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A BIG Swedish actor--Tor Johnson

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A BIG Swedish actor

– wrestler Tor Johnson acted in many movies

Tor Johnson (1902–1971) has a solid reputation as an actor in so-called horror movies. Here follows an obituary that was found on the web site www.findagrave.com. No author is mentioned:

“Actor. Born in Sweden in 1903, the husky son of Karl J. Johansson and Lovissa Petersson, he became a professional wrestler while in his early teens. Shortening his name to “Tor Johnson,” the young man journeyed to the United States and California in 1928. He immediately found work on the wrestling circuit as “The Super Swedish Angel,” a large economy size version of the International Villain, Frenchman Maurice Tillet, who was wrestling in the U. S. at the time as “The French Angel”. In 1934 Johnson made his American film debut in “Kid Millions” with popular comic Eddie Cantor, then, while continuing to wrestle, appeared in over thirty films, including “Man on the Flying Trapeze” with W.C. Fields, “Shadow of the Thin Man” with William Powell and Myrna Loy, “Canterville Ghost” with Charles Laughton, “Lost in a Harem” with Abbott & Costello, “Ghost Catchers” with Olsen & Johnson, “Road to Rio” with Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, and Dorothy Lamour, “State of the Union” with Spencer Tracy and Kathryn Hepburn, “Alias the Champ” with fellow-grappler Gorgeous George, “The Lemon Drop Kid” with Bob Hope, “The Black Sleep” with Basil Rathbone, John Carradine, and Bela Lugosi, “Carousel” with Gordon MacRae and Shirley Jones, and perhaps his most (in)famous film of them all, “Plan 9 from Outer Space” with Bela Lugosi and “Vampira,” for writer-director Ed Wood. Tor Johnson's television appearances included



Tor Johnson in “Plan 9 from Outer Space.”

“You Bet Your Life” with Groucho Marx and George Fenneman, “Peter Gunn” with Craig Stevens and Lola Albright, “The Red Skelton Show” with Red Skelton, and “Bonanza” with Lorne Greene and Michael Landon. In the mid-1960s a mask and special effects company, Don Post Studios, immortalized the “Gentle Giant” by taking a life mask of the actor-wrestler, and also creating a best-selling commercial “monster mask” of Tor. The four-hundred pounds-plus character actor, in turn, recreated his best-known movie persona – “Lobo” – for a series of personal appearances with the Don Post Studios-Stunt Stars from Screenland Traveling Monster Show, seen at Uni-Mart stores throughout Southern California. In 1969 he retired to his home in Sylmar, a community near Hollywood, adjoining the San Fernando Valley. Plagued by ongoing

heart problems most of his life, he passed away at the age of 67, at San Fernando Valley Hospital in San Fernando, California. The cause of his death was congestive heart failure. In 1994, Tor Johnson was portrayed by wrestler George “The Animal” Steele in Tim Burton's motion picture “Ed Wood,” with Johnny Depp and Martin Landau.



Tor Johnson's grave marker at Eternal Valley Park, Newhall, Los Angeles county, California. (Findagrave.com).

297 298	Oct. 19. 1.	Karl Erik Tore.	Genark. Karl Johan Johansson 65 ²⁴ / ₉	868
			från H. Nyberg ö.h.h.	
			Lovisa Kristina Pettersson 67 ²⁴ / ₈ 1.	

Brännkyrka CI:8 (1895-1902) Bild 2450 / sid 240 (AID: v84176.b2450.s240, NAD: SE/SSA/0003)

Tor's life in the records

According to American biographies, Tore was born in Sweden in 1903. For some reason this is not right; he was born in Brännkyrka in 1902, just south of Stockholm (see picture above). Tore grew up in a working-class family, and they moved from Brännkyrka to the nearby island of Söder and then back again several times. He had a brother Ernst Teodor, b. 1884; sister Elsa Lovisa, b. 1889, who left for Chicago in 1906; Hilda Elvira, b. 1891; and Ester Maria, b. 1894. If any other siblings also emigrated is not known. In 1919 Tore left for America, but somehow told the authorities that he was going to Brännkyrka, as that is what is recorded in the Maria Magdalena moving-out records.

He arrived at Ellis Island on Sep. 30 on the *Stockholm*, is called an electrician, and his destination is sister Elsie Möller in Chicago. He is listed as Karl Erik.

In 1922 he returned to Sweden, and in 1923 he left again for America on the *Kungsholm*, this time in the company of his future wife, *Greta Maria Alfrida Johansson*, born 1898 Aug. 9 in Kungsholm, Stockholm.

They arrived at Ellis Island on 1923 March 28, and are both recorded as being unmarried. Their destination is his aunt, *M. Nordmark*, in Chicago, his mother's older sister. Their marriage record has not been found.

It has not been possible to find them in the 1930 census, but in 1940 they are living in New York, on 48th street in Kings County in Brooklyn. Tore and Greta are married and their son Tore (later: Karl) is born ca 1925 in New York. In 1935 they lived in Boston, but were now in New York. Tore is listed as a building worker, not an actor.

They moved later to California, and in Tor's death notice he is listed as having signed up for the Social Security in New York before 1951.

Tor died in Sylmar, Los Angeles Co., California, on 1971 May 12.

JOHNSON, Tor, of Sylmar, passed away May 12th, 1971. Survived by his wife Greta Johnson; son, Karl E. Johnson; daughter, Mrs. Margarita Olofsson; five grandchildren; sisters, Miss Elvera Johansson, and Mrs. Esther Stevesson. Services were held Saturday, May 15th, at J. T. Oswald Mortuary Chapel, San Fernando. Interment at Eternal Valley Memorial Park, Newhall.

This obituary was found in the Van Nuys Valley News 1971 May 16 (from Newspaperarchive.com).

Tor's ancestors

1) *Karl Erik Tore (Tor) Johnson*, b. 19 Oct 1902 in Tellusborg, Brännkyrka, Stock., died 12 May 1971 in Sylmar, Los Angeles Co., CA.

— Generation I —

2) f *Karl Johan Johansson*, b. 28 Sep 1865 in Härad, Södm. died 15 Apr 1925 in Maria, Stockholm, AB. Stone and building worker. Married 15 Feb 1891 in Jakob och Johannes, Stockholm, Stock., to the following ancestor:

3) m *Lovisa Christina Pettersson*, b. 4 Aug 1867 in Österåker, Stock., still alive in 1926 in Stockholm.

— Generation II —

4) Father unknown

5) fm *Clara Josefina Lennqvist*, b. 29 Jun 1845 in Klackhaga, Länna, Södm. died 27 Jan 1920 in Älbytorp, Överselö, D.

She worked most of her life as a domestic. In 1869 she married Johan Albert Andersson, b. 20 Oct 1846 in Tumbo, Södm., a tenant farmer in the Mariefred area. He ran away from home in the summer of 1875, and is later supposed to be in America.

6) mf *Per Gustaf Pettersson*, b. 14 Oct 1827 in Tensta, Upps., died after 1881. He was a farm laborer, and later lived in Stockholm and moved in and out of the city. Married to the following ancestor:

7) mm *Maria Margareta Gustafsdotter*, b. 24 Dec 1822 in Lillkyrka, Upps., died after 1881.

— Generation III —

11) fm m *Maria Sofia Persdotter*, b. 6 Sep 1827 in Klackhaga, Länna, Södm. Married 26 Dec 1849 in Länna, Södm. to *Johan Erik Lennqvist*, b. 10 Jun 1820 in Stora Risviken, Länna, D. He lived with his in-laws at Granelund on Klackhaga lands in Länna, but around 1853 he left his wife and disappeared.

— Generation IV —

22) fm mf *Per Ersson*, b. 26 Mar 1788 in Länna, Södm. died in 1860 in Länna. Farmer at Klackhaga in Länna. In 1855 he moved as a widower to the parish poorhouse. Married to the following ancestor.

23) fm mm *Anna Andersdotter*, b. 12 Feb 1794 in Länna, Södm. died of stomach ache 17 Jan 1829 in Klackhaga, Länna, Södm.