



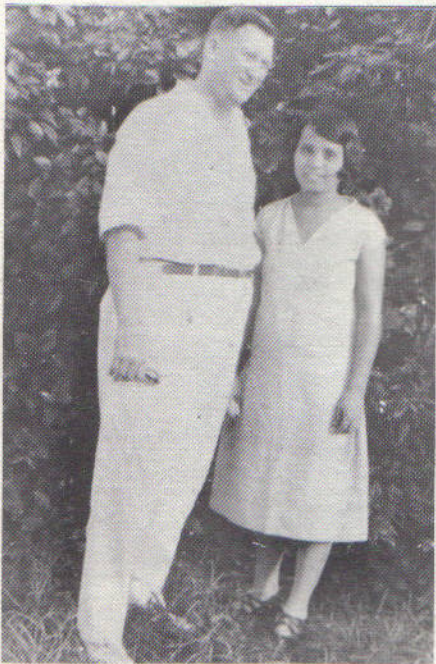
WILLIAM G. JOHNSTON, 1880-1943

An adventuresome Tennessean, he joined the marines and came to Guam. He married his student and established a relationship that was to last until his death. He started the entertainment industry on Guam with a theater that showed silent films. He became a teacher, writer, and finally an administrative assistant for the navy, until the Japanese came in 1941. Removed from his beloved Guam to Japan, his health failed. In the end he was to die far from the places he knew as a boy and later as a man. His name is still a household word on Guam and his wife, Agueda, was to become Guam's leading lady. His name is William Gautier Johnston of Franklin, Tennessee and this is his biography.

William G. Johnston

1880 - 1943

A BIBLIOGRAPHY



W.G. Johnston and his wife, the former Agueda Iglesias.

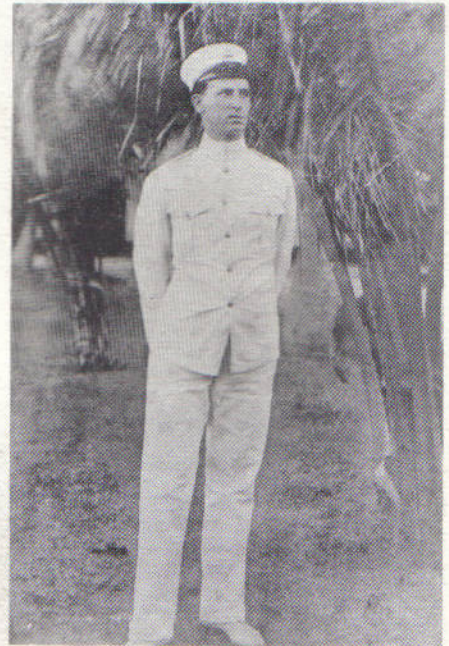
William Gautier Johnston was born in Athens, Alabama on January 30, 1880, the son of J.W. and Salita Judson Johnston. The family moved to Franklin, Tennessee while "Gautier" was still an infant. William excelled at his studies and was graduated from Wall and Mooney. After graduation, he attended George Peabody College in Nashville. An adventuresome young man, he decided to see the world, so he joined the marines and was immediately sent to Guam. A few days after his arrival in Guam, the governor learned that Johnston had attended college. As a result, he was relieved of all duties as a marine and was assigned to teach

By **Rene C. Mahone**

school during the daytime; in the evenings he administered a high school for government employees and for some of the island's young teachers. In order to uphold the dignity of the teaching profession, Johnston always wore his white uniform while the rest of the marines wore khaki. For this, he was dubbed by his fellow marines the "Aristocratic Marine." His students, meanwhile, called him the "Walking Encyclopedia."

It was in one of his English classes that he was to meet his future wife, Agueda Iglesias, a Guamanian who was interested in the teaching profession. It happened that she needed help with her schoolwork and William readily "volunteered" his services. He paid visits to her home, helping her with her school work. This soon ended, however, as he quickly lost his heart to her and, at the age of sixteen, she became his wife. Death separated them thirty-two years later.

In 1910 he left the marines and became a civil service employee working for the Navy, under the Bureau of Yards and Docks. He was to work for the Navy until the Japanese occupied Guam in 1941. During that long period he also achieved recognition outside the military establishment. In 1915 he opened a movie house which showed silent films. In later years,



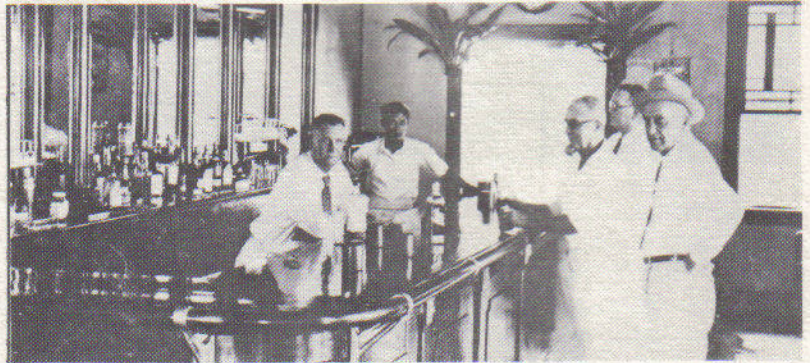
Johnston in uniform. Picture was taken before 1911.

needing someone to play the piano, he employed his son, Herbert, who added the only sound in the otherwise silent theater. The films he brought to the island were popular. As a result he became a business success. Having experienced success in the business world, he then engaged in soap manufacturing. Johnston would buy copra by the pound from the farmers. Copra, which is the dried meat of the cocoanut, was run through a machine in the Johnston factory. The oil derived from this process was made into soap. The "waste" product was sold to farmers so that they could feed it to their pigs.



The Johnston's pre-World War II Gaiety Theatre in Agana.

It cannot be said that Johnston was the first to establish a soap factory in Guam. In fact, he bought his factory from a Spaniard named Vives. The factory at that time was called the Vives Coconut Oil and Soap Factory. As the years passed, the factory lost its usefulness. Consequently, neither a factory nor the soap-making process exist in Guam today.



Mr. Johnston behind the bar of the old Elk's Club in Agana.



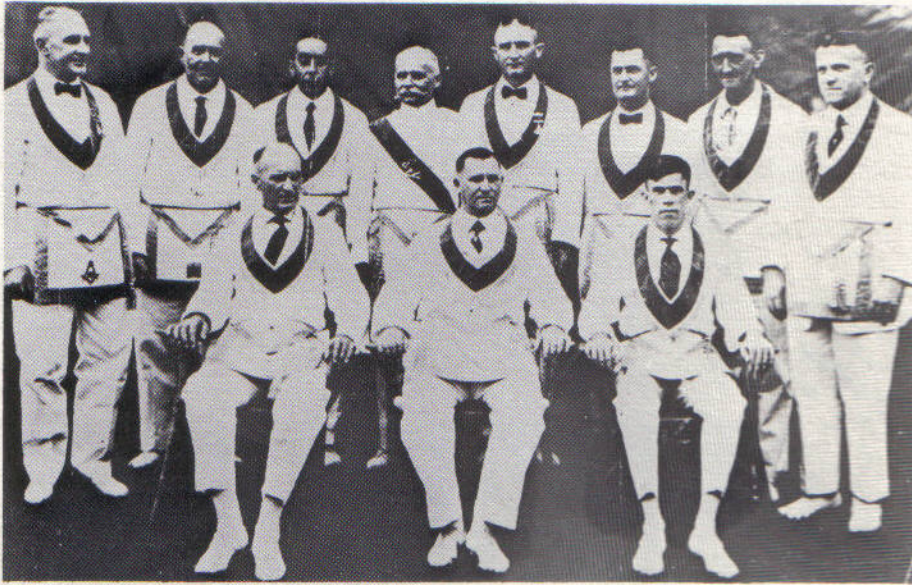
An early picture of the Johnston family. From left to right: Margaret, Joseph, Tom, baby Eloise, Herbert, Cynthia, Mr. Johnston, Mrs. Johnston, Joe Torres (Cynthia's husband), Marian.

Before the Japanese came in 1941, Johnston lived a rather tranquil life. He became a charter member and an exalted ruler of the Elks Club. He became the first Elk on the island, as far as is known, to be appointed District Deputy by the Grand Exalted Ruler of Elks. In addition he was a member and Past Master of the Charleston Lodge of Free and

Accepted Masons. Through the peaceful years before the Pacific War he engaged in many civic enterprises. He was a very peaceful and contented man during those years. He lived in a Spanish style house near what is today the Spanish Bridge in Agana. Through the years his family grew until, eventually, he and Agueda had seven children. He was content to

lead the peaceful life of a happily married man. With the exception of a few visits to the mainland, he remained in Guam until 1941.

By the time the Japanese came in 1941, Johnston had worked himself up to the position of Administrative Assistant for the Navy, in charge of Public Works. He had written articles, dealing with public works, for the Guam Recorder.



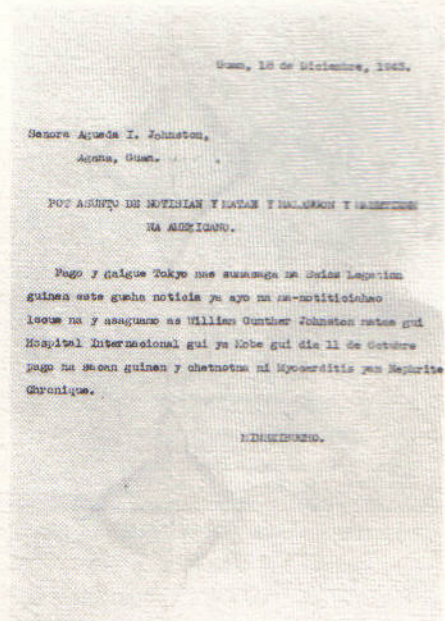
W.G. Johnston (center, front row) as Worshipful Master of Charleston Lodge 44 of Free and Accepted Masons.

On December 8, 1941, Johnston got a call from the governor stating that there was an emergency. Johnston quickly met with the governor and began destroying official documents to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. Orders were issued for the people to seek shelter. Johnston went to Machanao where he stayed in a school house. Finally, when the Japanese had the island under control, word got out that the people were to come into Agana and get passes. The family returned to their home in Agana where an old Japanese

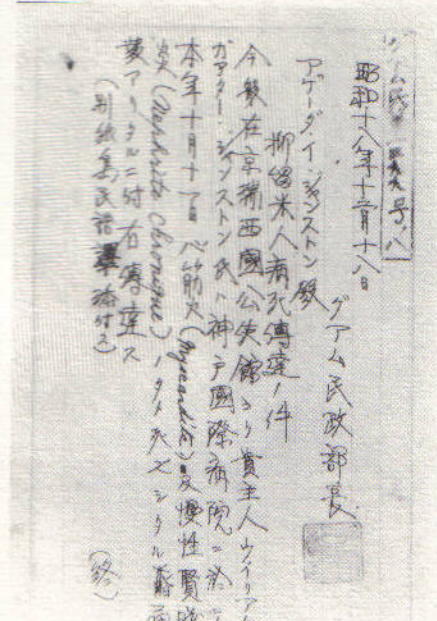
friend, Okada, who had been a projectionist in previous years, advised Johnston to give himself up. By this time the Japanese had rounded up the people and put them into a complex near the church in Agana. Native born islanders were allowed to return to their homes but non-native islanders, including Johnston, were interned. On January 10, Johnston was placed on a ship bound for Japan, never to return.

Johnston was taken to Kobe, Japan, and held in an internment camp. However, he had high hopes of being repatriated. From his cell

he could see a ship that would take away some of the prisoners who were to be repatriated. Much to his sorrow, he was left behind while diplomats were taken first. During his internment he kept a diary and once he was able to get a letter home to his mother. As his first year of internment came and went, he began to feel the effects of the cold and inadequate food. The war for Johnston seemed to drag on without end. Finally, on October 11, 1943, far removed from the places he knew as a boy and from his beloved Guam which he called home for so many years,



Letters, in Chamorro and Japanese, informing Mrs. Johnston of her husband's death.



he died. The medical reason for death was "heart ailment." In a letter, dated March 17, 1975, George J. McMillin, Rear Admiral U.S. Navy (Ret.), who was Governor of Guam at the time of the Japanese invasion, wrote, "I remember Mr. W.G. Johnston very well; he had a very responsible position in Public Works. We left Guam in the same Japanese ship, the Argentina Maru, in January 1942 for Japan. I was very sorry to learn later that he had died in a camp in Kobe." Ironically, Johnston was to have been retired from Navy employment in January, 1942, approximately a month after the Japanese occupied Guam.



EPILOG

The legacy of Johnston lives today through his wife and children. After his death Agueda was to achieve nation-wide fame as an educator. She became one of the first local educators on the island. She taught school until the war broke out and afterwards helped in getting the schools on Guam reorganized. She continued her work in education after the war with renewed dedication. Her educational career covered a

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period of forty-six years. Many of her former students became governors, legislators, successful businessmen and, otherwise, served as leaders in the community. Very recently a new school, the Agueda I. Johnston Junior High School, was dedicated and named in her honor. Thus, the legacy of Johnston will live not only in the school that bears his wife's name; it will also live in the hearts of all those who knew and loved him. Such was the man William Gautier Johnston.

Johnston (sixth from left in the second row) in the internment camp in Kobe, Japan.

