

## Hannes Martin Andersen

Born: Nov 1, 1917  
on Island

Died: Feb 5, 2010  
Island

Period of Service: WW II  
Sources: Cemetery,  
Separation papers, bio by  
daughter Christine, Dick  
Purinton interview

Went to State Teachers College, Platteville, Wisconsin 1936-38. Then taught in a one room schoolhouse in Appleport School in Sister Bay 1938-41.

Enlisted as a cadet in Merchant Marines Dec 3, 1941, four days before Pearl Harbor. Took four months training in Merchant Marine school in engineering, GE Turbo-electric school and oil burning school. Went into active service in Honolulu. Served aboard USS Thomas Jefferson where he was taken into the Navy itself in 1942. Sent to a rescue mission to the Philippines and throughout his service was on board USS Bexar, USS Medusa, USS Kailoa, USS Bivin (in Boston Navy Yard), USS George F. Elliott, and USS McGaffin. Spent most of his active service in the Pacific theater during WW II including New Guinea, the Admiralty Islands, and the Philippines. He became squadron ordnance officer.

His medals include WW II Victory medal, American Area Campaign, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, Philippine Defense medal, Philippine Liberation Medal, and Merchant Marine Combat.

Retired active service Jan 23, 1947 as first Lt and immediately joined naval reserve, serving till Jan 7, 1973, giving him 31 years in the Navy and the Naval Reserve, and finally retired altogether in 1977 as captain.

After a short period in sales in the San Francisco area, he joined the Oakland fire department on Jan 1, 1950. After serving 27 years he retired as Battalion Chief.

He then came back to the Island in 1977, and was a member of the Am Legion Post for 32 years, serving as Post historian, and Commander in 1983. He created a form that documented the biographical and military data for members of the American Legion Gislason-Richter Post 402, which form supplied much military data on recent members of the Post. He was a member of the Island Fire Department for 7 years, of the Farm Museum for 9 years, and the rescue squad for 6 years. He also was a member of Trinity Lutheran Church board for 30 years.

He wintered in Mesa, AZ where he liked to collect rocks for a craft hobby. He was married to his wife, Betty, from Sturgeon Bay, for 51 years. He had two daughters, Christine, who has helped supply material for the Island Archives, and Wendi Leyba.

The following is a review of notes from an interview Dick Purinton had with Hannes on July 15, 2009 at Hannes' home on West Harbor Road, Washington Island. Hannes was 91 years old at the time, fell shortly afterwards, and was taken off the Island where he died the following February. Hannes was working on a book about commercial fishing on the Island at the time of the interview. He says, "I was so taken with stories of commercial fishing. I grew into a fan and spent practically all my time there (at the Archives.) I waited to do an all maritime book.

*Purinton: How or why the interest?*

## Hannes Martin Andersen

Close relations of Hannes were fishing. George (Sr.), Russ and Spencer Nelson were fishermen. Spencer married Hannes' sister Sis, and became a brother-in-law to Spen. Despite this relationship, Hannes had made only two fishing trips on a gillnetter, one trip with Russ and Spen on the *Jane*, and one trip with Jake Ellefson on the *Miss Judy*.

*Purinton: How did your Navy path come about?*

"In 1941 I was teaching at Appleport School (on Old Stage Road near Sister Bay). I received a 1-A on the draft. I didn't want to be a dogface. The Merchant Marine was looking for cadets, so I filled out an application. I sat for six hours taking exams...algebra; geometry; physics. I had gone to Platteville for two years, and had received a teaching associate degree.

"I passed high enough and they gave me a choice: New York, New Orleans, or San Francisco. I went to the San Francisco Merchant Marine Academy, then called the US Merchant Marine Cadet Corps, located on Treasure Island. When I graduated, I signed up for deck, but I was changed to engineering. I then took a course originally designed for four years, but it had been reduced to three years. Then I was sent aboard a Merchant ship for one year for practical engineering. I was the first engineering cadet to leave the school, and I sailed on the *President Grant*.

"This would have been very early in November of 1941.

"We started our voyage 33612, a four month trip around the world. I was assigned work with the maintenance men descaling evaporers, and tearing down machinery. We finally left SF for Honolulu November 16<sup>th</sup> to sail to Manila. We were kept near Hawaii overnight for reasons then unknown to us, and we lay to off Pearl Harbor for the first convoy across the Pacific.

"The cruiser *Boise* formed convoy Nov 17<sup>th</sup> to Dec 4<sup>th</sup> to make Manila, along with some old WW I freighters. We carried enough fuel on board to make it without stops.

"One of the first days in December, not yet in sight of Yap, a Japanese man-o-war was sighted, hull down. We sent a scout plane overhead, and after that the cruiser steamed on the freighter's port side." (For better cover, since war had not yet broken out.)

*Purinton: Why did this convoy sail, and what was the purpose?*

"We carried Norden bombsights for MacArthur's B-17's B-17s. Mac was in the Philippines, and was in command of the US Army there."

*Purinton: Was there a feeling war was about to break out?*

"I never sensed that, really."

"December 4<sup>th</sup> we had arrived in Manila. We were to unload, and there was a threat of trouble. The Army wanted to use a 502-class vessel powered by two 4 cylinder-triple expansion engines. They were called the 'missionary special' the cheapest way for US missionaries to get to Asia and Africa.

## Hannes Martin Andersen

“My half-brother came to America in the *Grant*. She was built in 1923 for the American President line, a big line. The 535 class did 15 knots with a turbine. 15 ¼ knots was designed speed, 13 knots cruising speed.

“Ten days after the war broke out, we had all six boilers on line, and we made 17.1 knots on one watch while on our way through the Philippine Islands, and as a result, we wiped out a couple of bearings. The shaft would rotate at 98 turns, and we oiled by hand. Each oiler had his own can. The oiler sanded the bottom of the can thin so that he could sling a good amount of oil. The Cross heads were connected to the crankshaft with piston rods connected by big yokes. You put your thumb on the bottom of the can and gave it a sideways motion to sling the oil against the moving parts.

There were multiple horseshoe thrust bearings, and babbited bearings around the shaft. We kept oil cups full--- ten per thrust bearing shaft. These were oil cups with brass wool in them.

We came back to the US, and were assigned to a Liberty Ship, the *Thomas Jefferson*, in Puget Sound. She had been built on the West Coast. We loaded lumber--- a deck load from Port Angeles to San Francisco, then we joined a convoy to Honolulu. The lumber went to Pier 1, at Fort Armstrong.

“We did have some concern for Jap subs. There had been several attacks. At 9 o'clock at night, our convoy was past the Farallon Islands, and at 2100 we changed course when there was a severe blow to our starboard side. It turned out we were struck amidships by one of our own in the convoy. The bow of the ship --- a WWI Hog Islander, 300 foot long, built at Hog Island, PA, had rammed us in the starboard side, and we lost our starboard fuel oil service tank, punctured, and wiped out one of the davits, not far from my own stateroom.

“We unloaded lumber at Fort Armstrong. During the time of our transit, I had become good friends with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asst Engineer. I got the day off to visit Waikiki Beach. He had asked me if I had ever seen it, and I said ‘No.’ So we did. We spent the night in a hotel. Well, the *Jefferson* had moved during the night to another spot. We found out the Army had taken over the ship and put the Navy aboard. (It was no longer Merchant Marine.)

“I was offered a commission as an ensign, rather than the midshipman I had been, and so I stayed right on the ship. An Academy grad (Naval Academy) was Chief Engineer, but because he had little actual experience in the engine room, I was asked to become the practical engineer, while the Chief Engineer,, my senior, would do the paperwork. I had never had my hands on the throttle, but I knew the theory.

“ The Philippines were working around the clock to load food and supplies for McArthur in Manila. It was Good Friday,, and I was paid off from my service with the Merchant Marine -- \$500 -- which I sent home by Western Union.

“The ship had five holds -- three forward of the engine room spaces, and two aft. Our concern was capture by a Jap vessel. Just forward of the fireroom and engine room we carried two explosive charges. The Skipper and Exec wore a key around their necks, because we were going into Marvelos Bay at Bataan. We were loaded with ammunition and everything.

## Hannes Martin Andersen

"We got underway on Easter Sunday, and the Skipper called the officers into the wardroom. The Chief Engineer asked me to come along. The Skipper said he had orders and a route from the Army. Those orders were either to 1 anchor and discharge the Army's cargo and then leave port, or 2 anchor and scuttle the ship after unloading onto PT boats, or 3 run the ship aground, then discharge the cargo, and then blow up the ship.

"Then the Skipper said this would be a democratic vote. 'What plan do you prefer?' No one said anything. Then he turned to me and said, 'Andy, what plan do you prefer' I said I wasn't qualified, as the junior there, to make such a decision. 'On the contrary,' the Skipper said, 'You're running the plant. I want your opinion, and that's an order.'

"My reply to the Skipper was, 'I had made it out of Manila once, after the war started. If we still had a sound vessel, I'd stay with the vessel.' Every hand went up. 'That would have been my decision,' the Skipper said. 'I'll go up to the colonel's office and say, 'There's your ship. Now join it.'

"We would be totally by ourselves and not in a convoy. The sad thing was, we had a noisy plant. Ever since that ship was built it had a deep-pitched moan from the bearings, perhaps an alignment problem. When our ship was loaded and we were just about ready to leave port, we received a message from the Navy: Corregidor has fallen.

"Later, I was ordered to take over a cable layer ship for the Navy, the *SS Dickerson*, less than 200 feet long. It had only 800 hp, a triple expansion engine. Three to four times each year we loaded it up with supplies for Midway, Christmas Island, the Fanning Islands. We kept about five men as a regular crew, then we signed on civilian sailors to fill the roster. There were many men ashore looking for work.

"We took the ship to Milne Bay, New Guinea. We were to lay an anti-sub cable between the two points of the harbor entrance, but it turned out to be so deep that we couldn't do it. You could have no more than 30 fathoms for an anti-sub cable."

*Purinton: what happened to your first ship? Did you reach the Philippines?*

"Harkening back to how we got out of going to Manila on the *President Grant*...we had been laying at Pier 7 (Manila), and more and more ships were being sunk in the harbor. Our skipper asked for shipping orders to sail that evening. We left port with nav lights. Our navigation officers used bearings taken from the wrecks. This was prior to radar. The US port protection had 36" arc searchlights beamed toward Bataan, so that no ship could sneak into the harbor. Our ship's officer had the code for the searchlights so that we wouldn't be illuminated.

"We headed through the San Bernardino Straits. We were ordered to get rid of all flammables. We threw all the deck chairs over the side, all of the flammables such as strong-backs from the tarps, and we painted the ship grey. Everyone turned to.

"We were concerned about Japanese aircraft from Formosa. There was no attack on the first day. The second day Nicholas Field fighters could put out nearly all aircraft at once. One fighter was airborne, but the pilot ditched in the water near the breakwall. Japanese twin-engined-Betty Bombers kept dropping lower when no A-A guns were seen. The *Grant's* skipper used German charts dating back to 1880. There

## Hannes Martin Andersen

were no standard shipping channels then. All six Scotch boilers were online. We made it to Darwin, Australia, and we took on a pilot there.

“But they thought we might be an enemy vessel, because they couldn’t believe we had just left Manila harbor. We were questioned about the ‘George’ flag (King George?) What ship were we? What line? Due to flotsam picked up by the Japanese navy, Tokyo Rose had reported this ship, now called the *Grant*, had been sunk. But our vessel had been named the *President Adams* previously, and it was named the *President Grant* when a new ship was built.

“Gregory Cullen, a former skipper of our ship, had been known as a close friend of Mussolini’s ...which made the Australians nervous. Nothing seemed to match they later told us. The Jacob’s ladder was lowered for the pilot.... Who was ordered that if we were a spy ship, then he would ring up only slow turns ahead and the Aussies would blow it out of the water. If it weren’t a spy ship the pilot would hoist a flag.”

*Purinton: Were there any civilians from Manila onboard?*

“In Manila, we had moored port side to the largest pier – Pier 7. Opposite our ship was another President Line ship that had just brought civilians over from Shanghai. Our ship was about to be ordered to Shanghai to pick up civilians there, too, but our reefer hold was filled with beef which the Army wanted, and so the *Harrison* was sent to Shanghai instead. We had 130 civilians on board but they had all been removed to a shore hotel. *The President Harrison* was run aground when chased by a Jap man-of-war. Other civilians lost their lives when their ships were sunk by the Japanese.

“Outside of Thursday Island, Queensland, while waiting for a pilot, our crew found a tree ashore, and with a lot of Christmas gear on board for Singapore, our crew broke into the stores, and gave gifts to the children. We discharged passengers at Brisbane and Sidney on New Year’s Day. It was about 100 degrees, and we were loaded with wool and lead. Then, on to Wellington, NZ, with overcast skies all of the way. It was entirely by dead reckoning.

“Our Third Mate, ‘Whitey’ Thorstenson, put the engine room on standby notice as a matter of standard practice when making a landfall. Engineers had just got the condensate out of the reversing tubes when the command came to ‘REVERSE! REVERSE! REVERSE!’

“A huge bluff was staring at us in the fog. This was around 4 PM. We threw an orange crate over the side to gauge our forward movement. I was staring at these vertical bluffs. We could not have lowered the lifeboats in time.

“While in New Zealand, we took on about 60 New Zealand air force pilots and some freight, then we went south of the southern island until we reached the south end of South America, then came up the west coast. We had plenty of fuel – bunker fuel – so we had a great cruising range, but our poor evaporators weren’t working well and we were getting gaddy off for fresh water. So we did take on some water.”

*This is the end of Dick Purniton’s notes from his interview with Hannes Andersen.*

## Hannes Martin Andersen



## Hannes Martin Andersen

