

Wilbur R. Johnson

Wilbur R. Johnson was born June 4, 1924, in Coatsville, MO. He joined the U.S. Army in December 1939 and served in Australia, New Guinea, Philippines and Japan, with the First Amphibious Brigade. He was honorably discharged in October 1945.

He was a police officer in Ottumwa for nine years where he became interested in the investigation of arson cases. He started working for the Iowa Department of Public Safety in 1960 and moved to the fire marshal's office in 1964, from which he retired on May 31, 1989, as America's most senior fire marshal.

Wilbur's dedicated service to public safety is still evident today in modernized nursing homes and county care facilities, fire safety programs and education, building and fire safety codes and enforcement, among others. He served on a number of national committees including the National Fire Protection Association and the International Association of Arson Investigators of which he was president from 1974-75. He was also a member of VFW Post 00775 and the American Legion Post #0682. Wilbur enjoyed hunting and fishing and time with his friends and family, especially his grandchildren.

Wilbur died on April 4, 2004 at the age of 79, after battling kidney disease and heart problems for seven years.

He is survived by his wife, Shirley (DeMoss); four children, Charles Johnson, Cheryl Hashem, Jody Kolstad, and Todd Johnson; eight grandchildren, Doug, Elizabeth, Reid and Gage Johnson, Amineh and Jamila Hashem, and Jody and Tracy Kolstad; one great-granddaughter, Emily Johnson; sister, Doris Phillips; and brother Jesse Vaughn. He was preceded in death by his parents, Edgar Johnson and Grace Cortum; sisters, Dorothy Orman and Maxine Boltz; and his first wife, Betty Fuller.