

Murjo Oil & Royalty Company was incorporated in Texas in August 1937 and was one of many businesses formed by Francis Kirk Johnson. The name was derived by combining the name of one of his partners, F. H. Murphy, with Johnson.

When you get started on the activities of F. Kirk Johnson, there is no stopping place. He was an oilman first and foremost; however, he owned an airline, a foreign car distributorship, television and radio stations, cattle ranches, an olive ranch, and a racing stable. He collected paintings, and of all his possessions Kirk cherished most his collection of thirty-five original oil paintings of African game by the great German artist, William Kuhnert. The second-largest collection of eighteen Kuhnert paintings resided in the National Museum in Enschede, Holland. Many of Kirk's Kuhnert paintings now comprise an exhibit at the Fort Worth Zoo.

Johnson was born in Nebraska and spent his early years in Western Canada, where he studied civil engineering. He later studied geology at the University of Chicago. He married Elizabeth McGhee, a Chicago girl, in 1921 and entered the oil business that same year. He was called "Fran" by his family and close friends, but many business associates called him Kirk. The Johnsons moved to Texas, and he drilled his first dry hole on the Waggoner Ranch. One of his partnerships, Gibson and Johnson, made a big discovery in Winkler County, Texas, in 1929.

In January 1928, one of Johnson's companies, Leck Royalty and Oil, was incorporated. A few months later, the former Gibson and Johnson partnership was incorporated. Most of the properties originally purchased by Gibson and Johnson were later sold to Leck in 1930. Many mineral interests currently owned by Murjo Oil & Royalty Company were purchased from individuals who had purchased them from Leck Royalty. Leck was subsequently acquired by Ambassador Oil Company.

In the early thirties, the Johnsons moved to Fort Worth and, as an individual, Kirk got into producing, refining, and marketing. Kirk had three refineries in Texas and discovered fields in Texas, Michigan, and Kentucky.

In 1942, he started the Live Oak Stable, which he owned with Jimmy Stewart, the actor. They owned horses in England, Ireland,

Panama, and California. Jimmy and Gloria Stewart often accompanied Kirk and Elizabeth on expeditions, one of which was a forty-day safari in Africa. Kirk was president of the Fort Worth Zoological Association. In 1949 he financed and activated Central Airlines, Inc., a local-service airline.

Ambassador Oil Corporation was formed in 1956, with Kirk as president and chairman of the board. Many field discoveries made by Ambassador were named after Kirk, such as Wendkirk Field, Frankirk Field, Abkirk, Kenkirk, Newkirk, etc. Ambassador was sold to Anadarko in 1965.

The Johnsons had two children. Their daughter, Elizabeth Ann Johnson Mitsch, had a son, Donald Bond Ehrhart, and a daughter, Cynthia Ann Mitsch Bearden. Their son, F. Kirk Johnson, Jr., had three children, Debbie Johnson Head, DeMar Johnson Hopson, and F. Kirk Johnson, III.

Francis Kirk Johnson died in 1963.

Effective January 1, 1992, Murjo Oil & Royalty Company was divided along family lines. This was accomplished by fifty percent redemption-in-kind, leaving the corporation intact and providing continuity of operations.

Murjo owns oil and gas properties in seven states. Most properties are mineral interests in many Texas counties. Usually the company leases the minerals to others and retains a royalty interest; however, sometimes the company participates in the development to the full extent of its mineral interests. Murjo drilled some wells in the late 1970s and 1980s that are still producing and continue to be operated by the company. The company also owns working interests in wells drilled and operated by others. Murjo has both oil and gas production, royalty and working interests, operated and non-operated properties.

As of July 1, 2014, the directors of Murjo Oil & Royalty Company were Cynthia M. Bearden, Bettye B. Davis, D. Lee Thomas, Jr., and Colt Bearden. Murjo officers and other employees who have been with the company twenty-five or more years are: Bettye B. Davis, Cynthia M. Bearden, D. Lee Thomas, Jr., Becky W. Young, and Doug Huckabee.

Murjo Oil & Royalty Company is located in the historic Livestock Exchange Building in the Fort Worth Stockyards.

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