

Harold A. Johnson (19.. – 1944)

Harold Johnson listed his home of record as California.

Harold Johnson was in the United States Army Air Corps (USAAF) in World War Two and was listed as a Sergeant (SGT) when he died. His service number was 37556817. He was assigned to the 779th Bomber Squadron of the 464th Bomber Group, Heavy 15th Air Force, in the European Theater of World War Two. This squadron flew the B-24 "Liberator" aircraft.

Reference to that date follows (Reference: USAAF Chronology for October, 1944). Note: It is known that the 779th Bomber Squadron was over Vienna, Austria that day.

TUESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):

330+ heavy bombers attack the oil refinery at Blechhammer S, Germany and the industrial area of Vienna, Austria, plus alternate targets and targets of opportunity including marshalling yards at Banhida, Nagykanizsa and Szombathely, Hungary; Strass and Graz, Austria; and Maribor, Yugoslavia, a railroad bridge at Maribor, a rail line at Furstenfeld, Austria, and targets of opportunity scattered throughout the Balkans. P-51s escort a C-47 picking up personnel at Valjevo Airfield, Yugoslavia, a B-17 carrying a photo crew to Rumania (to photograph Ploesti), and several C-47s transporting personnel to Araxos Airfield, Greece.

He was killed in action (KIA) on 17 October 1944, and is buried at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery located at Nettuno, Italy. The location of his headstone is at Plot F, Row 10, Grave # 53. His aircraft flew from Panatella Field in Italy and was shot at near Vienna, Austria. He was the radio operator of this crew. From a source that was in the squadron "His last mission was the South Ordnance Depot at Vienna, Austria. Anything around Vienna (Wien) was a rough one. In addition to lousy weather on this mission the flak was "Heavy, Intense, and Accurate". "After five or ten minutes of the worst flak that many have ever seen, the 464th cleared the outer ring of flak batteries. They now faced the long trip back to Italy with the prospects that there would be German fighters lurking in the clouds looking for easy prey. The flight back to Pantanella was long and harrowing. Clouds still caused the group to deviate from the briefed route"

"The radio in the tower crackled to life with a call from Black H (42-50736), flown by Lt. Leistekow's crew. He was reporting that he was inbound and they were having some trouble getting the gear down because the hydraulics had been shot out. The crew had voted to stay with the plane instead of bailing out near the base."

"The grim reaper smiled and pointed his finger of death one last time that afternoon. While circling the field trying to crank the gear down, something went wrong and Black H fell from the sky, killing the entire crew."

His crewmembers were:

DATE: 10/17/1944

SQDN: 779th

LOSS TO: (UNK)

P. Leistikow, Elver R.

N. Degnan, Edward J.

EG. Pope, Lindley, C.

G. Fenley, Frank K.

G. Cellamar, Nicholas (NMI)

TARGET: Vienna

A/C#: 42-50736

CALL LTRS: Black H

CP. Parker, William W.

B. Graham, John B.

R/OP. Johnson, Harold A.

G. Swartz, Glen T.

G. Williams, Robert A.

NICKNAME: Unknown

One of our members found that this AC had crashed at Pantanella.

He was awarded the Air Medal and the Purple Heart.

