

Lt. Comdr. Anna Mayrell Johnson

February 21, 1910 – September 3, 1993

Murray's own Mayrell Johnson served as a Navy pilot in World War II, the first woman to receive flight orders from the United States Navy in 1943. She was a member of WAVES, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, which was the women's naval branch during WWII. She was taught to land on a football field because "every town in America had one."

While Mayrell was getting her master's degree at the University of Kentucky, she and Jane Haselden, a professor of French, jointly owned an airplane and flew together over Lexington during their lunch breaks. Johnson later became the chair of "Air Age" education in Kentucky, where she hoped to spread her love of flying to children across the state. Notably, she was a member of the Ninety-Nines, an elite female pilots' club which Amelia Earhart founded.

After graduation, Mayrell was named professor of political science and taught at the Aviation Education Institute in 1947 at Murray State. She continued her trailblazing legacy and became the first Dean of Women at Murray State, where she led the female student body on campus.

Mayrell was president of the Murray Women's Club from 1947-1948. She also served as Murray's mayor pro tempore during WWII. In 1952, she was one of four women featured on a postage stamp commemorating women in the armed service.

The Smith-Johnson History and Genealogy Room in Pogue Library at Murray State University is named in her honor.

Ashleigh Deno

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Sources:

Transylvania Library: Special Collections & Archives: Jane Haselden Papers: Home Officers,
Chairs, and Council - Murray Women's Club

Mayrell Johnson Papers from the University of Louisville

The Owensboro Messenger, Mayrell Johnson of Murray, one of four pictured on the stamp,"
October 7, 1952, page 12.

