

Honoring & Remembering

– Marvin Hanson

Second Class Boatswain Mate Marvin Hanson was born to Irving and Rosie Hanson at Meckling.

He enlisted in the Navy in 1942. His first train ride took him to Des Moines, IA where he was sworn into the Navy on Oct. 7, 1942. Training camp took place in Great Lakes Training Center in North Chicago, IL. After his 30-day stint there, Melvin was sent home on a 10 day leave. His next destination was aboard a Merchant Marine ship, in California, headed for Noumea, New Caledonia.

On New Year's Eve of 1942 he was assigned to the USS President Jackson as a seaman.

Like many of the ships at that time, his was a converted luxury liner. In 1941, it became an attack transport ship for the US Navy. It was part of the Pacific Fleet.

"There were hundreds of feet of steel cable, booms and winches to hoist boats in and out of the water; trucks, guns and supplies were transferred in and out of the holds where they were stored and had to be put in boats and taken to beaches," said Marvin.

The first battle he was in was Feb. 17, 1943. It was a torpedo attack.

"There was a tanker ship with us. If it had been hit there would have been a huge explosion. I was very scared."

It was a daily struggle to control the islands.

"November 1, 1943, they landed third Division Marines on Bougainville," he said. "When the wave hit the beach, the ship had to get under way to repel enemy aircraft. On Nov. 8, we went back to reinforce the Marines. Again and again we went back out to sea to repel bombers. There were about 100 planes out there and 45 dive bombers got through our fighter planes. Five bombs fell around us.

"A 500 pound bomb hit the king post (a big pipe about three feet across and 40 foot high that holds the booms used to unload the ship and is the crows nest as well) and bent the firing pin so it didn't explode. It hit the hole where there 40 barrels of aviation gas was stored, so I guess someone was watching over us."

The USS President Jackson also made several trips to Australia and New Zealand to transport troops for R&R. "It also took on wounded and rigged up jiggling that allowed us to bring three stretchers off a landing craft at one time," he said. "An operating table was set up in the mess hall and we transported wounded to a hospital ship. This took place during the battle for Iwo Jima."

The USS President Jackson earned eight battle stars in the South Pacific.

One of the hardest parts of being in the Navy was not getting mail on a regular basis. Sometime it was four months before any mail would arrive.

Marvin was transferred from the ship in May 1945. He was sent to Norfolk, VA for harbor tug duty, moving and decommis-

sioning ships for seven months. He was discharged on Dec. 28, 1945.

■ CAP

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me if I had dug a foxhole. I said, 'No, I am going to sleep on the Receiver Van roof. There are no Japs within 20 miles!' A Jap shell from a Coastal Artillery gun exploded and that whole area was bombarded all that night.

"We moved inland to a small village early the next morning which was towards Manila about 20 miles. This was our first of three stops to set up our Navy Radio Station. General MacArthur's headquarters was 100 feet away. I saw him once.

Shortly after arriving, Ernie was standing watch, marching around a crowded receiver van.

"Suddenly, two Jap looking men appeared, dressed in sandals, shorts and T Shirt. One of the men has a covered reed basket attached to his belt. Hurriedly, I motioned for them to keep moving. If I was forced to shoot, I might have hit a villager or hit someone from my own unit who is taking a nap before going on watch. They walked straight ahead, turned left, then right onto some railroad tracks. I told my boss. We had a phone hookup with a few soldiers maybe eight blocks away. My boss warned them that two suspected Jap soldiers were heading their way. Our soldiers phoned back that the two were challenged and were shot as they were reaching into the reed basket for the hand grenades. The Japs were tired of the war and were trying to escape into the hills.

"I spent about two-and-a-half months in Tokyo occupation service. After 22 months overseas, I made it home for Christmas. I was honorably discharged May, 24, 1947. I stayed in the active Reserves. I was in my senior year at Creighton University of Omaha when I was called back quite quickly for the Korean War. I obtained a four-month deferment so I could graduate. I met Fran in April of 1950. We got married during this short deferment on Sept. 30, 1950. I served 22 months in the Korean War."



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