

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

CHARLES J. "JERRY" HANSEN

Petty Officer 3rd Class, U.S. Navy, World War II

2000

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Charles Hansen, (b. 1927) Oral History Interview, 2000

Approximate length: 85 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Charles J. “Jerry” Hansen enlisted as a volunteer in the U.S. Navy in 1944. He was deployed to the Pacific aboard USS Bunker Hill, and was chosen to be part of the arresting gear division to assist aircraft landings. He describes being part of the Battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, having little connection with the outside world except for the infamous “Tokyo Rose” propaganda radio broadcasts. He talks about the day-to-day hardships of living on an aircraft carrier, and the challenges of guiding an aircraft to land under a night sky. He also talks about the effectiveness of kamikaze pilots, including one very damaging hit to the Bunker Hill that caused a major fire leaving nearly 400 crew members dead or assumed dead at sea. The attack forced the carrier to return to the United States for repairs before it circled back to the Pacific to pick up stranded American servicemen in what he dubbed “the magic carpet fleet.”

Biographical Sketch:

Charles J. “Jerry” Hansen, was born, Jan. 20, 1927, in Racine, Wisconsin. He was discharged from the Navy in 1946 and returned to Wisconsin.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000

Transcribed by Alex Rosinski, 2009

Abstract by David Hunt, 2015

Interview Transcript:

McIntosh: All right, talking to Charles “Jerry” Hansen, 19 May, 2000. Where were you born, Jerry?

Hansen: I was born in Racine, Wisconsin.

McIntosh: When?

Hansen: January 20th, 1927.

McIntosh: January of '27. S-O-N?

Hansen: S-E-N.

McIntosh: S-E-N. Swedish.

Hansen: Danish.

McIntosh: Danish. O-N is Norwegian, I know that.

Hansen: Mm-hmm.

McIntosh: USN [United States Navy] Okay, and when did you enter military service?

Hansen: September. Late September of '44.

McIntosh: Volunteer?

Hansen: Right.

McIntosh: Where did they send you?

Hansen: Well, they sent me to Great Lakes [Naval Station, North Chicago, IL] for boot camp, and when I got out of boot camp I got a seven day leave, and I went back to Great Lakes. I got on a train, and went to Shoemaker, California for like two or three days, got on another train and went up to Seattle, Washington, and got on the USS Bunker Hill [an Essex class aircraft carrier].

McIntosh: Had you had any rating up to that point, or were you just an ordinary seaman?

Hansen: No, apprentice seaman. No, I was a seaman, third class when I got out of boot camp.

McIntosh: Right. But you didn't have a—.

Hansen: No, no.

McIntosh: You hadn't gotten to a specialty yet.

Hansen: No, didn't know anything about anything [both laugh].

McIntosh: So you come up on this big ship, and, boy, I bet that was a surprise.

Hansen: It was alarming because I was used to these rowboats on Lake Michigan [McIntosh laughs], and it was sort of interesting that we got on the ship, and there were about, there were about I think a thousand of us that came up there from Shoemaker. They lined us up, and they just broke it down the middle and said, "You 500 go on the Bunker Hill, and you 500 go on the USS Franklin", which was another aircraft carrier.

McIntosh: [laughs] That went down.

Hansen: No, it didn't go down, but it had I think the most casualties at Okinawa of any carrier—.

McIntosh: Yeah, okay.

Hansen: Because we were with them the day they got hit, too. Then for about a week, didn't even have an assignment on there, had to carry, you know, at that time you carried all year—everything you owned on your back including your mattress. We slept in hammocks in the chow hall, and of course they started serving breakfast at about 4 o'clock in the morning so we had to pick them up and pack them all up and struggle for ourselves.

McIntosh: Was this the first crew for this ship?

Hansen: Oh, no, no. The ship was commissioned on December 7th, 1942, exactly one year after Pearl Harbor.

McIntosh: This was the second crew then.

Hansen: Yeah, they had been out, and they came back to the United States for their first overhaul. The crew is like 3,000 so we were just replacing about 500 of the people. Then it was interesting from that point because we were all raw rookies, and most of us were 17, 18 years old. They lined us up on the flight deck and the department, in our case it was a first class petty

officer came around and said, “Okay, you, you, you, you, and you, we need five guys in our division. You’re coming to us.” I think I sort of lucked out because I got into the arresting gear division which is what the planes hook on when they land, and we were a relatively small division. We had 32 men in it, and because we needed all of them to man the arresting gear when planes were landing, we did not have to—

McIntosh: Swab the decks [both laugh]?

Hansen: Well, we had to do a little of that, but we didn’t have to serve in the mess hall which is probably the worst job there is on an aircraft carrier.

McIntosh: Nobody liked that?

Hansen: No.

McIntosh: Why not?

Hansen: Well, they didn’t like it because you were the third deck down, and when you went to general quarters [condition of full readiness for battle] you went into watertight integrity. So you couldn’t get out of the department you were in when you were under attack.

McIntosh: When the bell rang you were stuck?

Hansen: That’s right. Well, you had about thirty seconds to get out.

McIntosh: Geesuz, that’s not much.

Hansen: Like if we were eating and general quarters rang, we had thirty seconds to get up to the hangar deck.

McIntosh: To the hangar deck?

Hansen: Yeah, because from the hangar deck there is no watertight integrity anymore. Only once—.

McIntosh: How many ladders was that to climb?

Hansen: Well, there was only two ladders, but you had to run through the passageways, and you being on a ship you know how—.

McIntosh: [laughs] Right.

Hansen: So one time I got stuck below decks, and, boy, I made sure I never did again because it is—I can feel for those guys in the submarine.

McIntosh: Claustrophobia got to you?

Hansen: Yeah, well, I just like to know what's going on [McIntosh laughs]. You know, to see when the Jap planes are coming in after you. And so I spent my whole naval career then in the arresting gear division.

McIntosh: Okay: Let's see, I guess I'll do it now. Now you have to give me the details of exactly what you did, because I have never interviewed anyone who did this. So just give me the basic stuff: I don't know anything about it other than the obvious.

Hansen: All right. There are 11 cables down the deck starting with the after part of the ship, and they're 20 feet apart.

McIntosh: Each cable?

Hansen: Yeah. So that with 11 cables at twenty feet you've got like 220 feet. Now, they didn't start right at the fantail of the ship, the first cable was probably 50 feet in so that, you know, the pilots didn't like to hook onto the back part of the ship [laughs]. So on each cable we had two men.

McIntosh: What does that mean, you had two men?

Hansen: Well, two of the crew assigned to it, so they—.

McIntosh: To do what? Raise it?

Hansen: Well, to raise it after the planes landed and taxied over, and then when the planes came in, you had to watch that if they caught a cable before yours that you threw yours down so that they don't hook on two of them.

McIntosh: I didn't realize that those cables were individually controlled.

Hansen: Oh yeah, they are. One person, or two people, but one person only is controlling it, and like you take turns.

McIntosh: On either side of the deck, or both of you stay connected to the—.

Hansen: No, you're both on the same side of the deck, but on the starboard side of the deck there were about, the first, oh I'd say, six or seven cables were controlled by people on that side of the deck. Then after that they were controlled—

McIntosh: On the port side of—.

Hansen: We controlled the others.

McIntosh: On the outside? That's the outside of the carrier.

Hansen: Right.

McIntosh: If the island is on the starboard.

Hansen: Right. Then after the last cable, I was on the 11 cable which is the last cable, then you have what they call barriers which are two cables across, and the first one is, say, about, oh, three feet high, and the next one is five feet high, which are controlled by one stanchion that goes down like this. Then the cables are flat, and when they lifted up the cables extend across the deck, and there were three of those barriers, each twenty feet apart. They were really—they put the most experienced guys on those because it was very important that you got those down as soon as you saw them catch a cable, and it was very important to leave them up if they didn't catch a cable.

McIntosh: That would ruin the propeller?

Hansen: That's right.

McIntosh: The minute if you hit those: What did you call those, by the way?

Hansen: Barriers.

McIntosh: You called them barriers, and they were made of steel, though?

Hansen: Well, the cables are about an inch in diameter, the same as the other cables.

McIntosh: They were the same?

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: 'Cause I notice—I've seen other carrier things where they have a sort of like a net—strips of material rather than—.

Hansen: Oh, yeah, I never have seen any of those. So generally—.

McIntosh: There were springs attached to these cables?

Hansen: No. There is a hydraulic engine underneath the flight deck, and it's huge for each one. It's probably—the shaft is about that big around, and then there's a big tank of air. When I say they're hydraulics, they're hydraulic

and air, and you build up the pressure in there. When they hook on—and the cable goes around at about, oh I say, at least six times so that you're getting a ratio of six, or 12 to one it would be that if the plane were to pull it out 12 feet, the engine only compresses one foot.

McIntosh: I see. So it just will slow the plane down then—.

Hansen: Right.

McIntosh: Gradually rather than snap the tail off.

Hansen: Well, it's not too gradual [laughs].

McIntosh: No, but I mean it's built so that it will decelerate the plane.

Hansen: Right. Then the interesting thing is that when—as soon as it hooks on all the cables go down.

McIntosh: But not automatically.

Hansen: No, no, they're supposed to go down. Then there are two guys, young guys [laughs], one on each side of the flight deck standing there, and it is a very dangerous job for them because if they get too far, start to run, and they were to hook on a cable the cable would just break their legs right off.

McIntosh: That's their job?

Hansen: Their job is, as soon as it hooks on and stops they run out, and they unhook the hook. You know, it doesn't unhook automatically.

McIntosh: They unhook it, and the plane drops their hook so you can get it out?

Hansen: No, no, the hook is dropped before the plane—.

McIntosh: Yes, I know that, but I mean when you are unhooking it, it's something you deal with on the airplane.

Hansen: Right. You take the cable and unhook it, and then the plane taxis forward in front of the barriers, and then the barriers go back up. The problem then that you have is as the planes are accumulating on the front part of the flight deck that there becomes less room and less room for incoming planes. So we had three elevators on the ship, one way forward, one on the port side sticking out sort of, and then one back a little further. We're in the landing area. Then there are plane handlers pushing these planes around and getting them on the elevators and getting down to the flight deck and making more room all the time. We had one further problem

that—I mean, one thing that entered into the whole thing is that the fighter planes, we had F4U Corsairs on there and F6Fs [Grumman Hellcat] and TBFs [Grumman Avenger], torpedo bombers. Each fighter plane had four rockets under each wing when they took off, and when they came back some of them still had a rocket or two on there that stuck—.

McIntosh: Oh, boy.

Hansen: When the plane came to a halt these rockets would—.

McIntosh: Slither down the deck?

Hansen: Slither down the deck.

McIntosh: Jesus H. Christ.

Hansen: Then these guys who were unhooking it, the one who was unhooking it, the other one would run and pick it up, and run to the side—.

McIntosh: Chuck it out.

Hansen: Well, he couldn't chuck it out because it was too far. You know, the flight deck ends here, and we were standing here, and then there's just a couple cables behind you. But he would come running over and hand it to one of us, and we'd just throw it over the top of our head, which was a little nerve wracking. While I was on there nothing ever happened with them, but there was the danger of it happening.

McIntosh: But they were armed.

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: Jesus [laughs].

Hansen: In fact, that saved my life, that portion of it because the fella that worked with me, his nickname was "The Mouse" because he was sort of small. He had been on since the ship was commissioned. At the time I was on the ship I was really a dinky little guy, weighed at like 127 pounds when I got out of the Navy. So I probably had thrown about fifteen of these over my head like that, and—.

McIntosh: They're weighing about what, twenty pounds, or not that much?

Hansen: Well, that's what I thought. He said to me, "Do you know how much that weighs?" And I said, "No," and he said, "It weighs over 100 pounds." I said, "You're crazy" [laughs]. I said, "I can't lift 100 pounds."

McIntosh: Yeah, if it's only that long, I can't believe— .

Hansen: Oh no, no, no. Oh, no, they're about seven feet long and about this big around.

McIntosh: Oh.

Hansen: And I said, "I can't lift that much," and he said, "You're so scared you could lift two hundred pounds." [laughs] I think he was right, probably. But anyway, this day, when all of the planes were loaded up with gas and bombs, and they were—in minutes they were ready to take off is when we got hit. We didn't have to be at our station when the planes are taking off because nothing could land, and he said to me, "Let's go back to ordnance and weigh one." We left, and we went back to weigh one, and before we got back there our workshop, and using the term workshop is sort of a misnomer because it was probably about six feet across and twelve feet long, and there were thirty two of us, and there were three of those compartments right next to—.

McIntosh: You mean some place to have coffee?

Hansen: Yeah, we had coffee, and we had a record player in there, and we just chewed the fat and, you know, needled each other and things like that.

McIntosh: But literally a waiting area?

Hansen: Yeah, and we did have vises in there and that, and we did do some work on there because we had to change these cables. We had somebody who kept track of how many landings on each cable, and after so many landings we replaced it. We'd have to take it off, and it was a big job because you had to—you would pour the fitting with melted lead in there so that—and that's how the cable was held into the other part of the cable.

McIntosh: These cables were size?

Hansen: They were at least an inch I would say, and before every landing we had to go with gloves and grease them so that there was no friction when the plane hooked on. So we put axle grease or some kind of grease on there every time. So anyway we stopped there before we went back to the ordnance department there, and that's when we got hit with these two bombs and two suicide planes. If we wouldn't have gone back there, later on when we went back to our station it wasn't there; it was gone. It was just—.

McIntosh: That'd taken you out, too.

Hansen: Right. And all the guys that were in the 40 inch mount that was right—you know, we could just look down at a 40 inch mount. We're all dead right there.

McIntosh: So out of Seattle, how long did you practice run or anything like that before you went across?

Hansen: We didn't. We went to San Diego, and we loaded up, and I'll never forget we had an executive officer on our ship, his name was Dyson, D-y-s-o-n. I don't know what he was, lieutenant commander or something, and the guys, the nickname they had for him was "Be-No." You know, everybody has a nickname except me: I didn't have one. I don't know why. "Be-No," and I learned on the way to San Diego why they called him "Be-No." He got on the loudspeaker, and he said, "Say, tomorrow night we're gonna have a big party on the ship." He said, "There will *be no* liberty." [laughs] He said, "This is gonna be a working party. We're gonna spend the whole night loading supplies, ammunition, everything on there. So we're gonna stay up all night and work." Then when we took off out of there the squadrons landed on the ship between San Diego and Pearl Harbor because they came somewhere from San Diego, the Naval Air Station there I guess. That was the only practice that we had to see then, and really, most of the overhaul they did was on engines and that. It wasn't really on the flight deck.

McIntosh: Weren't you practicing landing the airplanes during this time?

Hansen: Yeah, between there and—.

McIntosh: Did you find it difficult to learn your job?

Hansen: No, no.

McIntosh: Because it was pretty routine?

Hansen: Yeah, it was routine, and the expertise on the cables, the engines and that, there was enough of the crew—like we were only, I think, five new guys in there, so there were 27 that had been on there before. So they knew all about it, and it's sort of on the job training. Then we left Pearl Harbor. Everybody stopped at Pearl Harbor, I don't know why, but I suppose it's just a stopping ground for about half way.

McIntosh: I think, so that the captains can go in and check in with the big boss.

Hansen: That's right, probably, except the big boss was on our ship. Admiral Mitscher was on our ship. Well, he was only the air commander. There was still a commander of the whole fleet.

McIntosh: Well, I was thinking about Nimitz.

Hansen: Yeah. Then we went to the Ulithi Atoll [Caroline Islands, western Pacific], and there's a little island there called Mognog. I don't know if you were ever lucky enough to get there, but it's—.

McIntosh: No, I never did.

Hansen: It's little—.

McIntosh: But I know it.

Hansen: It's only about—oh, I don't even think it was a mile square, and there was only one building on it, and that building was a big refrigerator full of beer. Everybody went, and they give you two chits so you get two cans of beer. All you could do was drink your beer, and fight with other ships, you know [laughs]. There's all sailors on this little island, except we had one advantage. Our division, we had a first class petty officer, his name was Walter Braun, and his brother was in charge of that refrigerator, believe it or not.

McIntosh: A marriage made in heaven [laughs].

Hansen: Yeah [laughs]. So we—.

McIntosh: We doubled up on our ration.

Hansen: Yes, we did. We got more than we needed, I'll tell ya. [James laughs]. Then we went from there, and the first—.

McIntosh: Tell me about your planes before we get too far.

Hansen: Okay.

McIntosh: When did you get the planes? Were they onboard when you left?

Hansen: No, the planes got on between San Diego and Pearl Harbor.

McIntosh: Okay, that's what I thought. I didn't think they'd be while you were in Seattle.

Hansen: No, no, because it gives all of them an opportunity to practice landing and so forth.

McIntosh: Exactly.

Hansen: And then we did—between there we did more landings, and—.

McIntosh: Tell me about night landings.

Hansen: Ohh—.

McIntosh: That's what everybody says is the worst of the worst.

Hansen: It's horrible.

McIntosh: For you, too?

Hansen: Every—yeah, every four days—like we had four carriers in our task force. So every fourth day it was your ship's responsibility to send up the—they called it CAP, C-A-P, Combat Air Patrol, and you would send up four planes, and they would be circling the fleet or investigating any bogies [enemy airplanes] that showed up or what have you. Then they would come back to land, and it was a nightmare for them and for us because you had to—.

McIntosh: They always came back at night?

Hansen: Well, yeah, they'd only go up for like four hours. So the ships all had, and I don't know what they called it, but we'll call it blackout, that you had blackout curtains at every hatch that would be exposed to the outside, and anytime anybody opened that hatch all the lights in that room would automatically go out.

McIntosh: Oh.

Hansen: So, like we were, we slept right under the flight deck, since that's where our duty was, and we must have had, oh, 75 people in a room that's not this wide, and it's probably about from here to that wall long. We slept in there, and we had everything we owned in there, all of our personal belongings. So it was very close quarters.

McIntosh: You had a footlocker?

Hansen: Yeah, we had a locker that was about, oh, I'd say two and a half feet square, two and a half feet deep. They were stacked up to like five high, and the bunks were either four high or five high in there. So anytime

anybody went out of the hatch the lights went out. So you really learned how to live in the dark because no matter what you were doing those lights were going out every—.

McIntosh: That was automatic?

Hansen: Yeah, there was a switch on 'em when the hatch opened, and then beside that they had blackout curtains, like if this is the door here, the curtain would come like this so that even if the light was on they'd have to—it would be very difficult for anybody to see it. They would have to be in the exact right spot, but the lights always went out. So we would be at our station, and if the moon was out it was okay, but if the moon wasn't out it's perfectly black; there's no light.

McIntosh: But aren't there running lights along the flight deck so the pilot can see?

Hansen: Well, let me tell you about them [both laugh]. They're about this wide, and about, I mean this long and that wide, and when the plane comes in—you know, if the ship is going this way the planes come against the ship—

McIntosh: Right.

Hansen: And they get down there, and they turn around—.

McIntosh: Before their final leg.

Hansen: And when they're on the final leg those lights would come up for five seconds maybe—.

McIntosh: Five seconds?

Hansen: Go down, yeah. Just a very—.

McIntosh: That's all they got?

Hansen: Very brief—I'm not sure, but that's what I would estimate it to be. Boy, they would just dive [laughs], and a lot of them would go towards the starboard side of the ship—.

McIntosh: Towards the island?

Hansen: Yeah. So in case [both laugh] something went wrong [laughs] —.

McIntosh: So, they said we stop one way or another.

Hansen: Yeah, right. Then if the landing signal officer — see, this was all manual then.

McIntosh: Yeah, but he must have had some on—.

Hansen: He had flags that were—.

McIntosh: Fluorescent?

Hansen: Yeah, they were like fluorescent. I mean, he just, like he'd go like this, that means, "Get that wing down, get that wing down," and if he waves you off like this, that was the bad part for us because we were—they were coming in this way, and we were on this side of the ship, and they'd come right—we had a hole there to dive in, and boy you dove in that hole because you'd get your head cut off by the propeller—.

McIntosh: But you were waiting for him and assuming he was gonna land okay. You were above?

Hansen: Well, no, we're just above like we are here. We're standing in a catwalk—.

McIntosh: Could you see him coming at night?

Hansen: Well, yeah, because there's flashing—.

McIntosh: The flash from the fire of the engine.

Hansen: Yeah, right, right. Most of the time there was some moon or some light, but it's sort of scary because the landing signal officer does not like to wave them off. If it's close, his option is to go like this, and that means land. So it's really almost a last minute wave off and then when he waves them off, there's a big net for him to jump into because if they start turning—

McIntosh: Take him right off the scene.

Hansen: Take him right with him. Then everybody on this side of the ship just dives in the hole.

McIntosh: The hole? Tell me what—.

Hansen: Well, the hole is like a hatch without a door on it.

McIntosh: Right. Underneath the flight deck?

Hansen: Right, right under the flight deck so we just dove in there. When there's two of us, and the rule was, I mean, it's probably a good rule that you always run—there's a hatch here and a hatch down there, but you always run toward the plane.

McIntosh: That was the rule?

Hansen: Yeah, so you can see what's going on. If you're running the other way, you know—I don't know, it didn't make sense to me because the object was to get in that hole [both laugh]. So that's about the whole thing as far as—.

McIntosh: The night landings.

Hansen: Well, the night landings, and I would say that out of every, oh, 20 planes we sent up, and we only sent up four at a time, that out of every 20 that three of them would either land in the barriers or crash into the gun mount right in front of the island: I mean, it was—.

McIntosh: Lose any pilots?

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: Some of them hit hard enough to damage the—.

Hansen: Well, we didn't lose any that way, but some of them would—they gunned their engine, and they'd end up in the water, and they wouldn't get out of the plane.

McIntosh: So the plane goes into the water, your ship is going 30 knots, how would—.

Hansen: That's why there's always destroyers with us that are tailing you all the time.

McIntosh: That's—well, I was getting around to that. That wasn't your ship's responsibility to pick 'em up?

Hansen: Oh, no, no, no.

McIntosh: Once they're off the ship then it was up to the destroyers to pick 'em up.

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: Then the carrier would not have to slow down.

Hansen: Yeah, the carrier wouldn't do a thing.

McIntosh: It would take you 10 miles to slow down.

Hansen: Oh, yeah. We had, oh, like we had four carriers in our task force, and you could usually see one of them. The others were farther enough away so you couldn't see them, and a couple battleships, maybe three, four cruisers, and 25 destroyers that are spaced out all over.

McIntosh: But those destroyers aren't very far from you.

Hansen: No. Well, some of them are because they're—they called 'em picket ships too, that was their first line of duty—well, to pick up pilots if they got shot down. I think one of the strangest things we had happen one day was, and I think, I might be wrong on this, but we got credit for sinking the largest battleship, the Yamato, our crew did, or the squadron.

McIntosh: Yeah, it spilled in the sea.

Hansen: No, no. This was up at—.

McIntosh: Marianas?

Hansen: No, no, it was in the battle off Okinawa.

McIntosh: Okay.

Hansen: Anyway, this one plane got shot down, and our picket ships didn't get there first; the Japs got there first. They picked him up, and so he got shot down, he was a prisoner. Later that day our pilot sunk the ship on which he was a prisoner. So he was on a ship that got sunk, and then one of our submarines picked him up, brought him back to the ship. So he was shot down, captured, sunken on a ship, [both laugh], and rescued, all in one day.

McIntosh: That's a hell of a day.

Hansen: Yeah. I bet he celebrates that day quite wildly. And they sent him up the next day because, you know, whenever the pilots crashed or had problems, if their plane got shot up, they had to go up the next day because they'd get buck fever [condition when a hunter freezes upon seeing a deer] otherwise, be afraid to do it.

McIntosh: Did you handle the cables any differently for the night landings?

Hansen: No, not really. We would try to be more alert.

McIntosh: I was gonna say, how was the vision on deck?

Hansen: Well, it was—.

McIntosh: You got used to it, I assume.

Hansen: Yeah, you got used to it because it's just a flat surface, and, you know, when the plane came in, even if it was pitch-black, you could see something because of the light of the engine.

McIntosh: Now one of the two of you had to disconnect your wire, is that correct?

Hansen: No, no, these guys that ran out—.

McIntosh: Oh, that's right, those are special guys.

Hansen: Right.

McIntosh: Did you lose any of them?

Hansen: Well, I've seen them where they broke their legs.

McIntosh: From whipping of that—.

Hansen: Yeah, the cable hit them, and I mean I don't really know what happened to them because we didn't really know these guys. I mean, they just appeared, and they did it, **[End of Tape One, Side A]** and then they got out of there. They were probably part of the plane handling crew: The plane handlers, there was a lot of them because there's always shoving planes around on the hangar deck—.

McIntosh: They lived in a different part of the ship than you?

Hansen: Right. The only people that lived in our compartment were the catapult and the arresting gear, and we were right up under the focsle [forecastle] of the ship. Many a night we strapped ourselves in bed [laughs] because, you know, you could go 50 feet up and down. Then the next area in the middle of it was a gunnery crew for the guns that were around the flight deck.

McIntosh: That was another separate—.

Hansen: Yeah, and then I don't even know who was in the third compartment, but it was all—you really—.

McIntosh: It's a different world.

Hansen: It's a different world in that you—I mean, there were probably 2,700 guys on that ship that I never met. You know, I mean, I'd see 'em in line or something, but—.

McIntosh: So you'd know maybe 50 guys, and that's it?

Hansen: Yeah, or a hundred.

McIntosh: And you never learn any more.

Hansen: No.

McIntosh: You never see them.

Hansen: No. And all the people below decks—.

McIntosh: And the mess hall, was that one level or two levels or—.

Hansen: You won't believe how small that was [laughs]. I mean, I don't think the whole mess hall was—.

McIntosh: With 2,700 people?

Hansen: Yeah. I mean, you could eat in a minute. My wife still wonders how I eat so fast.

McIntosh: You had to.

Hansen: Yeah. You wanna get out of there [both laugh]. You don't wanna be there—.

McIntosh: But the food was good?

Hansen: Well, this is strange. I come from a family of nine kids. My dad worked on the railroad, and there was the Depression right before that, and we didn't live too high on the hog [laughs]. I think I was one of the few people that thought the food was pretty good [both laugh]. I mean, I never—.

McIntosh: The others didn't have anything to compare it to like you did.

Hansen: No, and, I mean, there are some people, you know, I'm sure there are people in heaven that complain, and there are people complaining all the time. I think the only thing about the food was, you really did learn to eat

it fast, and every day of the week, the food was exactly the same as it was the last: Every Wednesday you had the same thing, every Thursday you had the same thing, every Friday—.

McIntosh: It's all predictable.

Hansen: Yeah. But I had no complaints about the food.

McIntosh: Now when you were busy working, the landing and so forth, did you take time off to eat then?

Hansen: No, no, no, because the chow hall was open like, say, five hours for each meal: five hours for breakfast, five hours for lunch, five hours for dinner: So they had—you just—.

McIntosh: But I thought during operations it might go on, and you'd be missing some meals and—.

Hansen: Yeah, you would. When we were at flight quarters or general quarters we were supposed to be at our spot.

McIntosh: And stay there.

Hansen: Yeah. That's why we had two because if somebody got sick or something—.

McIntosh: Tell me the difference between flight quarters and general quarters.

Hansen: Well, flight quarters is when planes are landing or taking off. General quarters is when there is a possibility that you are under attack. Now when we were at flight quarters, we were always at general quarters. They were at general quarters when—.

McIntosh: You didn't—it was the same to you then.

Hansen: Yeah, it was the same to us, but to people on—.

McIntosh: The guns.

Hansen: Well no, it was the same for people that were at general quarters because they had to be there both times. We only had to be at our station at flight quarters. I mean, we could get by without being there because ordinarily they quit landing planes during general quarters, but we had to be there because they still will catapult them off.

McIntosh: But you weren't involved with the catapults?

Hansen: Well, no, we weren't except if they catapulted one off and he immediately had a problem: He'd come back to land—.

McIntosh: No matter what, right, if possible.

Hansen: It's interesting, and the reason that they had the catapult at that time was we had—I'll say 110 planes that were capable of taking off at one time, and there's no room to store 110 planes. You've gotta store them on the hangar deck, and then you've gotta store them on the after part of the flight deck, and there's not enough room for the first plane to really take off. The planes that are in the front of the line, they had to be catapulted off until you get enough room so that they can take off by just gunning down the flight deck.

McIntosh: I saw the mechanism on the [USS] Valley Forge [an Essex class aircraft carrier] was a catapult. That was impressive.

Hansen: Oh, yeah. It wasn't that impressive in our case because they didn't have to gain the speed, or they didn't have the weight to take off: They had—and we would go up and watch them sometimes. They would never allow that on the modern day ships because of the danger and that, but they had a ring, they called it a holdback release ring. It's just a piece of metal maybe—I'll say it was a quarter of an inch thick, and the ring was a quarter of an inch in both directions. That—it would hook on to the tail of the plane and just a stationary part. The guy would gun his engine and keep gunning it and gunning it until that ring broke and when that ring broke, it set off the catapult. It would be a simultaneous event, and then—.

McIntosh: Goose him up in the air.

Hansen: Oh, boy [both laugh]. They were going full speed when it got to the end of the—.

McIntosh: I talked to a pilot, and he said the most important thing is you had to learn to keep your head back.

Hansen: That's right. He'd break his neck.

McIntosh: Because you'd damage your head—yeah, right. You'd break your neck if you had your head forward. He said it just snapped you back so hard it would make you unconscious.

Hansen: Right. One other strange thing that, there's a lot of strange things, but another that I just happened to be thinking of right now is that we had one

pilot who was catapulted off the ship, and within ten seconds he shot down a Jap plane. A Jap plane was coming in, and he shot it right down. Because, you know, when he's taking off you really prefer not to shoot the guns, and it's difficult to shoot right straight ahead. We had a couple other strange things. We had a guy who was going to—he got a wave off, and before he gunned his engine he hooked on the first cable, and then he gunned his engine, and he—.

McIntosh: Tore the—.

Hansen: No, the cable didn't break, but it just held [laughs] him back, and the plane was hanging right over the side of the ship.

McIntosh: Held up by that cable.

Hansen: Yeah [laughs].

McIntosh: Lucky he got out of that. If it was falling the plane might have crashed on him—.

Hansen: Oh, yeah. Right.

McIntosh: Kept him from bobbing up.

Hansen: Another strange thing was that we had jeeps on the flight deck, and when they were pulling planes from the forward part to the aft part or the aft part to the forward part, instead of people pushing them they would hook the jeep on there, and then they would pull it up, there, and guys would unhook that and move it around. These guys, I don't know, they were a little nuts I think, these guys that drove those jeeps. They must have had bets or something at how fast they could get back to get another plane, and this one time this guy came riding back, and he was going too fast, and he went right off the flight deck into the ocean.

McIntosh: Into the drink.

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: He was gone?.

Hansen: I mean, that's a long way down in a jeep. No, they came up—some destroyer picked him up, and I'm not sure he wanted to come back.

McIntosh: I was gonna say, the CO [Commanding Officer] had something to say to him.

Hansen: [laughs] I'll bet he did.

McIntosh: I couldn't believe it. I suppose everybody stood around [laughs]. They couldn't believe what they just saw.

Hansen: No, no. But there were a lot of funny things, odd things. We also, because we were the flagship, that when they either shot down a Jap plane and the pilot survived, which was not very often, but once in a while they might have even been kamikaze pilots—.

McIntosh: That missed?

Hansen: No, no, that we shot 'em down before they got to us, and the pilot was ejected out, and he survived: When the destroyers would pick them up, they would bring them over to us, and they would pass a line between us and the destroyer, and then they'd put a basket on there, and they'd send over—.

McIntosh: Did you put him in your brig?

Hansen: They put him in the basket and bring him over, and the ships, it was pretty hard to transfer somebody, but they weren't quite as careful when it was a Jap, and they'd squeeze together, and that thing would go in the water, and then they'd go back out [laughs]. Then he would get on our carrier, and they'd put him in the brig, and they'd interview him. I can't tell you how many happened while I was on there, but I'd say somewhere between five and 10 this happened. Every one of them that a couple of days later, they would announce over the loud speaker that this Japanese prisoner that we had committed suicide, and I didn't think anything of it until later years: I thought you really wonder if they did commit suicide. Who knows?

McIntosh: Did they say how?

Hansen: No, no, that's all. That was the end of it, and we weren't that interested in it at the time anyway. But then—I have to get way back to the beginning now: When we left Ulithi, and I didn't even know my way around the ship, I didn't know what was going on. We went straight to Japan, and we were the first carrier based planes that raided Tokyo where the planes came back to the ship. That was sort of interesting, too, because we—you have to go into the wind when you're launching planes, and you have to go into the wind when you're landing, and the wind was coming right towards us from Japan. We got to within fifty miles of Tokyo Bay, and, you know, we had, I'll say, zero planes attacking us during that, and I think the reason was they thought we'd probably be a couple hundred miles out to sea, and they were looking for us in the wrong place. The whole raid took place, and we lost a couple planes over Tokyo, but we

didn't see one Jap plane there: I thought, hey, this war isn't too bad [laughs] 'cause that was my first experience.

McIntosh: So tell me about your first combat or your major—.

Hansen: Well, the first where we really got battle was the invasion of Iwo Jima, and that really wasn't too bad for our carrier because the carriers are always in the middle of the task force, and then there's cruisers, battleships, and destroyers. The destroyers and the cruisers did an excellent job of shooting down the planes so that they really—not many of them got to us.

McIntosh: Didn't have much action then.

Hansen: But then after that we went back—after Iwo Jima we just went out, that was on February 19th the invasion of Iwo Jima, we went out a little way, a couple hundred miles out to sea, and then we got all, completely all, of our supplies replenished, all of our ammunition, all of the carrier fuel. We were completely ready to go and raid Okinawa. We got there on March 1st.

McIntosh: Mitscher was still—.

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: He had his headquarters on your ship.

Hansen: Right. And the people tell me that—we had great regard for him, I mean he was a good guy, and he's from Hillsboro. He was born in Hillsboro, Wisconsin. But the fellow said, and I learned this years later, at one of our reunions, that this guy was in the staff, and he got, whenever we were under attack or anything, one of his staff had to go in and wake him up, and tell him, "Okay," because he—I mean but he was a good admiral, and he said his entire body was covered with tattoos.

McIntosh: Oh, my.

Hansen: I mean, I don't know if that [laughs]—.

McIntosh: That means he was an ordinary seaman.

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: For a couple of years, doesn't it? Yeah, duty in the Philippines or something?

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: Where you get those—.

Hansen: Well, he was the captain of the [USS] Hornet [an Essex class aircraft carrier] when they raided Tokyo.

McIntosh: Yes, I know that. Okay. So tell me about Okinawa now: Now we're getting down to the big stuff.

Hansen: Oh, boy. We got there on March 1st and started hammering away, and the Japs were determined not to let us get that island, and they hammered away at us. So we were there a month before D-Day, and then on Easter Sunday, it was April 1st that year, and that's—.

McIntosh: The day of the landing.

Hansen: That's the day of the landing. I don't know what the plans were, if they planned that we would be getting out of there relatively soon, but it was such a battle that we just stayed there and stayed there and stayed there.

McIntosh: Did you know about the kamikazes then?

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: How did they tell you that?

Hansen: They didn't tell you: We just see them.

McIntosh: I know, but how did you know that these were guys who were trying to commit suicide?

Hansen: Well, you could see it because they all—I mean they told us—.

McIntosh: They made no effort to do anything but just dive for the—.

Hansen: No, no, no, no. I didn't see one of them that ever—he either got shot down, and we shot down a lot of them, or they crashed into the ship. They talked about them, and then, well I don't know, has anybody ever talked to you about Tokyo Rose?

McIntosh: Oh, yeah.

Hansen: Oh, yeah, well, she was, she was on the radio all the time: That's about all we could get on there.

McIntosh: Oh, yeah? Did she identify any of your ship mates?

Hansen: Well, yeah, she talked about like—okay, Bunker Hill, we know Admiral Mitscher's on there, and we know all about you married guys what your wives are doing: She really—she was a bad apple.

McIntosh: Yeah, she spent 20 years in jail after the war.

Hansen: Yeah, she was from Chicago. D'Acquisto [D'Aquino], her name was, Rose D'Acquisto. And she would talk to us about the kamikaze planes. They were pretty proud of that. So then—.

McIntosh: The activity picked up a lot, though when—.

Hansen: Oh, yeah. You were always wondering about, you know, when you went to sleep that night if you were gonna be under attack. Well, then on May 11th which was Mother's Day, another Sunday, Sundays were bad luck for us, I guess, about, I think it was at 10:07, when these two kamikaze planes came in, and we weren't at general quarters because they had acquired our, I forget what they called it. The letters CAC come to me. It's like Combat—CIC, Combat Identification Code, and they changed it all the time. But for some reason they either lucked out, or they got it some way, but when they were coming in they identified themselves as friendly planes, and before, I don't think they were just a couple hundred yards away when the guy, the sailor that was on the microphone looked around and he hollered, "Meatball, meatball." That's what we called the sun on there, and they didn't even get general quarters blown before we got hit.

McIntosh: Oh, really?

Hansen: No.

McIntosh: They saw 'em and bang.

Hansen: Well, just—yeah, I mean—.

McIntosh: One right after the other.

Hansen: Oh, yeah, just boom boom. And they dropped bombs first.

McIntosh: I would think the radar would have picked that up.

Hansen: Well, they did, but see they identified themselves as American planes. [Approx. 20 sec. pause in recording]

McIntosh: Tell me, about where?

Hansen: Well, one was right—both of them were relatively close to the island.

McIntosh: Hit twice?

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: One right after the other, or almost—.

Hansen: No, within I'd say a minute of each other, and—.

McIntosh: One was afterdeck?

Hansen: No, it wasn't really. It was afterdeck, but not way back because fortunately that's where we were, and there were a lot of people there. Well, I was with "The Mouse" because we had gone back there—.

McIntosh: But it hit the deck.

Hansen: Well, it went right through. One of them went through and right—.

McIntosh: Through the deck?

Hansen: Well, because the flight deck is wood. It went through there and got to the hangar deck, and some of it out the side and bombs exploded, and things like that. I think some of the pictures show where one of them hit the elevator.

McIntosh: Yeah, I saw that.

Hansen: Well, it really, it's a big blast, and it knocks you off your chair and everything else—.

McIntosh: Did you see 'em coming?

Hansen: No, no, we were in this workshop. Very few people saw them coming. So he and I knew we were supposed to—because general quarters blew then we knew we were supposed to run to our station. Well, we ran that way, and it was just fire all over the place. We couldn't get to our station. Since all these planes were loaded up with gasoline and bombs and everything else, it was just a mess up there. So we came back to where we were, and there was two five-inch gun mounts right outside of our workshop, and they apparently lost contact with the people below decks, and the shells and the powder—you know, at first they send the powder keg and then the shell, and they just kept coming up, and they weren't

being used so we ran up and we were throwing them over the side [laughs].

McIntosh: The powder.

Hansen: Yeah, the powder and the shells because we didn't want any shells rolling around there. Anyway, then he and I decided to go over through one of the—it's not a compartment, but it's like a catwalk where our engines were. We decided to go in there and see if we could get on the starboard side of the ship and maybe get in front of the fire. Well, we got over there, and he said to me—and we didn't have our helmets on or lifebelts or anything, and he said to me, "We gotta jump over the side," because the hangar deck was burning below us, and the flight deck was burning above us, and it didn't seem like there was anywhere to go. So I said, "Gee, Mouse, not we. [McIntosh laughs] I mean, if you wanna jump over the side, go on, but I'm gonna hang around here for a little while anyway." So we gave each other a hug and he jumped.

McIntosh: Oh, my.

Hansen: And it's a long way down without a life belt or anything.

McIntosh: About 10 stories, I 'spose?

Hansen: Well, I don't think it's 10 stories, but it's high. It's a long way.

McIntosh: Without a life jacket?

Hansen: Nothing. So then I went back to where our compartment was, and it was getting worse, and we got back to the complete fantail of the ship. There's an area there where there's enough—you, the next step is jumping over the back part of the ship. There must have been a hundred guys there that had worked their way back there. There was nothing we could do: We just either had to jump, and some guys jumped over the side there—

McIntosh: But they didn't call abandon ship?

Hansen: No, but there are people that just lose their mind at a time like that. So we just stayed there, and I mean you could just hear the fire inside the hangar deck there: There was a metal wall there, but you could still hear it. Then there were life belts up there, and we all finally did get a life belt, these kapok [silky fiber from the ceiba tree] jackets. We must have been there, well, we were there for four hours, and finally some guy came along, and he said, "See, if we crawl along this side", and I can't remember that part of it, but I remember him saying if we crawl along this one side we can get ahead of the fires. So I thought, well, it's worth a try, but I don't

remember how we got there, but the next thing I knew we were on the front part of the ship, and there wasn't any fire there. So then we—

McIntosh: Then they went up.

Hansen: No, we were up. We ended up on the flight deck up there. We, well, everybody did something else. I mean, there were people there that were injured, and we helped them, and some of us got out hoses and were manning hoses. Finally, we got the thing under control, but it still burned until the next noon. I mean, it burned for 24 hours.

McIntosh: What was burning?

Hansen: Well, paint, planes, you don't think planes can burn, but boy they do [both laugh]. And the wood flight deck, and stuff on the hangar deck, that paint—.

McIntosh: Were any of your planes in the air when this happened?

Hansen: No. Why, I shouldn't say that. I think there were a couple of them in the air, and they just landed on another carrier, but there's a picture there, too, of them: You can just see all the planes they're just demolished. They just burned. So then the next day—.

McIntosh: What was the word from the skipper after all this? What did he say over the PA system?

Hansen: Well, the PA system was sort of out. The next day they started hauling bodies and assembling them on the forward part of the hangar deck to see if they didn't have dog tags if anybody could identify them.

McIntosh: Most of them were burned—.

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: That was the cause of death, was the fire?

Hansen: Or smoke inhalation, things like that, and there were some that were wounded by shrapnel and that, but—

McIntosh: What I was thinking about the explosions of bombs down below deck might have killed some people.

Hansen: Right. So then the next day the skipper did say that we would have to head back for the States, and we have to go alone: They're not gonna send any ships with us.

McIntosh: Oh, boy.

Hansen: Because the battle was still raging there, and they needed all the ships they could keep there. So—.

McIntosh: But no more planes attacked you?

Hansen: Yeah, they did. We were going past YAP [in the Caroline Islands of the western Pacific], Y-A-P, and a couple planes attacked us, and we still had gunpower to shoot them down.

McIntosh: You did shoot ‘em?

Hansen: Yeah. That was a happy day I’ll tell ya when we shot them down.

McIntosh: I’ll bet. ‘Cause all you needed was another—.

Hansen: Because our food—you know, the food was almost nothing, and then the food was bad because [laughs] we didn’t have much.

McIntosh: Yeah, right, you’d run out.

Hansen: So then the next—.

McIntosh: The extent of the damage, tell me before we leave that, down in the inner part of the ship, did it take out the—.

Hansen: No, no, the engine area was fine.

McIntosh: Okay, and the mess hall—.

Hansen: Except they lost a lot of men down there because of smoke inhalation. That they didn’t all have, they were supposed to have masks, but one guy told me that he was down there, and that when they had the masks—and there was something that you had to pull out of it that blocked the inhalation, and he says a lot of them forgot that or something: They put it on, and they suffocated to death.

McIntosh: Just panicked.

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: How many men were killed?

Hansen: Three hundred and ninety-three.

McIntosh: Of your 2,700?

Hansen: Yeah, and then another 250 some were wounded. You know that 393, it was like 350 killed, and forty-five or so missing, that drowned. They jumped over—.

McIntosh: So they assumed that they—.

Hansen: Right, and they never did show up so they're dead. But the next day they said they're bringing back people, and who should appear but "The Mouse."

McIntosh: After a big swim?

Hansen: I said, "How did it go Mouse?" [both laugh] He was happy to see me, and I was happy to see him.

McIntosh: Sure.

Hansen: And he said he swam for about five hours, and he said you couldn't really see much because you know the waves—.

McIntosh: Waves, right.

Hansen: I mean, you can see 10 feet or so. But he said the whole fleet went over the horizon, and he just thought I'll just keep swimming, and you know it's easier to swim in the ocean than our lakes here because of the salt, and he said all of a sudden some destroyer appeared out of nowhere and picked him up.

McIntosh: Was he with a group, or—.

Hansen: No, he was all by himself. He never saw another person.

McIntosh: Wow, lucky—.

Hansen: You know, a person could be like 40, 50 feet away from you—.

McIntosh: Never see him.

Hansen: And you wouldn't see him, and I don't suppose you stand around yelling because what are you gonna—"Yay, come on over by me." [laughs]

McIntosh: Right.

Hansen: So anyway, then the third day, or May 13th, they announced that we were going start burying the dead. I mean, you've gotta get rid of them, and we all had to go through, and if we saw anybody that we could identify that didn't have dog tags on, we tried to identify them.

McIntosh: Any of 'em from your crew?

Hansen: Oh, we lost four guys.

McIntosh: Of your 30?

Hansen: Yeah. So it was just about, we lost the average, I guess you would say. Then they had, we had a rabbi, a Catholic chaplain, and a Protestant minister aboard, and they all survived. So we, we take a body and lay it on a slab of—like this, and tie a five inch shell on the front of their legs, and it really didn't make much difference, I don't think, but I mean that's the custom of the Navy, I guess. And then if they knew what religion he was they'd all say a little prayer, and we'd dump 'em in the ocean. And that took a long time, you know, when you've got—.

McIntosh: Three hundred people, sure—.

Hansen: Yeah, just a minute apiece is—.

McIntosh: All day long.

Hansen: Yeah. Then we got, then we had to go and start, there were still hundreds missing, you know we didn't have 350 bodies there because there were a lot of people that were dead that were in other parts of the ship that we couldn't get to—.

McIntosh: Oh, you couldn't get to, or hadn't found, or something—.

Hansen: Well, we couldn't get to them until—you had to get rid of the water tight integrity by compartments. If you open a hatch and it's all water in there you gotta get that water out of there someway. So, and then even on the flight deck there were compartments you couldn't get into underneath the flight deck because the doors were like melted shut. So we went—.

McIntosh: Couldn't you cut your way in at all?

Hansen: Well, what we did was we chopped down through the flight deck.

McIntosh: Pulled them out.

Hansen: And it was really—.

McIntosh: That's kind of grisly business.

Hansen: It is, and, you know, if the guy was in perfect shape, and just, you know, screaming and that, he might die like this, and rigor mortis had set in—.

McIntosh: Had trouble getting him out of the hole.

Hansen: And you'd have to like break his arm off or break this hard—.

McIntosh: And everybody turned to [orders] to do this?

Hansen: Oh, yeah.

McIntosh: I don't think I'd like to do it.

Hansen: That was one of the jobs I had there, and you know the first one you do, you know, it might get to you, but then it's just a job. Somebody's gotta get them out of there, and I am sure some people it really bothered, yeah. But I think the worst part of it was, now we're maybe say two weeks into it, and you would go down about three decks, and they'd say, okay, we got this compartment secure, and there's some bodies in there so you go get them out, but we didn't have **[End of Tape 1, Side B]** any gas masks or anything.

McIntosh: Oh, wow.

Hansen: And you'd go in and stink. You'd go in there, and you'd hold your breath, and just drag this body as far as you could, and then run [laughs], and then somebody else would go and drag him a little way. And to get him out of there, you know, it's a nightmare because you've gotta drag him—.

McIntosh: The decomposition is really—.

Hansen: And then take him over the hatch, and then take him up a ladder, and so we did that, and you know that whole—it took us about a month to get back to the United States, and we stopped at Pearl Harbor for I think one day. I don't know why they did. They sort of tidied up the ship. Well, we pushed all the planes, the remaining planes off that were on the flight deck into the drink 'cause they were all damaged, and that, I remember what I told you, but I don't remember anything else about that part of it. It took us a month—.

McIntosh: Those people that you dragged out three weeks or four later, you didn't have any ceremonies for them, you just dumped them over the side?

Hansen: No, no, they had—they always had—.

McIntosh: They went through the same routine?

Hansen: Right.

McIntosh: So they went back to the United States, and you got a 30 day [leave]?

Hansen: Right. And being one of the newer ones on the ship, I got the last 30 days, because two-thirds of them stayed. The first went 30, 30, and I was home, I got home from I think August 1st to September 1st, roughly. I was home on V-J Day.

McIntosh: I was gonna say, you were home on the—.

Hansen: And I hate to put this on tape, but I got drunker than a hoot owl [laughs].

McIntosh: Why not? [laughs] That's the thing to do.

Hansen: And the next day, the next day I got home about 4:30 in the morning. And the next day, my mother—well, with nine kids you know she's a good Catholic person, she woke me up, and she says, "You know Jerry, today's a holy day: You gotta go to church." [McIntosh laughs] I said, "Oh, mother, I don't think," she says, "In this house we go to church on holy days." [both laugh]

McIntosh: The rules didn't change just because you went to war.

Hansen: No, no sympathy from her, so I got up and went to church. But a strange thing happened when we got back to the United States. We—they had some telephones on the dock there, and I think they had three or four of them so they—and we couldn't write home or anything during this period of time, you know from May 11th until we got back. And even if we did, the mail was still there from before that time. So anyway, they said, "You can get off the ship and get in those lines, and you can make one phone call: So be prepared to make that one phone call." I must have stood in line four hours, got to the phone call, put my quarter in, or whatever it cost at that time—.

McIntosh: The line was busy?

Hansen: No, no. I remember the number. I still remember it today, Prospect 2-8-6-8. I called that number, and this lady answered the phone, and it wasn't my mother. I mean, I says, "Mother." She says, "No". She said, "Is this Jerry Hansen?" I said "Yeah." She said, "This is Mrs. Raymond," this was my best buddy at home [laughs]. I called his number by mistake. And I

said, “Gee, Mrs. Raymond.” I says, “I’m back in the United States.” She said, “Gee, I didn’t know you were gone.” [laughs] I said, “Well, my mother’s probably worried about me so would you call her, and just tell her I’m back in the United States, and I’ll call her tomorrow.” Which I did.

McIntosh: [laughs] Four hours—.

Hansen: And she was very worried because one of my mother’s sisters married one of my dad’s brothers, and they only lived about a block away. And one of the guys—they were all—.

McIntosh: This was in Racine?

Hansen: Yeah, there were four guys from Racine on there, and two of them were killed, and they all really—

McIntosh: On your ship?

Hansen: Yeah, and they already received notice that they were killed, and my—that uncle worked with this guy’s father, and he knew that something bad had happened, and he kept asking, “Have you heard from Jerry? Have you heard from Jerry?”

McIntosh: How long before the newspapers had this story?

Hansen: Oh, it didn’t come out until about—.

McIntosh: Weeks later?

Hansen: No, no, months later.

McIntosh: Months later?

Hansen: In fact, I’ve got one of the copies in here—.

McIntosh: Months later?

Hansen: Yeah, which they delayed everything at that time. Well, they didn’t publish it until after the war ended which was August 15th, August 14th actually.

McIntosh: Did they have a good medical crew onboard your ship?

Hansen: I don’t know.

McIntosh: Never saw 'em?

Hansen: No, I never—one day, you hated to go there because the hospital part—I never even saw the hospital part of the ship. I never once went down there for anything. And one day I fainted in the chow line: You know it was real hot, and we had been working all night practically—.

McIntosh: Dehydrated.

Hansen: And this guy just got me a glass of water, and I drank it, and I stayed in the chow line [both laugh]. But you know, what I think now, they gave us like two salt pills every day with our breakfast, and you know I think now, I wonder if that was really good for us [both laugh].

McIntosh: Oh, it wouldn't hurt. How about the Atabrine? Did they give you Atabrine, or no?

Hansen: No, that's all we ever got was the salt tablets, and we did get, what, quinine for malaria.

McIntosh: Oh, then you got quinine, that's right.

Hansen: Yeah.

McIntosh: Were those Atabrine tablets?

Hansen: No, that's the only two things they ever had there, salt tablets and quinine.

McIntosh: Atabrine did the same thing.

Hansen: Oh.

McIntosh: All right. So you got out right away, and then what?

Hansen: Oh, no, then we went back, when I went back—oh, I've got a picture over there: It's sort of interesting because I had a good friend—he was about a year older than me, and he was, he was in combat over in Europe for about three days, and he got captured by the Germans. He was a prisoner, and he got out when the war ended over there, not out, but I mean out of the prison camp, and he was home on leave when I was home. And then another guy who had served his 25 missions as a bombardier was home. So we had a pretty good time.

McIntosh: Drinking.

Hansen: Yeah, a lot of it. Well, then we went back to, went back to the ship,

and—.

McIntosh: Of course it was in dry dock by this time.

Hansen: Oh yeah, we went right on the dry dock when we came back, and there were thousands of workers on it [McIntosh laughs]. I mean, you really have to admire those guys. They did a fast, great job, but with every one of them—well, it wasn't over when we got there so every one of them, you had a CO2 bottle, a fire extinguisher, and every worker had to have a sailor with them, that fire extinguisher, so that was our duty to be—.

McIntosh: Follow all these guys around?

Hansen: Yup.

McIntosh: With acetylene torches.

Hansen: Right, and we got liberty every third night there. And we got a new—we only had one officer: We had a lieutenant in charge of our division, and we had a chief petty officer, and then the first class, and the chief petty officer had been on a carrier that got sunk, and he should never have been in combat anymore because he was a complete wreck. He was useless, as far as we were concerned, and he knew it: He'd just delegate everything to the first class petty officer. The lieutenant that we had never really met with us. I mean, he just met with the first class petty officer, and—.

McIntosh: What was your rating?

Hansen: Well, I ended up as a third class petty officer, aviation boatswain's mate, parentheses, arresting gear, (AG), third class. So anyway, this ensign that they assigned to us in lieu of the chief petty officer and the lieutenant, his name was Ensign Krause, and he had been in the Navy for 90 days [laughs]. I mean, he was a "90 day wonder" out of college, and he, he really came in there—he was like—I think he was 19 years old, and he tried to be a buddy with us, which you know officers shouldn't do that, shouldn't be buddies with the crew because the crew—.

McIntosh: Then you can't give them orders.

Hansen: No, the crew will just murder you.

McIntosh: Right. They'll run right over the top of you.

Hansen: So he was there about three days, and he would—we had to muster at the ship. You know, we couldn't sleep on the ship so we were sleeping in some barracks in Charleston [South Carolina] which was half a mile away

from the shipyard. And we were supposed to muster every day to get the assignments for the fire extinguisher and so forth. He'd be there, and he didn't know any of us so he'd say, "Hansen." "Here." "Christano." "Here." And he'd go through it, and he'd say, "You know, I've got like 28 names here, and there's only 10 guys here." [McIntosh laughs]. He said, "You can't all be here. What's your name?" And you'd say, "What do you want it to be?" We were really nasty to him, and he refused to think that we were being insubordinate. I mean, he just—he would refuse to do it. So we got away with that: I mean, he never did anything, he always reported that we were all there, all present and accounted for. So, and there were some married guys, and their wives came out there, and they were living in these barracks so one day we decided to have a baseball game between the married guys and the single guys, and he wanted to get involved in that. We says okay 'cause he was single. "Yeah, come on over. You can be on our team." So he came over there, and of course we had all kinds of beer and that, and they start feeding him beer with whiskey in it, and he got drunker than a hoot owl, and he had the 8 o'clock [laughs] watch on the ship. God, we said, "Boy, Mr. Krause, you're in no shape to go and stand that watch. You better take a shower." So we put him in the shower with all his clothes off, and we took 'em back to the ship [laughs]. Oh, and he—I mean, I really, you know, in retrospect felt sorry for the guy.

McIntosh: That's really tormenting him.

Hansen: Yeah. And then we used too—then, after we—they got the ship repaired, we went to San Diego and got another flight crew, a squadron on there and went to Pearl Harbor, and I don't know if it was to train the squadron, or if it was to test all the ship, you know, because all the arresting gear was practically new now. So then we came back to Seattle, and they welded five high bunks all over the hangar deck, just—.

McIntosh: Now this is about September, after the war?

Hansen: Well, it's probably, we're probably into November now because—.

McIntosh: They still wouldn't let you out.

Hansen: Oh, no, we had been with the crew, I mean the squadron, so they said we're in the, I think they called it the "Magic Carpet Fleet" [troopships] that there were millions of guys out in the Pacific that had no way to get home.

McIntosh: That's what it was for.

Hansen: So we went to the Philippines: We went right from Seattle to the Philippines, and—oh, I know when it was now because it was over New Year's Eve, and so it was like December that we left, and that was over New Year's Eve, and we still had lookouts for mines and that, and they spotted some mines, and my God, you think we could shoot that mine up that we spent [laughs] half a million dollars worth of ammunition, and we never could because it's hard to shoot down to the water. And we were alone, there were no other ships with us, and the skipper finally said, "Ah, to heck with it." He says, "It's probably a fake mine anyway." So we just went on our way.

McIntosh: How many people did you bring back?

Hansen: Well, I don't know. It just seemed like there were thousands of them because they were five high, and there's—and I think I got a picture of that part of it, too. We took them back, and then the chow line—we didn't have any different mess hall, the chow lines ran 24 hours a day, and the crew, these were all, none of them were sailors, they either were soldiers or Marines, mostly Army guys, so that you could tell who was in the crew and who wasn't. And we could always go to the head of the chow line, they had to let us in there, and—but they would go and eat, and they would just go to the end of the chow line, that's all they did. And then go eat again, chow line, eat again [laughs]. And then we had certain places where they could take a shower, and they changed that so that they showered in salt water, but then there'd be a beep or something, and fresh water would come out for like 15 seconds, you rinse off, you get out of there. So we went to the Philippines and came back, and I ran into one guy I knew, that I was with in high school or grade school, that I went to the head of the chow line, and he was right in front of me. His name was Richard Dubuque. I remember his name. He said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "What are you doing here?" [both laugh] So anyway, we came back from there, then we went to Guam and brought home another bunch of guys. And then we went to, I think it was Saipan, and we brought home another bunch of guys, and then apparently everybody that was supposed to come home was home, and then we took the ship, and we took it I think to Pier 81 in Seattle, and we started decommissioning it. And in early June of 1946 I got a call, I thought, "Oh, my god, I haven't goofed up." But I got a call from somebody over the loudspeaker to appear at the gangway, and he said, "Here's orders for 200 guys." He said, "And you're the senior [laughs] sailor here in this group." He says, "We're gonna transport you down to the railroad station and take you to Great Lakes for discharge." So I was in charge of these 200 guys, a third class petty officer, and—.

McIntosh: That's the way it went.

Hansen: That's it.

McIntosh: So have you kept track of any of your shipmates?

Hansen: Well, you know it's sort of strange, but this "Mouse" will not correspond with me, and I think he's embarrassed—.

McIntosh: That he jumped?

Hansen: Yeah, and I don't know why because—.

McIntosh: People do things when they're stressed.

Hansen: That's right, but I've written to him many times, and I know he's alive because I see guys at the reunion, but he will not—

McIntosh: But you've heard nothing?

Hansen: Nothing, he will not respond. I sent him Christmas cards.

McIntosh: Oh, that's a shame.

Hansen: And then there's another guy that I went through boot camp with, and he was in the barrier section, and he jumped over the side, and he had to jump because that's right where, I mean I'm sure of that. But one day I was up in Columbus, Wisconsin, and I saw him on the street. I said, "John", his name was John Gorsuch. I said, "John, what are you doing here?" And he says, "Oh, I'm the manager of this," oh, elevator or something, something, because he was from Cambria, Wisconsin, in farming. And I said, "Geez, I live in Madison, why don't we get together?" So he says, "Okay." So we arrange where he and his wife and myself and my wife went out to dinner.

McIntosh: Oh, that was nice.

Hansen: And it's the same thing, that he, he was transferred out of there, and I've corresponded with him: He will not correspond with me. A lot of other fellas, I mean, I do correspond.

McIntosh: How about Marc Mitscher, you ever meet him up at Hillsboro?

Hansen: No [laughs].

McIntosh: You saw him at reunions?

Hansen: No, he never—no, because, see, he was born in 1886 [1887].

McIntosh: Right, he was old.

Hansen: Oh, yeah, but in 1970 when we had the reunion in San Diego –

McIntosh: He was still alive?

Hansen: No, but his wife was there.

McIntosh: Oh, how nice.

Hansen: Yeah, she came, and we had a memorial service for all the guys who died and that at that time. Yeah, I've gotta go to the bathroom.

McIntosh: Oh, okay. Well, we've run out of soap anyway.

Hansen: Okay.

McIntosh: I just wanna set this, and I'll show you.

[End of Interview]