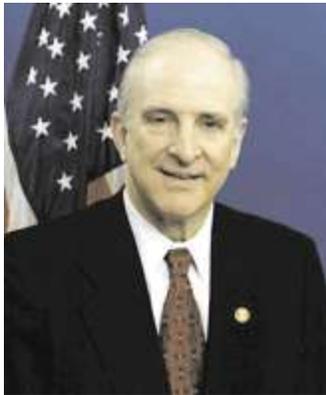


JOHNSON, Samuel Robert



Sam Johnson A True American Hero

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint says Isaiah 40:31. Sam Johnson's favorite Bible verse epitomizes him as a man of God and a devoted patriot who exemplified service before self. U.S. Congressman Sam Johnson, 89, a longtime resident of Plano, went home to his Lord on May 27, 2020. Sam is survived by two adult children, daughters Gini and Beverly, as well as 10 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. He was predeceased by his faithful wife, Shirley Melton Johnson, in 2015, and his only son, Dr. Bob Johnson, in 2013.

Samuel Robert "Sam" Johnson will be remembered as a loving family man, an accomplished fighter pilot, decorated combat veteran, a former Prisoner of War, a humble conservative legislator, distinguished Christian statesman, and consummate public servant.

Born on October 11, 1930, in San Antonio, Texas, Sam graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Dallas. While attending Southern Methodist University (SMU), he married his high school sweetheart, the former Shirley Melton.

After earning a degree in Business Administration from SMU in 1950, military leaders called his entire ROTC class up for service.

Despite never stepping foot inside of an airplane, much less flying one, Sam applied for flight school and was accepted. Sam quickly left for Korea where he would fly 62 combat missions in his F-86 Sabre christened "Shirley's Texas Tornado".

A stickler for accuracy it was right up Sam's alley to fly with the Air Force's precision flying team, the Thunderbirds, in his F-100 Super Sabre all across North and South America. He flew the positions of Slot Man and Solo. Sam relished retelling stories about how his supersonic Thunderbirds flew before the creation of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) so they could do all sorts of tricks now prohibited, like drop sonic

booms. (Not coincidentally, this practice stopped immediately after Sam's cadre blasted out all of the waterfront windows in a South Carolina coastal town thanks to the sonic boom shock waves.) After enjoying much success as a fighter pilot, military leaders appointed Sam to run the Fighter Weapons School at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada (the U.S.

Air Force's version of Top Gun.) Always curious about ways to improve strategy in the cockpit and American air dominance, Sam invented three-dimensional flight with aviation legend John Boyd; the Air Force still teaches these fundamentals today.

Once America's engagement in Vietnam began to escalate, Sam volunteered to serve in the effort.

At this time, the family relocated to Plano, Texas, to live near Shirley's relatives. That one fortuitous move would prove divine in nature.

On April 16, 1966, during his second tour of duty, Sam flew his 25th and last mission in his F-4 Phantom. Shot down and imprisoned by the North Vietnamese for 2,500 days, Sam spent nearly seven years as a Prisoner of War.

Shirley did not know if Sam was dead or alive for two years.

Sam chronicles his POW experience of torture, broken back, dislocated shoulder and 3 1/2 years in solitary confinement in his autobiography, *Captive Warriors*. The book details Sam's story as one of the eleven self-named "Alcatraz Gang." Ever the optimist, Sam prayed nonstop and communicated with fellow POWs by tapping on the walls in a secret code. Together this so-called Band of Brothers vowed WHEN, not if, they returned home, they would quit griping about the government and do something about it. Even decades later, Sam frequently choked up as he recounted how each night the Alcatraz Gang would close each day by tapping the letters "GBU" for God bless you. He recently attended a private reunion with the remaining three other members of the so-called Gang. It was a blessed time for all.

Sam returned home as part of the initial round of Operation Homecoming in February 1973.

The ultimate military man and servant leader, Sam asked for a banana split and his next mission.

He returned home to Texas to a hero's welcome and countless homecoming parades across America.

Continuing in his Air Force career, he earned his Master's Degree in International Affairs from George Washington University, graduated from the National War College, served as Wing Commander of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing at Homestead AFB, Florida flying F-4s, and finally served as Air Division Commander at Holloman AFB, New Mexico flying F-15s, where he retired a Colonel.

During his 29-year Air Force career, for his service and bravery to this country, the military awarded Sam two Silver Stars, two Legions of Merit, the Distinguished Flying

Cross, one Bronze Star with Valor, two Purple Hearts, four Air Medals, and three Outstanding Unit Awards.

Despite Sam's steadfast courage and impressive accolades, Sam did not like to be called a hero. On the contrary, he often liked to "salute" people of all walks of life who inspired him. He would say "you are the hero."

After retiring from the Air Force, the Johnsons returned to Plano where they started a home building business. Soon after, Sam won an election for the Texas State House and a seat on the vaunted Ways and Means Committee. Unable to get Sam to vote for a tax hike, Austin party elders threatened and did kick the rookie legislator off the plum committee. Unwilling to bend or break on principle -after all it was only a vote and definitely not torture -Sam easily voted no. However, Party leaders returned him to the committee the following session.

In 1991, Sam won a special election to Congress. During Sam's sweeping career as a U.S. Representative, Sam did not care who got the credit as long as it got done and it was the best for America.

Appointed to the prestigious tax writing Ways and Means Committee, Sam leveraged his clout to advance his smaller government, fiscal conservative, faith-and-family values agenda. An ardent conservative, Johnson helped create the Republican Study Committee, originally known as the Conservative Action Team (CATS). Always the servant leader, Sam served as an Assistant Whip and then Deputy Whip to the Majority Whips to "grow-the-vote" for Republican initiatives in the House.

During Sam's congressional tenure, he went to great lengths to improve daily life for those in North Texas. As a long-time military man, Sam worked tirelessly for local veterans laboring behind the scenes to secure two veterans health clinics in Plano. Countless veterans have expressed their gratitude for his efforts on their behalf.

In addition to receiving too many awards and recognitions to count, Sam also assisted many noteworthy boards and service committees. The Congressional Medal of Honor Society bestowed Sam the National Patriot Award, their highest civilian accolade. Sam served as a Regent for the Smithsonian Institution, where he was a voice for honest and true exhibitions.

He was greatly admired by his colleagues in the U.S. Congress as they showed their admiration by voting him the Most Admired Member of Congress.

Sam enjoyed the simple things in life -like a good church service, time with family and friends, a mountain escape to Angel Fire, a big steak dinner with red wine, or a platter of El Fenix enchiladas -or anything with chocolate. He simply stated, "When you spend a good portion of your life held against your will, you don't really sweat the small stuff."

A distinguished Christian statesman most known for his trustworthiness, humility, humor, and selflessness, Sam personified integrity.

He expected much and he let you know when you didn't meet his expectations but then forgave, forgot, and moved forward. These qualities, learned in the crucible of a tiny,

dark cell during his time as a POW, proved useful as he forged his career as a faithful public servant.

Sam turned the evil efforts of men into good and others were blessed. God will commend His good and faithful servant.

Sam absolutely loved people and lived life to the fullest, even during his final days. In his last few days he had dinner with friends, played dominoes, and celebrated Memorial Day with Veteran neighbors and friends. He will be deeply missed.

Sam and Shirley shared a love story for the ages. While Sam earned burial rights at Arlington National Cemetery for his high-

Cemetery high-ranking military status, he will be buried next to his wife, Shirley, at Restland Memorial Park Cemetery in Dallas. For decades, Sam and Shirley attended First United Methodist Church Plano and Stonebriar Community Church.

Sam was preceded in death by his beloved wife Shirley Lee Melton Johnson and his only son, Dr. James Robert "Bob" Johnson. Survivors include his daughters Gini Johnson Mulligan (husband Jim) and Beverly Johnson Briney (husband Scott), and daughter-in-law Anita Miller. Together, the adult children blessed the Johnsons with 10 grandchildren: Beth Johnson, Bobby Johnson, Karen Mulligan, John Mulligan (wife Michelle), Robyn Mulligan Maggio (husband Dave), Shannon Mulligan (husband John Reisig), Susan Mulligan, Jason Mulligan, Sarah Briney and Sam Briney; and five great grandchildren: Trinity, Kenzie, Dominic, Jordan and Rose Johnson.

He is also survived by nieces and nephews Pam McCracken, Wilson Melton, Roberta Tidwell, and Lance Melton.

His family sends out special thanks to all his former staffers who maintained friendships with each other but more importantly with him. He was always delighted to receive or make a phone call to someone who had worked for him. He loved life and we will miss his big belly laugh! He especially enjoyed two recent video happy hours with them.

Visitation will be held at The Memorial Chapel in Restland Funeral Home, Dallas, TX on Sunday June 7, 2020 from 2pm-4pm.

Limitations may apply due to COVID-19.

A Private Graveside service with military honors will take place at Restland Memorial Park Cemetery in Dallas, TX.

A Public Memorial service is to be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The Hon. Sam Johnson Endowed Military Scholarship Fund at Southern Methodist University or The Sam Johnson Endowed Scholarship Fund at Dallas Baptist University.

