# **Classifieds**

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# Classifieds

The Beebe News Classifieds! Deadline for the week is Monday at 3 p.m. 501-882-5414 to place your ad.



#### Call Neil McConnell at (501) 374-1500 to place your ad here!

# ANNOUNCEMENTS



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CALL TODAY FOR A

# History Minute John Harold Johnson

DIRECTV

By Dr. Ken Bridges - Professor of History, South Arkansas Community College South Arkansas Historical Preservation Society kbridges@southark.edu<mailto:kbridges@southark.edu>

Failure is a word I simply accept," don't said John Harold Johnson in an interview once. He faced obstacles and controversy his entire life, but the Arkansas native rose from deep poverty to becoming one of the most successful businessmen in the world, and in the process, giving a voice to a community eager to be heard.

Johnson was born in Arkansas City in January 1918. He was the grandson of slaves, and his father worked at the local sawmill while his mother worked as a cook at a levee camp. Their hard life was made even more difficult when a sawmill accident left his father dead.

His education stalled in the early 1930s when he completed the eighth grade. Desha County did not have a high school for African-Americans, and possessing such a thirst for education, Johnson voluntarily re-took the eighth grade. In 1933, he and his mother moved to Chicago, impressed by the many opportunities available to African-Americans there. He graduated high school in 1936, becoming president of his senior class and serving as editor of both the school newspaper and the yearbook.

Johnson won a scholar-

ship to the University of Chicago and got a job with an insurance company. Through this work, he saw the need for a magazine targeting African-Americans. His mother put up her furniture to get a \$500 loan (or \$11,000 in 2024 dollars), and Johnson looked for investors and potential subscribers in the African-American business community. In 1942, he launched Negro Digest. He cleverly inflated interest by having twenty friends go to different newsstands asking for copies of the magazine, prompting vendors to begin stocking it. Johnson quickly employed the strategy in other cities, and the magazine's circulation soon reached 50,000. Though this magazine would last only a few years, it would be the beginning of a publishing empire.

In 1946, Johnson launched Ebony magazine, which would highlight trends and leaders in the African-American community. Emboldened by his success, in 1948, he formed Johnson Publishing Company; and three years after that, he launched Jet, which covered African-American artists, musicians, and entertainers. By the 1960s, his magazines had millions of subscribers across

the United States as his publications promoted emerging African-American TV stars to controversies surrounding civil rights legislation, education, culture, and employment.

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As the civil rights movement continued, he would face criticisms for a number of controversial public statements, but he would press forward regardless

By 1982, he had reached the Forbes 400, the business magazine's list of the 400 wealthiest Americans with a fortune estimated at over \$500 million (or more than \$1.6 billion in 2024 dollars). He became the first African-American to be named to the list.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Even with the honors he received and his many successes, he refused to slow down. "Every day I run scared. That's the only way I can stay ahead," he once said. Six years later, at the age of 84, Johnson retired as chairman and CEO, leaving what became the world's largest publishing company owned by an African-American, turning control over to his daughter. In 2005, he passed away at the age of 87.

Week of January 6, 2025