



# HAPPY 140<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY, MARTIN JOHNSON!

## October 9, 1884 – October 9, 2024

### 140 Facts About Martin Johnson



1. Martin was born October 9, 1884.
2. He was born in Rockford, Illinois.
3. His full name is Martin Elmer Johnson.
4. Martin's father was John Alfred Johnson.
5. John Alfred Johnson was born in Jonkoping, Sweden.
6. John Alfred Johnson's family came to the US when he was just an infant.
7. Martin's mother was Lucinda Constant.
8. Lucinda Constant was born in Chillicothe, MO.
9. Martin was 12 when his family moved to Independence, KS.
10. His father John was a jeweler.
11. Crates of jewels from exotic places sparked his interest in travel.
12. Mr. Johnson also sold books and cameras.
13. Mr. Johnson had a franchise to sell Eastman-Kodak cameras and film.
14. Mr. Johnson built a darkroom for Martin to develop pictures.
15. Martin made extra money by taking photographs.
16. At age 17, he traveled to nearby towns to take photographs.
17. He traveled in a wagon pulled by Socks, his pony.
18. His photographs cost ten cents each.
19. One of his stops was in Chanute.
20. Osa Leighty was seven and brought her three-year old brother to have his photograph taken. It was the first time Martin and Osa met.
21. Between 1903 and 1906, he sailed twice to Europe.
22. One trip was on a cattle ship; another was with a load of horses.
23. On these trips, he traveled to England, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium, and Sweden.
24. With \$5.50, he took one trip from Chicago to Liverpool, London, and Brussels.
25. He sailed home to New York on a cattle ship in May, 1906, with 25 cents left.
26. In 1906, he read an article about author Jack London building a sailboat named The Snark.
27. He wrote to Jack London for a job on The Snark.
28. On November 12, 1906, London sent a telegram, "Can you cook?"
29. Johnson replied, "Sure. Try me."
30. Martin's friend Jess Utz cooked at White Front Quick Lunch Room in Independence.
31. In six weeks, Johnson learned to cook in Jess Utz's restaurant kitchen.
32. On November 23, London sent a long, detailed letter of the planned trip.
33. In December, Martin met Jack and Charmian London in Oakland, CA.
34. The Snark measured 45 feet long by 14 feet wide, with two sails, and carried a crew of six.
35. On Monday, April 2, 1907, The Snark sailed out of San Francisco, CA and in May, 1907 arrived in Hawaii.
36. Martin and two other crew members were seasick for a week.
37. Local Kansas newspapers published Martin's diary from October, 1907 to January, 1908.
38. Along the way, Martin became the trip photographer.
39. Jack London bought all the photography equipment and supplies from Martin's father back in Independence.
40. In June 1908 the Snark landed in the Solomon Islands.
41. London was sick with malaria and other ailments.
42. In November, Jack, Charmian and Martin took a ship to Australia for medical treatment for Jack.
43. Doctor's orders required Jack and Charmian to return to the US.
44. Martin went back to the Solomon Islands to help the captain of The Snark sail to Australia.
45. The Snark's voyage ended in 1909 when it was auctioned off in Australia.
46. Back in Independence, Martin and Charley Kerr opened the Snark Theater.
47. It seated 340 and Martin showed slides of his travels.
48. He also visited nearby towns to present his travelogue.
49. Osa's friend Gail Hamilton worked at the Chanute theater.
50. Gail Hamilton formally introduced Martin and Osa.
51. Martin and Osa dated for three weeks.
52. They eloped on May 15, 1910.
53. Martin was ten years older than Osa.
54. They held a second wedding in Kansas City later to satisfy Osa's father.
55. Jack London published *The Cruise of The Snark* in 1911.
56. Martin Johnson published *Through the Seas With Jack London* in 1913.
57. He and Osa presented his travelogue in the US and Europe until 1917.
58. In 1917, investors raised \$7,000 to sponsor a trip to the Solomon Islands.
59. In 1917, Martin and Osa were in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu.)
60. They sailed there in a 28-foot whale boat.
61. Martin recorded 20,000 feet of film in the New Hebrides.
62. *Among the Cannibal Isles of the South Pacific* was a silent movie made from that footage.
63. In 1919, the Johnsons returned to Vanuatu, followed immediately by a trip to British North Borneo (now Malaysia) in 1920.
64. The film from Borneo was *Jungle Adventures*.
65. They spent time in Africa in 1921-22 and from 1924-1927.
66. In 1925, they met the Duke and Duchess of York, who became King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.
67. They were in Africa again in 1927-28.
68. In 1928, three Eagle Scouts won a national competition to go with them to Africa.
69. They produced a film titled *Across the World with Mr. and Mrs. Johnson* that included the Eagle Scouts' adventures.
70. From 1929-31 they were in Africa pioneering sound and producing the movie **Congorilla**, the first sound film ever made entirely in Africa.
71. In 1932, Martin and Osa earned their pilots' licenses in Chanute.
72. They owned two amphibian planes: Spirit of Africa and Osa's Ark.
72. In 1933-34, they flew 60,000 miles from Cape Town, South Africa to Cairo Egypt.



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73. Their African Flying Safari feature film *Baboona* premiered in 1935.
74. Martin and Osa were on Wheaties cereal boxes in 1935.
75. They traveled to British North Borneo in 1935-36.
76. Martin took a steamer on one leg of the way to Borneo so Osa could make the first solo flight by a woman across the South China Sea.
77. In 1936, Martin was honored at the Adventurers' Club of New York.
78. They began a nationwide lecture tour in January of 1937.
79. On January 12, they were on a flight to Los Angeles and Burbank, CA.
80. The plane crashed in California.
81. Martin died January 13, 1937.
82. Although injured, Osa continued the tour.
83. Osa died in 1953 in New York City.
84. Martin and Osa are both buried in Chanute, KS.
85. In 1961, the Safari Museum opened in Chanute, KS.
86. It holds the artifacts, films, photographs, books and other memorabilia of Martin and Osa Johnson.
87. Martin and Osa wrote 10 books each, for a total of 20 books combined.
88. They published over 100 articles.
89. They created 10 feature films.
90. Martin and Osa's trips required thousands of dollars of supplies plus photography and film equipment.
91. One trip to Africa required 235 porters to carry all their equipment and supplies to their inland camp site.
92. In 2004, photos taken by Martin and Osa were used in the movie *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*.
93. In 2006, their photos were used in *Night at the Museum*.
94. In 2010, their photos were used in *The Lost Explorer* by Tim Walker.
95. In 2010, Martin and Osa were People category of the *8 Wonders of Kansas* by Kansas Sampler Foundation.
96. Elements of the Johnsons' lives (the plane, a travel poster, and the house on Paradise Falls) are evident in the movie *UP!*
97. They were first to observe gorillas in their natural habitat.
98. Disney Corporation used parts of Johnson films in programs.
99. Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge displays Johnson photographs.
100. Martin and Osa invented the Safari documentary.
101. They were the first pilots to fly over Mount Kenya.
102. All their trips combined totaled nine years of travel.
103. Martin said Osa was the ideal travel companion.
104. He said Osa had "pluck, endurance, and cheerfulness under discomfort."
105. American Eagle created a Martin + Osa clothing line in the early 2000s.
106. Sometimes they were called "the motion picture explorers."
107. Sometimes companies sponsored some trips in exchange for advertisement in their movies.
108. Martin and Osa showed Hershey candy bars in some movies.
109. Bisquick was featured in their kitchen in some movies.
110. Historians, anthropologists, conservationists, and aviation specialists have studied the Johnsons.
111. Scholars in women's studies and fashion have also researched their lifestyle, with more emphasis on Osa.
112. In Kenya, the Johnsons and guide Bud Cottar searched for a "hidden lake."
113. They found a small lake and established a home there.
114. They named it Lake Paradise.
115. In 2014, Bud Cottar's great-nephew Calvin Cottar was hired by David Lansing and photographer Pete McBride to see if they could once again locate Lake Paradise.
116. Their story is in a January 2014 National Geographic article "Paradise Lost and Found in Northern Kenya."
117. Occasionally, Martin and Osa befriended animals in their travels.
118. Once they traveled with a golden gibbon named Kalowatt.
119. They nicknamed an elephant "Sweet Potato" because she ate them from their garden.
120. They had a cheetah named Bong who later lived at the San Diego Zoo.
121. There was an orangutan named Abai who went to live in the Bronx Zoo.
122. They also had a gorilla named Snowball.
123. At one point, they also had a pair of ostriches.
124. Lake Paradise was 432 miles from Nairobi.
125. Martin said the desert drive to Nairobi was dangerously hot.
126. If they drove a car at speed, the engine would overheat and the tires would burn.
127. During part of the drive, the car would frequently bog down in loose sand.
128. The sand would have to be dug out for several hundred yards each time.
129. While the desert was extremely hot, Lake Paradise was cool all year.
130. Lake Paradise temperatures ranged between 57 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
131. In a letter, Martin wrote that he had seen 33 elephants in a herd.
132. The Lake Paradise site required a staff of 100 native employees.
133. There were a herd of camels, plus donkeys, mules, and camels to haul equipment.
134. Camels were used for safari trips away from the camp at Lake Paradise.
135. Wild animals wandered in and out of camp, sometimes ate from their garden.
136. Martin said they had proved that if they left the animals alone, nothing would happen.
137. In 2012, Jan and Romi Svatos produced the award-winning film *Africa Obscura*, about retracing the Johnsons' journey to Lake Paradise.
138. In 2017, Safari Museum staff and volunteers helped create a museum at Lake Paradise to honor the Johnsons. It opened in 2021 and displays 50 Johnson photos.
139. In 2018, Jan and Romi Svatos produced the documentary *The Ark of Light and Shadows* about Martin and Osa.
140. Osa wrote her famous book *Married Adventure* after Martin died. Their adventures lasted 27 years from the date of their marriage to the date of her death.