

Friday Nite Auto Crash

★ ★ Thomas F. Johnson, Father Of Three, Killed West Of Grinnell

A fast moving car colliding with a concrete bridge abutment seven miles west of Grinnell Friday night snuffed out the life of 23 year old Thomas F. Johnson of Grinnell, the father of three young children.

Passenger

Johnson's uncle, Paul O'Hara, also of Grinnell and a passenger in the death car, was seriously injured and is hospitalized here in Grinnell where his condition is regarded as critical.

The crash occurred at approximately 11:20 Friday on Highway 56 on a bridge just west of

the Rock Creek Lake turn-off when the two men were returning to Grinnell from Newton where they had spent the earlier part of the evening.

Lost Control

Exact details of the crash are not known although it is believed that Johnson lost control of the car as he attempted to round a slight curve at the bottom of a long hill. The car was apparently traveling at a high rate of speed when it struck the concrete bridge abutment, slammed across the road and down a steep embankment before finally coming to rest in a ditch approximately 350 feet away from the original point of impact.

Johnson died almost instantly and his body was so tangled in the debris of the wrecked automobile that portions of the car had to be cut away before the body could be removed.

Noticed Wreckage

Guy Slaven of Grinnell passed the scene of the crash shortly after it happened and noticed the wreckage. After hurriedly examining the car, Slaven notified authorities who came immediately.

The Jasper county coroner examined Johnson and pronounced him dead. A later examination indicated crushing chest injuries and a basal skull fracture as the causes of death. Meanwhile, O'Hara was rushed to a Grinnell hospital for treatment.

Three Children

Johnson was married to Lela Van Meter of Grinnell on February 11th, 1956 and they were the parents of three children; two daughters, Sherry and Susan, and a son, Paul.

Surviving besides his wife and children are his parents, George and Wilma Johnson, two sisters, Patricia Ann and Kathryn, and a brother, Russell.

Air Force Veteran

Johnson had lived in Grinnell all of his life with the exception of three and one-half years spent in the United States Air Force. While in service, he served in England.

Following his discharge in 1954, he had been employed at the Maytag Company in Newton. He was a member of the Methodist church and the American Legion.

Funeral Services

Funeral services were held this afternoon from Smith's Funeral Home with the Rev. John DeLong, minister of the Methodist church, officiating. Music at the services was provided by Mr. and Mrs. Ed Bohstedt.

Pallbearers were Lester Hill, Bernard Kriegel, Jack McGinnis, Eugene Roop, Leonard Vanderveer and Carmen Wilson.

Graveside Rites

Graveside services were conducted by the Foch-Tonnant post of the American Legion with Charles Ziegenmeyer serving as commander of the ceremonial unit. Jack Day was in charge of the ritual.

Interment was at Hazelwood cemetery.