

Cpl Raymond Paul Hansen

Born Jan 25, 1926
on Island

Died:

Service #36993741

Period of Service: WW II
Sources: *B10F 2, svc quest-
ionnaire, monument, JGay
interview, J, Am Legion
scrapbook- box 17*

Entered service July 1, 1944 at Milwaukee. Discharged 5/14/1946 Camp McCoy, WI.

Trained at Ft Sill, Oklahoma in field artillery as Cpl. Stationed in Philippines with Btry A 97th Battalion.

Philippines Liberation ribbon, Asia Pacific service.

Joined American Legion Post 402 in 1945. Was commander of the post in 1954-55, 1964, and 1970.

Married Barbara Joyce Christenson on April 4, 1948, who is a very good pianist and singer and is in large measure responsible for the culture of music in the family and on the Island. Her son Dan plays piano and guitar well and has also contributed to music on the Island, having been involved with teaching music in the school and the formation of the singing group known as the "Faithful Friends", and the running of the Red Barn for many summer programs.

Ray is the son of Jens and Josie. He's the current oil man on the Island, and he and Barb have a greenhouse to provide the Island with flowers. (JG) See John Gay interview.



VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT
Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Ray Hansen

Conducted by Mr. John Gay

August 10, 2010

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library
in partnership with the Library of Congress

This is John Gay. It is August 10, 2010 and I am interviewing Ray Hansen on Washington Island at his home, on East Side Road and Town Line Road. We're going to find out about Ray's experiences in the military and record it for the archives.

Entering Military Service

Ray, where were you when you went into the service? Were you here on the island?

Well, I graduated from high school. The day after I graduated I went into the service.

It didn't take long!

I had already had my physical and they were waiting for me!

What year was it?

1944 – in May of 1944.

Where did you go into the service?

I went to Milwaukee or Madison, and they transferred me immediately to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Your basic training was down there at Fort Sill?

I went to field artillery, and Fort Sill is known for that.

Was that the first eight weeks of basic?

Sixteen weeks.

So you were in the middle of summer in 1944 at that time. Was it warm down there?

It wasn't that bad.

You put up with it.

Yes.

After that, what was your assignment?

Well, after the sixteen weeks I got a leave to come home for a week or two. Then we were assigned to go to Fort Ord, California.

Near San Francisco.

Right outside San Francisco.

Then, around the first of the year of 1945 we got on a big transport ship where they carried cargo and military people.

What was your rank at that time?

I was a private.

What do they train you in the artillery to do?

Actually, it was in the mule pack – where they transport their .75mm guns with mules. You take them apart, take the howitzer apart in about six different pieces, put them on the mules and transport them that way.

Did you actually have mules to transport them?

Yes. It was pretty popular in Italy. They used the mule pack a lot there. But that was the .75mm and was the biggest they could transport by mules.

Did somebody take care of the mules?

Yes. That was part of the job. Everybody took their turn. But after we got overseas we got into the bigger stuff, where you towed them with big trucks.

Duty in the Pacific

Where did you get sent from Fort Ord?

We landed in New Caledonia, which is right off Australia.

Was that the Solomon Islands?

No.

From there they sent us up to Leyte and Manila. I was there for quite some time. We were still training for a time, naturally, because we weren't used to the bigger guns.

When I got there, there were guys who had been overseas four years already. We were replacing those guys.

At Leyte?

Yes, in Leyte.

How long were you in Leyte?

Well, I spent all of the rest of my time overseas in the Philippines.

Things progressed and it appeared like we were going to invade Japan. We were still at Leyte when they used the big bomb. But we still weren't sure. They moved us up to Manila. We spent the rest of my time overseas in the Manila area.

On that big base there in Manila?

Yes.

So you didn't get into combat, then.

No, I never got into direct combat.

Because they were winding down the Pacific Campaign as soon as the big bombs went off.

Yeah.

I know the guys were afraid they were going to have to go to Japan and invade that after Okinawa.

I would have had to go. I'm sure of that.

So you were thankful that Truman dropped the bomb.

Yes. Who wants to start killing people.

So what were your duties in Leyte? Did you have to continue in a sort of training mode when the war ended?

We were still kind of just standing by. We played a lot of baseball over there. We had a big tournament of all the teams in that whole area. I was involved with playing against a bunch of big-time players. Joe Garagiola was the manager of the Manila Dodgers. They had Early Wynn; he was their shortstop.

Shortstop? Really.

Well, he didn't want to ruin his arm pitching, so he played shortstop. And he was a great guy. They beat us in the tournament, but we played them. I forget now what the score was. I think they beat us something like 5 to 2.

That was credible.

We were competitive.

What did you play?

I was the pitcher.

Very good. So you pitched against Early Wynn when he wasn't pitching! He played for the Sox. He got his 300th win with the Sox.

Right. At that time he was with Cleveland.

Right. For years.

That's how he came up in the majors – with Cleveland.

Were there any other Washington Island guys who were with you in the service? Did anyone go with you?

Well, I had a funny experience. Writing back and forth I'd get some newsletters from Washington Island. My brother, Richard, was a third lieutenant on a victory ship anchored in Manila Bay. By corresponding back and forth – we had the same APO numbers – when I realized where he was I went to my superior officers and asked them if I could go and see if I could find my brother. They gave me permission to go. There's a bunch of islands around Leyte.

First of all, I got permission to go. They gave me a week. I didn't get that much time, but it took me that time to cover my whole program getting over there and back. The first day out we got on a supply ship where they take supplies and the mail to all the area – all the ships and everything. So the first time I went, the first day out, I had to get off at an island called Samara, that's part of the Philippines. So this supply ship let me off and they were going to pick me up the next day. So I got off and slept in the barracks at another Army base. The next day I got aboard the ship – crawled up the side.

On a ladder.

No, it wasn't a ladder. It was one of those nets hanging down.

The kind they use to bring the freight up in.

I'm not sure.

Anyway, I got up and spent about two days on board that ship with my brother.

So he was there and you found him. Very good. I'll bet he was surprised.

He still couldn't believe it that I was actually able to do that.

When we were kids we always played cards. On the ship everybody played bridge. I didn't know how to play bridge, but I learned how to play it pretty quick. So I spent two days learning how to play bridge with the captain and the whole crew.

On board the ships they have pretty good food – not that we didn't have good food, too. But on the ships it was a little better.

But then, on the way back, it took longer. It took an extra day to get back because the boat wasn't stopping at all the ports. So after I got back I reported and told them how everything went, and everybody was satisfied.

Good. How far is Leyte from Manila Bay?

Well, it's just about the whole distance of the island. I'm not sure how long that would be.

But they weren't in the neighborhood.

No. We had to get on another ship when they transported everything. It took us at least two days, maybe three. But then I spent the balance of my time in Manila.

Were there any particular duties you had to do? Did you still have to continue training?

No. Not at that point.

Returning to the United States and Discharge from the Service

When did you get out, then, Ray?

I spent about 18 months over in the Philippines. I got out in about April of 1946.

So you were in two years.

A little short of two years.

How did you get back? Did they have a troop transport back to San Francisco?

Yeah. On the way over it took 36 days to get over there.

Is that right? Did they do a lot of zig-zagging to miss the submarines?

Yes. Coming back it didn't take that long.

A straight shot. Were you discharged then in San Francisco?

No. I had to report back to ... I can't think of the name of the place.

What state was it in?

Wisconsin.

Oh. McCoy?

Yes. That's where I went in and that's where I got discharged. Camp McCoy.

Returning to Civilian Life

Then you came back to the Island, did you? And you stopped pitching, or did you pitch for the Island team?

We organized our county league again. The county league had to stop playing because there wasn't enough personnel to play.

You had a pretty competent team, did you?

We always had a good team. But I had a good experience in the service, like I mentioned. I went to a try-out camp. There were 272 people who were at that try-out camp.

Where was that held?

It was held around Appleton. So, many people signed up, and I got signed up.

Out of 272 people.

Yes. {I was the only one signed out of 272 people.} So I spent two years playing professional ball. I was able to stay on the team – good enough to participate. I could have gone back the third year, I got invited back. But in the meantime I got married and we had a baby, and we decided maybe it was time to settle down.

Did you come back to farm, then?

I worked for other people in the commercial fishing business. But then, when I came back, Standard Oil had Haldur Gudmunson as the agent here on the Island. They had another guy hired, an older man, but they wanted a young man to train so he could take over when Haldur retired, and Haldur asked me if I would do that. And that's how I got to be the Standard Oil agent.

Did you operate off the dock, then?

Yes. Standard Oil owned that. They had me as the agent, but later on they sold out to me as a jobber. So I bought their property and operated it as an agent.

When did you meet Barbara and get married?

She's an Island girl. We got married in 1948.

So you were just out of the service two years when you got married. What kind of pay did you get as a professional ball player?

I can't remember.

Free agency wasn't out there yet (chuckles).

It was enough money to survive on. The professional is where the team pays their players to play. Semi-pro's is different. In semi-pro's one or two people get paid and the rest wouldn't get anything. But this was like the major leagues.

What team was it that you were on?

I was affiliated with the Cleveland Indians.

Were you? I can remember Cleveland won the series in 1948. I was there. I went to a couple of games. I was going to school in Cleveland, and a friend of mine who was pretty well-off. He had his son – he sent some tickets to his son and he shared them with me. So I saw two of the World Series games in Cleveland.

Who pitched? Did Bob Feller pitch?

Yes. We saw Feller pitch. Bob Hope was there. Joe Louis was there. I got his autograph. They were good games. I really enjoyed that. And I had a chance to go to a third game – there were three games in Cleveland – and my roommate at school was from Panama. He loved baseball but had no way to get to a game. So I said to my friend in Chicago that he could have my ticket if he'd like to go. He thought that was great. So I gave up that ticket. But it was fun. Did you strike out Joe Garagiola?

No. I never played against him. He actually didn't play. He was a catcher for St. Louis. Then he got drafted and went into the service. Then he was managing the Manila Dodgers, but he didn't play. He let another guy play – Joe Ginsberg, his name was. He ended up being a major league ball player also. But he let him catch.

That's nice. So that was a pretty good experience for you. I knew another guy in town – Len Hines was his name – he played in the European area with Ted Williams. So you got back here and went to work for Standard Oil, and then

eventually took over all the operations here for Standard Oil. Shortly after that you began having babies and you had to really work!

I have to tell you something that I think is really quite a thing. I was one of seven brothers – there was 12 in our family: five girls and seven boys. At one time there was five of us older brothers in the service at the same time. The other two – my brother, Ted, later served in Korea; and my other brother, Frank, was in the Marines. All seven of us served in the service.

That's quite an accomplishment. They made a movie about the five brothers who were in the Navy at one time.

Yes. They were all on one ship, weren't they?

Yes. Ray, I appreciate the time. It was a good interview and I'm really glad you did this. I think it will be a nice thing for the archives of Congress, and also for the archives here on the Island. Thanks, Ray.

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT
Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Ray Hansen

Conducted by Mr. John Gay

August 10, 2010

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library
in partnership with the Library of Congress

This is John Gay. It is August 10, 2010 and I am interviewing Ray Hansen on Washington Island at his home, on East Side Road and Town Line Road. We're going to find out about Ray's experiences in the military and record it for the archives.

Entering Military Service

Ray, where were you when you went into the service? Were you here on the island?

Well, I graduated from high school. The day after I graduated I went into the service.

It didn't take long!

I had already had my physical and they were waiting for me!

What year was it?

1944 – in May of 1944.

Where did you go into the service?

I went to Milwaukee or Madison, and they transferred me immediately to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Your basic training was down there at Fort Sill?

I went to field artillery, and Fort Sill is known for that.

Was that the first eight weeks of basic?

Sixteen weeks.

So you were in the middle of summer in 1944 at that time. Was it warm down there?

It wasn't that bad.

You put up with it.

Yes.

After that, what was your assignment?

Well, after the sixteen weeks I got a leave to come home for a week or two. Then we were assigned to go to Fort Ord, California.

Near San Francisco.

Right outside San Francisco.

Then, around the first of the year of 1945 we got on a big transport ship where they carried cargo and military people.

What was your rank at that time?

I was a private.

What do they train you in the artillery to do?

Actually, it was in the mule pack – where they transport their .75mm guns with mules. You take them apart, take the howitzer apart in about six different pieces, put them on the mules and transport them that way.

Did you actually have mules to transport them?

Yes. It was pretty popular in Italy. They used the mule pack a lot there. But that was the .75mm and was the biggest they could transport by mules.

Did somebody take care of the mules?

Yes. That was part of the job. Everybody took their turn. But after we got overseas we got into the bigger stuff, where you towed them with big trucks.

Duty in the Pacific

Where did you get sent from Fort Ord?

We landed in New Caledonia, which is right off Australia.

Was that the Solomon Islands?

No.

From there they sent us up to Leyte and Manila. I was there for quite some time. We were still training for a time, naturally, because we weren't used to the bigger guns.

When I got there, there were guys who had been overseas four years already. We were replacing those guys.

At Leyte?

Yes, in Leyte.

How long were you in Leyte?

Well, I spent all of the rest of my time overseas in the Philippines.

Things progressed and it appeared like we were going to invade Japan. We were still at Leyte when they used the big bomb. But we still weren't sure. They moved us up to Manila. We spent the rest of my time overseas in the Manila area.

On that big base there in Manila?

Yes.

So you didn't get into combat, then.

No, I never got into direct combat.

Because they were winding down the Pacific Campaign as soon as the big bombs went off.

Yeah.

I know the guys were afraid they were going to have to go to Japan and invade that after Okinawa.

I would have had to go. I'm sure of that.

So you were thankful that Truman dropped the bomb.

Yes. Who wants to start killing people.

So what were your duties in Leyte? Did you have to continue in a sort of training mode when the war ended?

We were still kind of just standing by. We played a lot of baseball over there. We had a big tournament of all the teams in that whole area. I was involved with playing against a bunch of big-time players. Joe Garagiola was the manager of the Manila Dodgers. They had Early Wynn; he was their shortstop.

Shortstop? Really.

Well, he didn't want to ruin his arm pitching, so he played shortstop. And he was a great guy. They beat us in the tournament, but we played them. I forget now what the score was. I think they beat us something like 5 to 2.

That was credible.

We were competitive.

What did you play?

I was the pitcher.

Very good. So you pitched against Early Wynn when he wasn't pitching! He played for the Sox. He got his 300th win with the Sox.

Right. At that time he was with Cleveland.

Right. For years.

That's how he came up in the majors – with Cleveland.

Were there any other Washington Island guys who were with you in the service? Did anyone go with you?

Well, I had a funny experience. Writing back and forth I'd get some newsletters from Washington Island. My brother, Richard, was a third lieutenant on a victory ship anchored in Manila Bay. By corresponding back and forth – we had the same APO numbers – when I realized where he was I went to my superior officers and asked them if I could go and see if I could find my brother. They gave me permission to go. There's a bunch of islands around Leyte.

First of all, I got permission to go. They gave me a week. I didn't get that much time, but it took me that time to cover my whole program getting over there and back. The first day out we got on a supply ship where they take supplies and the mail to all the area – all the ships and everything. So the first time I went, the first day out, I had to get off at an island called Samara, that's part of the Philippines. So this supply ship let me off and they were going to pick me up the next day. So I got off and slept in the barracks at another Army base. The next day I got aboard the ship – crawled up the side.

On a ladder.

No, it wasn't a ladder. It was one of those nets hanging down.

The kind they use to bring the freight up in.

I'm not sure.

Anyway, I got up and spent about two days on board that ship with my brother.

So he was there and you found him. Very good. I'll bet he was surprised.

He still couldn't believe it that I was actually able to do that.

When we were kids we always played cards. On the ship everybody played bridge. I didn't know how to play bridge, but I learned how to play it pretty quick. So I spent two days learning how to play bridge with the captain and the whole crew.

On board the ships they have pretty good food – not that we didn't have good food, too. But on the ships it was a little better.

But then, on the way back, it took longer. It took an extra day to get back because the boat wasn't stopping at all the ports. So after I got back I reported and told them how everything went, and everybody was satisfied.

Good. How far is Leyte from Manila Bay?

Well, it's just about the whole distance of the island. I'm not sure how long that would be.

But they weren't in the neighborhood.

No. We had to get on another ship when they transported everything. It took us at least two days, maybe three. But then I spent the balance of my time in Manila.

Were there any particular duties you had to do? Did you still have to continue training?

No. Not at that point.

Returning to the United States and Discharge from the Service

When did you get out, then, Ray?

I spent about 18 months over in the Philippines. I got out in about April of 1946.

So you were in two years.

A little short of two years.

How did you get back? Did they have a troop transport back to San Francisco?

Yeah. On the way over it took 36 days to get over there.

Is that right? Did they do a lot of zig-zagging to miss the submarines?

Yes. Coming back it didn't take that long.

A straight shot. Were you discharged then in San Francisco?

No. I had to report back to ... I can't think of the name of the place.

What state was it in?

Wisconsin.

Oh. McCoy?

Yes. That's where I went in and that's where I got discharged. Camp McCoy.

Returning to Civilian Life

Then you came back to the Island, did you? And you stopped pitching, or did you pitch for the Island team?

We organized our county league again. The county league had to stop playing because there wasn't enough personnel to play.

You had a pretty competent team, did you?

We always had a good team. But I had a good experience in the service, like I mentioned. I went to a try-out camp. There were 272 people who were at that try-out camp.

Where was that held?

It was held around Appleton. So, many people signed up, and I got signed up.

Out of 272 people.

Yes. {I was the only one signed out of 272 people.} So I spent two years playing professional ball. I was able to stay on the team – good enough to participate. I could have gone back the third year, I got invited back. But in the meantime I got married and we had a baby, and we decided maybe it was time to settle down.

Did you come back to farm, then?

I worked for other people in the commercial fishing business. But then, when I came back, Standard Oil had Haldur Gudmunson as the agent here on the Island. They had another guy hired, an older man, but they wanted a young man to train so he could take over when Haldur retired, and Haldur asked me if I would do that. And that's how I got to be the Standard Oil agent.

Did you operate off the dock, then?

Yes. Standard Oil owned that. They had me as the agent, but later on they sold out to me as a jobber. So I bought their property and operated it as an agent.

When did you meet Barbara and get married?

She's an Island girl. We got married in 1948.

So you were just out of the service two years when you got married. What kind of pay did you get as a professional ball player?

I can't remember.

Free agency wasn't out there yet (chuckles).

It was enough money to survive on. The professional is where the team pays their players to play. Semi-pro's is different. In semi-pro's one or two people get paid and the rest wouldn't get anything. But this was like the major leagues.

What team was it that you were on?

I was affiliated with the Cleveland Indians.

Were you? I can remember Cleveland won the series in 1948. I was there. I went to a couple of games. I was going to school in Cleveland, and a friend of mine who was pretty well-off. He had his son – he sent some tickets to his son and he shared them with me. So I saw two of the World Series games in Cleveland.

Who pitched? Did Bob Feller pitch?

Yes. We saw Feller pitch. Bob Hope was there. Joe Louis was there. I got his autograph. They were good games. I really enjoyed that. And I had a chance to go to a third game – there were three games in Cleveland – and my roommate at school was from Panama. He loved baseball but had no way to get to a game. So I said to my friend in Chicago that he could have my ticket if he'd like to go. He thought that was great. So I gave up that ticket. But it was fun. Did you strike out Joe Garagiola?

No. I never played against him. He actually didn't play. He was a catcher for St. Louis. Then he got drafted and went into the service. Then he was managing the Manila Dodgers, but he didn't play. He let another guy play – Joe Ginsberg, his name was. He ended up being a major league ball player also. But he let him catch.

That's nice. So that was a pretty good experience for you. I knew another guy in town – Len Hines was his name – he played in the European area with Ted Williams. So you got back here and went to work for Standard Oil, and then

eventually took over all the operations here for Standard Oil. Shortly after that you began having babies and you had to really work!

I have to tell you something that I think is really quite a thing. I was one of seven brothers – there was 12 in our family: five girls and seven boys. At one time there was five of us older brothers in the service at the same time. The other two – my brother, Ted, later served in Korea; and my other brother, Frank, was in the Marines. All seven of us served in the service.

That's quite an accomplishment. They made a movie about the five brothers who were in the Navy at one time.

Yes. They were all on one ship, weren't they?

Yes. Ray, I appreciate the time. It was a good interview and I'm really glad you did this. I think it will be a nice thing for the archives of Congress, and also for the archives here on the Island. Thanks, Ray.