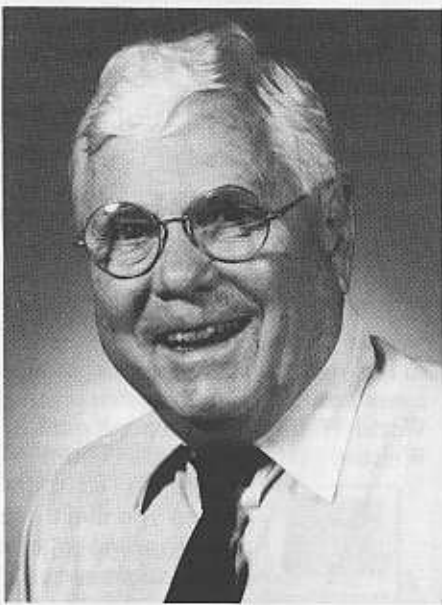




VALLEY OF THE GIANTS



J. Richardson Johnson

Professor Rich Johnson pushed the limits of education—worldwide—for 35 years. A plaque under a Wright Brothers Maple at the Wright Bicycle Shop concludes with the thought: “The Air Force’s Engineers owe him a great deal.”

He was born in Wellsville, Ohio, where the Ohio River leaves Pennsylvania and first separates Ohio from the panhandle of West

Virginia. After a normal depression-era childhood, “Where everybody was poor, but nobody knew it,” he graduated from Miami University with a degree in Geology. He was a weatherman in the Navy with a first-hand knowledge of hurricanes and typhoons.

In 1946, he joined the Farm Bureau Insurance companies in Columbus, Ohio. After a number of supervisory and technical jobs, he volunteered to become a “Personal Trainer” in the group of companies that became Nationwide Insurance.

“The day I started teaching, I stopped working. Teaching was never work, it was as natural as breathing. Learning to teach, preparing my topics—and experiencing the responsibilities of the classroom were delights. Once I picked up the chalk, life changed from black and white to color; from penny whistle to the Ohio State Marching Band.”

At Nationwide, he helped build one of the early “Management Development” programs. He traveled to educate management teams “on-site,” oversaw preparation of correspondence courses and began appearing on major Management Development programs.

The Ohio State University pressed Johnson to give up his life among tall buildings and work with them. In 1957, he came to Dayton to act as a contractor for Ohio State and lead the teaching of the U.S. Air Force Advanced Logistics Program.

Patriotism was high. The cream of faculty people across the country lined up to teach in this one-year, one-of-a-kind program. Later, the program became the Logistics School of the Air Force Institute of Technology.

In 1966, he left Ohio State and became a full-time professor in a

small but innovative school in A.F.I.T., the Civil Engineering School. This school was technically brilliant and had a worldwide “student body.” The challenge here was to raise the quality of the teaching to equal the knowledge and experience of the Civil, Mechanical, Electrical and Industrial Engineers on the faculty. The second challenge was to teach complex subjects worldwide without excessive student travel to Dayton.

A full-fledged school was run in Dayton while traveling teams and various forms of “Distance Education” using telephones and television met needs in all 50 states, the Pacific Rim and Europe.

Hands-on experience was a key to successful worldwide schooling. Johnson stressed knowing what teaching really means: “Lectures fill notebooks, dialogue fills minds and real-world experience under a good mentor fills hearts. Notebooks are nice; minds and hearts are *essential*.”

Johnson retired in a shower of Air Force affection in 1992. He had taught over 20,000 hours.

In the last years of his career, he held the rank of DU-7, the professorial equivalent of Major General. He is a Fellow in the Society of American Military Engineers. On retirement, he was designated Emeritus Professor of Management Sciences.

He is a member of the Engineers Club Barn Gang and serves on the Board of Governors. The Johnson’s have four children, seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter.

Johnson’s contributions to education, industry, government and the local community assure him a place in the “Valley of the Giants.”