



John W. Johnson

Staff Position: Correctional Officer

Location: USP Leavenworth

Last Watch: September 29, 1974

While on evening watch on September 29, 1974, officers in B cell house observed paper money being passed amongst inmates during a card game. Those officers – including Officer John W. Johnson – approached and broke up the card game, then searched participants. No money was found, but inmate Willie “Gypsy” Adams, one of the participants, became argumentative with staff.

At approximately 9:00 p.m., while Officer Johnson was talking with another officer at the unit cutoff, inmate Adams suddenly appeared and stabbed Officer Johnson in the chest with a 14” piece of strap steel that had a tape handle. As the assault continued, Officer Johnson fell and inmate Adams chased the other officer upstairs; that officer secured himself in a pipe chase. Inmate Adams then returned to three gallery where he discovered Officer Johnson crawling towards the front of the gallery. He resumed his brutal assault on Officer Johnson, continuing for several minutes.

The Number One officer assigned to that cell house was working two gallery and came to Officer Johnson’s aid. That officer’s attempt to stop the continuing assault on Officer Johnson was unsuccessful, as he too was injured in the rescue attempt. However, he managed to call for assistance.

Upon seeing responding staff, inmate Adams grabbed Officer Johnson and slit his throat. Officers fought to regain control over inmate Adams as the cell house chanted “kill ‘em all!” In total, Officer Johnson was stabbed 117 times – **117!**

Of the several Lieutenants who responded to emergency calls from the cell house, one dragged Officer Johnson, who was then unconscious, to the end of the tier and sought medical treatment for him. Despite having been stabbed in the chest, the Number One officer managed to walk to the institution hospital for medical assistance; he survived.

Adams directly confronted a second Lieutenant, who approached him after leaving the scene of the original assault on Officer Johnson, but the inmate turned over the homemade murder weapon that was still in his hand and surrendered.

Inmate Adams was convicted of killing Officer Johnson. Six months later, he committed suicide while in custody at USP Marion.

A combat veteran and recipient of the Purple Heart for his service during the Vietnam War, Officer Johnson began his career with the Bureau in January 1974 and was killed during his first year of service.