Hjalmer/Halmer/Helmer Emil Johnson

There were numerous men with names similar to Hjalmer Johnson who were of the appropriate age to have served in WWI. According to *Dakota County in the World War*, Hjalmer E. Johnson served as a private in Company D, 54th Pioneer Infantry, AEF. "He was also in the army of occupation," it said, and listed his hometown as Farmington. We believe this refers to the "Helmer E. Johnson" (age 37) who lived in 1930 in Greenvale, Dakota County, Minnesota with his brother Ludwig (age 40, not a veteran), when Helmer/Hjalmer reported that he was a veteran of the World War. Their parents, according to the census, were born in Norway.

Further research showed that Helmer Emil Johnson was the son of Halvor Larsen Johnson (1854-1932) and Ingebor Nelson (1871-1949). Their children were Edan Leander, Ludwig Theodore, Nedvin, Helmer Emil, Edwin, Gerhard Julian, Clarence O., Thelma E., Lloyd R., and Edith.

Helmer was born 15 May 1893 in Eureka Township, Dakota County, Minnesota. The 1900 and 1910 censuses show the Halvor Johnson family in Eureka Township, where Halvor was a farmer and blacksmith. Helmer attended St. Olaf College in 1913-1915. He registered for the draft on 5 June 1917 at Eureka under the name, "Halmer Emel Johnson," with a home address of Farmington, and stated he was a self-employed farmer.

Helmer Emil Johnson enlisted 26 July 1918 at Farmington and served as a private with Company D, 54th Pioneer Infantry. The 54th was created on 4 January 1918 at the Provisional Depot for Corps and Army Troops at Wadsworth, South Carolina, the 71st New York Infantry being the nucleus of this unit. From 9-14 Aug 1918 it received 3300 men mainly from Minnesota, Pennsylvania and South Carolina to bring the Regiment to strength. On 9 Aug 1918 the Regiment boarded the SS *Duca d'Aosta* and the *Caserta* to sail to France and arrived 12 Sept 1918 at Brest. The 54th Pioneer Infantry Regiment was involved in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive from 25 September to 11 November 1918. After the Armistice they were used as garrison troops in the German towns of Wittlich and Coblenz. Helmer returned to the U.S. and was discharged from service on 24 July 1919.

After the War, Helmer returned to farming in Dakota County with his brother, Ludwig. In the 1940 census, Helmer Johnson was working as a laborer on the farm owned by Ludwig and his

wife in Greenvale Township. Helmer was 46 years old and single. In 1942, he registered for the WWII draft under the name “Hilmer Johnson,” mailing address RFD Northfield, Minnesota.

Helmer died 13 September 1954 in the Northfield, Rice County, Minnesota hospital after suffering a stroke. His funeral was held from East Christiania Lutheran Church, and included military rites by members of Eugene H. Truax VFW Post No. 4303. Helmer was buried in the church cemetery in Lakeville.

NOTE: Minnesota Historical Society has both a military service questionnaire and a bonus file (warrant number 93077) for a Helmer Johnson of Farmington. Those sources were not consulted for this biography.