No. 81638  
Camp Ukrainerlager Rastatt (Germany)

Dear Mother:

I was taken prisoner Sept. 29, so I'm now in Germany.



Letters Written by Robert C. Johnson (Cont.)

Am still healthy and feeling fine. Was issued new set of winter clothing and lots of stuff to eat by the Red Cross, so am in good condition. Sleep in warm Barracks. (Ans. Soon)

(Letter) To Mrs. John N. Johnson:

Rastatt, Oct. 27, 1918

Dear Mother:

Well, I can say I'm still O.K. and feeling same as ever. I can write just two of these letters and 4 cards a month, so I can't write to you all, so you'll have to let the rest of them read this. Well, I'm now a prisoner of war, what do you think of that, pretty good, eh? You don't have to worry about me because I got all the clothes I need, and I get a big box of canned stuff to eat every week from the Red Cross, besides what I get from the Germans. So we get plenty of eats. Believe me, the Red Cross is doing some good work over here. Well, I s'pose you would like to know how I was taken prisoner. I was taken prisoner the 4th day after I went over the top. I saw Arthur and Bex the night before they got me and they were all right then. It was pretty hot all right, up there, ha, ha. Will tell you more about it when I come home. It is just like an American camp here. They even have a band, they got the instruments from the Red Cross. Well, Platus, you'll have to write me a fat letter now, because I haven't had any for a long time. The weather is awful damp here, the leaves are falling off the trees too, so I expect we'll have a snowstorm pretty soon if there is anything like snow here. Well, you'll have to greet everybody for me and tell them I'm still jake and expect to be home in the near future.

Your son,

Robert

Prisoner No. 81638

Camp Ukrainerlager,  
Rastatt, Germany.

Vichy, France, Dec. 13, 1918

Dear Mother:

I am now back in France again. We came thru Switzerland, so I saw the big Alps Mountains. Believe me, I was glad to get out of Germany so I could get something else to eat than soup. I'm still feeling fine, haven't been sick a single day yet. We are now staying in a big hotel. We're going to stay here a few days and then we're coming back to the States again. Wish I could get back for Christmas, but I don't think I can make it. S'pose Elmer will be back for Xmas. I don't know how it is with Bex and Arthur, whether they are dead or alive. We went over the top in the same squad and they were all right when the gerrys captured me. Well, there is no use to write any more because I might be home just as soon as the letter. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Your son, Robert.



January 2, 1919

Dear Mother:

Well, I am still in the same town. Am feeling just the same as ever. Haven't been sick a day since I came in the army. The other day I was down town and ran across Bex. Here we have been in the same town for over two weeks before we meet each other. I also had a letter from Arthur, and that package you sent from home. Gee, that gum and candy tasted fine. If I go down town with a piece of gum in my mouth, in half an hour I'll have every kid in town after me begging for some. I don't think they have anything like gum here in France.

I think if they sent me back to N. Dak. now, I'd freeze to death because it is almost like summer here yet and rains nearly every day. But if they turned me loose, I believe I'd go clear up to the north pole if my home was there. They said this morning that we are going home as soon as they can get transportation, so I ought to be back by spring anyhow. I have just one sheet of paper on hand, so this will have to be all for this time. Better late than never, so I wish you all a Happy New Year.

Your son,

Robt.

To Otto M. Johnson,

January 26, 1919

Dear Bro:

I have not received your letter yet, but thanks for same. I tank you har did your best saa jeg skal not kick. I tank I har been out of luck getting letters since I com her til dis bloody country. Two is all I have gotten but I skal write vonce in a while just the same so you can still know I been living alive.

Well, we are still doing squads east and west and go out in skirmishes and capture all the hills and towns we can find around here, so we are kept busy every day. They had pay day here today, but I was out of luck because they didn't have my service records. I've got five months coming now so I'll have bacho francs when I do get paid.

We haven't had any rain here now for some time, so I think the rainy season is over, but the ground is frozen up so I think we'll have snow. Maybe the worst part of the winter is yet to come.

I don't know whether we will be home for spring or not, it looks pretty slim to me. And then there is three of you there so they won't have any use for us anyhow. No, news are pretty slim nowadays, so I better pack up my troubles in the old kit bag and say finish.



Letters Written by Robert C. Johnson (Cont.)

Saa faar di ture saa maate da, og leve i haabet som musen  
i skaabet.

Your Brother,

Robert.

Circumstances of Robert C. Johnson's capture by the Ger-  
mans, told to his father, John N. Johnson.  
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On Sept. 29, 1918, the fourth day after he went over the  
top in the Argonne Forest, he was detailed to help the litter  
carrier of the first aid station. It being dark when this was  
accomplished they remained there all night. The next morning  
when returning to their company, they were fired upon by Germans  
left behind our lines. They sought protection in an abandoned  
machine gun nest. They had but one gun between them as the  
litter carrier went unarmed. After some time the litter carrier  
sized Robert's gun, rushed out and was killed. The Germans  
then closed in on the nest, and Robert surrendered, having no  
means of defense.

He was then taken back of the German Lines and used there  
for about three weeks helping move war materials in the German  
retreat. He was then taken to Prison Camp Ukrzinerlager,  
Rastatt, Germany and given Prisoner Number 81638. At this  
camp were 1700 American prisoners. Of these one was a negro  
who was given special privileges.

Squads of prisoners were sent out to work on the neighboring  
farms. Cows were used for plowing on the farms. Men were  
used for hauling from the railroad.

Robert was employed mostly in a factory making apple jam.  
This was a desirable job because of getting extra sugar and  
fruit while at work. Soup was the chief food given the prisoners.  
In this one day he found a horse's tooth. The prisoners would  
have suffered but for extra food and clothing furnished by the  
Red Cross.