

Glen Nielsen

Interviewed by Judy Hansen
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My parents were Sylvia Hansen and Heber Lavel Nielsen. My parents divorced when I was about twelve years old and they both remarried. I was born December 2nd, 1930 in the Provo hospital but when I was young we moved from Provo to the east bench north of where the Mt. Timpanogas temple is in American Fork. That was the old Hansen homestead. We were four miles from the town of American Fork and we didn't have a car; we had a team of horses. A lot of the neighbors around there were like that. I lived there until I was about ten years old and then we moved to American Fork on 5th North and 277 East. I lived there until I got married. I graduated from American Fork High School in 1948.

I was drafted August 14, 1951. There were eight of us from American Fork that got drafted together.

The ones I remember were Ern Hindley, Glade Stiner, Bob Nelson, a Pulley kid, a Jackmen that went through but they declared him a 4-F¹. He had a hernia. I had a large hernia so I didn't think that I would get drafted but the doctor I got checked me over and said, "You'll be fine to go into the service." I said, "What about that hernia doc?" And he said, "They'll take care of it for you in the Army." Ern Hindley had one eye. He got hit in the eye with a baseball and he didn't think he'd get drafted but they drafted him too.

We were inducted into the Army at Fort Douglas. They swore us in and we were there just overnight. They put us on the trains and sent us to Fort Lewis, Washington where we were issued all our clothing. We packed everything in our duffle bags and they put us on the train and sent us down to Camp Roberts, California. It is inland between San Francisco and Los Angeles. That is the worse place I was at the entire two years I was in the Army. It was so hot there. We had basic where we had to run in from the rifle ranges that were maybe four miles out and it was so hot kids toppled over with heat stroke. Even our Captain that was in the orderly room, when some of these Lieutenants would run us in, he would come out and get rid of them because he said he was raised in that country and he couldn't stand that heat so he knew us young guys couldn't stand the heat with a pack and a rifle.



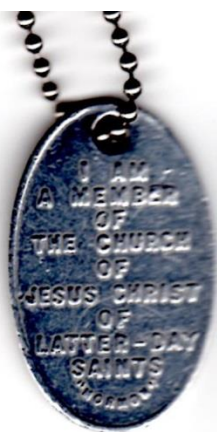
¹ 4-F (US military), is a military classification for candidates found to be unfit for military service after formal examination. Class 4F meant you had one or more medical conditions which totally disqualified you from serving in uniform.

My hernia bothered me quite a bit there but I wasn't going to go in and take care of it because I was trying to stay with my buddies (he laughs) but we all got divided up and they told me everywhere I trained that I was going to Korea. Korea was going pretty strong in 1951. I got lucky. I was pulled out with about fourteen other guys and sent to Wisconsin where I was attached to the 5th anti-aircraft battalion guard unit that got activated and was being sent to Germany.

We had 40 mm and quad-fifty machine guns. That is what they used during the 2nd world war and we were using them at this time. Our purpose when we went to Germany was to defend a bridge that crossed the Rhein River. If the war broke out with Russia they had to get the dependents across that bridge over into France and get them out of there. There was quite a bit of trouble with Russia at that time in Berlin over the Berlin Wall. The Russians were shooting Germans that were trying to escape. We were pretty nervous that something would break loose out there because we were outnumbered by the Russians. They had more troops than we did. Every time something broke lose in Berlin we were put on alert to go down, set up our guns, and defend that bridge.

We were outside Wiesbaden, Germany and it was close to Frankfurt. I read they have a big hospital in Wiesbaden where they bring the troops from Iraq and Afghanistan that are injured. We still maintain quite a presence in Germany. I was so fortunate to get sent to Germany because Germany was such a beautiful country. There is so much to see and do there.

When I went into the service the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints gave us a packet. We had a Book of Mormon, a songbook, and they gave us a small directory that we could carry in our shirt pocket that listed where they held all the church meetings throughout the world. I was fortunate to get stationed in Wiesbaden. There was one other LDS fellow in the 5th Anti-aircraft battalion; Sheldon Law that went to church with me. We had Captain Savage from Ogden that was our church leader. He had to fly somewhere every month to get his flying hours in. He would come to church, tell us when he was going, and tell us to get our passes to come and go on the plane with him. I got to go to France and Algiers, Africa with him. I was scheduled to go to Greece but I got to come home a month early because I hadn't used my furlough.



They also gave us this LDS dog tag (as he shows it to me) that says, "I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In case of injury notify member." We couldn't wear it in basic training. The catholic boys couldn't wear their crosses, a ring, or anything with their dog tags. On our dog tags it has our blood type and our religion. They wouldn't let us have LDS on our dog tags. They just put an 'X' for other. They had 'P' for Protestant, 'C' for Catholic. You always had to have your dog tags on you for identification. I couldn't wear my LDS tag in basic training but after I got to Germany they let us wear it



on our dog tags. The church meant so much to me in the service because I always had something to do. They even respected that I went to church on Sunday mornings and I had a pass.

One time we were going to fire up in Grafenwöhr. They told us no one could get off because we had to go fire. When Sheldon and I went to church we told Captain Savage that we couldn't go to conference with the missionaries and servicemen because we had to go fire on that date. Captain Savage said, "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of it." We told him not to get us into trouble and he said we wouldn't be in any trouble (he laughs). Here came a letter down from the Chaplains office telling the battalion commander that this conference was going on that day and the Chaplains office wanted us to attend that conference. I was up on the 4th floor of the barracks and my battery officer, he had never come up to our room whereas I was a cook, he just left us alone up there; Well, where he got that letter he come up to the room and said, "Nielsen, you're going to a LDS conference in Frankfurt." I told him, "Sir, I'll go fire that's all right." He said, "You're not listening to me, I said you're going to that conference." So when Sheldon and I got to the conference with Captain Savage we had a two star General come from the chaplain's office. Of course he wasn't LDS but he praised all the LDS servicemen. He said, "You men are doing what we want you to do. You're mingling with the German people. You're working with their children and you are good public relations for us. Anytime you have a church function or have anything to do with the German people we want you to let the Army know because you are to be off to go to these things. If you need to, contact the Chaplains office and we will take care of it. You're not out fighting with the people in town and drinking, you're doing what we wished the other guys would do. You're working with the German people." He really praised us. We did do those kinds of things. We tried to coach little soccer teams. If we ever needed to give those kids a treat or something the mess hall was open to us. We could take them there and give them ice cream. They looked up to us because we were working with the German people. It made my time in the service enjoyable. I love Germany and I would sure like to go back and go to my old barracks to stand in the doorway and have my picture taken. There are a lot of memories there. I think the camp I was in, Camp Pieri in Wiesbaden probably has been turned over to the German army now.

When I first went into Germany I was a truck driver and pulled a 40 mm gun. You were responsible for that gun and the truck you were driving. I had to go to ordinance once time and pick up a gun that needed some work done on the wheel bearings. When I was pulling it back to Camp Pieri I lost a front wheel. I was on cobblestone road and it was raining. You couldn't see that gun behind the truck; the truck was so big with that canvas cover. The German's on the sidewalk would point and point. I wondered what was wrong. I finally turned a sharp corner and I could see that gun was tipped down and the front wheel had come off of it (he laughs). I pulled over right then and we were able to call on a phone to the camp and they came out with a wrecker and hooked onto the gun. We never found the wheel that came off. They tried to get me to pay for that gun because I was responsible for it. I had volunteered to go to cook school and was down in Stuttgart, Germany for eight weeks to learn to be a cook. When I got back and checked into the clerk's office they told me I had to go to headquarters. When I got there they had paperwork for me to sign to pay for that gun (he laughs). That meant I would have to stay in the service. They said I'd get rank advancements and wouldn't notice any pay cuts. That is what

they used to get us to be more conscientious and take care of things. They agreed with me that Ordinance was responsible for that gun because they didn't put a cotter kit back in to hold the wheel on. It wasn't my responsibility so I didn't have to take care of that gun. When I released to come home that gun was sitting in the corner of the gun park. They never fixed it. It was obsolete because missiles were coming out.

I really enjoyed being a cook. We cooked for 3,500 men in a new mess hall. We had German KP's. All the soldiers wanted \$2.00 a month taken out of their pay to give the German civilian men and women jobs working in our kitchen. They washed all the trays. The cooks washed some of the pots and pans that we cooked with but that was all. We didn't have to peel spuds. The German women would peel all our spuds. The German's did the bulk of taking care of it because the G.I.'s didn't want to pull KP. They would rather pay the \$2.00 a month. We had a lot of German's working in our mess hall. Our pay was \$75.00 a month and when I was made a Corporal I was making \$121.50 a month. If I had signed up for another six years in the Army like my friend did I would have made Sargent and my pay would have went up quite a bit better.

If you were a Sargent or above you could have a wife over there and draw extra pay. You could even live off post and have an apartment. There were a lot of guys over there that had their wives with them. When we had church activities we'd be just a regular church group. We had parties and there was always something to do to make the time pass. I was active going to church and they respected that. I was always off on Sunday even though we would cook one day on and one day off. I could trade because there were kids that wanted to be off Saturday night. They would trade with me so I could have Sundays off all the time. I could get off for activities that we had during the week, all I had to do was tell the mess Sargent when I wanted to be off and they would arrange it.

I was discharged around the 15th of July 1953. I was only in the Army for 23 months because you got furlough and if you didn't take your furlough time off then you could get out early. Me and my buddies knew this so we didn't take our furlough time and got out together. I regret that I didn't take a little furlough time and go to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark; some of those places I was so close to.

I went across the ocean on troop ship. It took ten days and you are crammed in there like sardines. You are in bunks seven high. Going over I was in a top bunk and coming home I was on the very bottom bunk right down on the floor. I couldn't turn over because the guy that was above me sunk down so close to me that I would have to slide out to get into a different position. The top bunk was the best but it all worked out fine.

They have rooms in those troop ships and all there is are bunks. They fold up against the wall to clean the ship out. On the way over we landed at Bremerhaven, Germany. The Atlantic Ocean is rough because of the storms and those troop ships are not as big as you would think they would be. They really rock up and down. We'd have storms going across and the ship would just shake when the propellers would come out of the water when the ship dipped down into the ocean. We couldn't get on deck because it was chained off and the doors were locked or there was a guard on the doors. You couldn't go out or you would get washed off the ship. When it

was a smooth day we could all be out on top of the deck and look out over the ocean. They do have some big storms going across the Atlantic. My buddy Sheldon Law was sick the whole ten days. As soon as we pulled out on the ocean he got sick and didn't eat. He lost 30 pounds going over. He couldn't keep a thing down even though they gave him pills for sea-sickness. I'd take him oranges and soda crackers; stuff like that from the mess hall. They would stay down just a little while and it would all come back up (he laughs). It was a fun experience coming across on the ship. Sheldon and I went over and came back together. He was sick both ways from that motion sickness. Down in those room when we'd have storms it was quite an experience.

I spent twenty days of my military service crossing the ocean. We went pass the White Cliffs of Dover. We could see where some of the battleships from WWII were sunk in the English Channel. I was there six years after WWII ended and it looked like they intentionally left all the areas that were bombed out. You could go up above a city on a hill and you could see where those planes went through those cities and wiped out railroad stations, railroad tracks, and buildings. There was just a path through the cities. The cities were bombed that bad. They built out around to re-build but they hadn't built that much. Germany was still trying to get on their feet and the people didn't make much money. Us GI's had quite a bit of money compared to the German people. They were poor people. They rustled what little bit of wood they could get to cook their food. They couldn't cut anything green in their forests so they would pick up the dry stuff. You'd see a bike coming down the road and it would look like a bush. Those guys could tie those old dry twigs around on the bikes and they would be inside the twigs peddling the bike. They have a lot of forests in Germany. You could see how bad WWII damaged that country.

Have you ever been told what that notch is in a dog tag (as he holds up his dog tag)? When you find another soldier that is dead you are supposed to take one of his dog tags off, you have two dog tags, and put it between his teeth and take the butt of the rifle and drive it up in so he can be identified. The enemy likes to get the dog tags because they like to get the names of the soldiers that are killed. War is terrible. I feel so sorry for those guys that are over in Iraq and Afghanistan – it is a bad, bad war. Vietnam was terrible and Korea was really a bad war. I've talked to my buddies and they tell me Korea wasn't anything like what they went through in Vietnam. This war over there now has so many of the veterans that have mental problems that they have psychiatrists in the hospital to try and help them. It has completely changed. When I went in the Army it was the cold war with Russia. We were just occupational troops to show a presence there. We would defend Germany if Russia started anything and Russia sure acted up until Reagan got Gorbachev to knock down the Berlin Wall and free Germany, East Germany the Russian sector. We were in the West, the American Sector. Of course the English, the French, and Americans all worked together but Russia was more difficult.

When I was drafted you just went in and accepted your duty and did your job. There was only a few National Guard activated like the one I went in as a replacement troop. Today the guard gets



activated and has to go. They have a lot of married men and they didn't do that so much back then. The Lehi guard or the American Fork guard never got activated back then. After we got into the military a lot of my buddies and I said we should have joined the guard (he laughs) and stayed home. I was buying a new car and had a girlfriend and hated going into the service but it was an experience that I am so glad I was in for two years.

I was fortunate that they took me into the service. The military said they would take care of our health and our needs. The VA hospital in Salt Lake City is keeping me seen because of my wet macular degeneration. They give me shots in my eyes every month and this has been going on for three years. By putting the shot in my eye it makes it so the macular doesn't weep and I am able to have my eyesight and still have a driver's license. I'm 84 years old and I really appreciate how the hospital in Salt Lake City had treated me. That's my hospital. I started going there over forty years ago and it is an excellent hospital. They give us very good care there and so it was good for me that I did go into the service.

When I was driving truck and loading fire on the 40 mm guns it damaged my hearing and I wear hearing aids because of it. The VA pays for my hearing aids. They can tell by hearing tests why you have hearing loss on the job you had in the service.

While I was in the Army I got to travel a lot and see a lot of country. That made it very nice. I was so fortunate because all my friends went to Korea and when I was writing to them there wasn't much to do in Korea compared to what we had in Germany. It was a good experience going in there for two years and I am glad I did because of the opportunities it has given me. I have been a member of the American Legion for fifty years and there is a nice bunch of active guys in the American Legion here in Lehi.

Four years after I got home from the Army I married Connie Kirkham from Lehi. We married in 1957 and she moved me to Lehi and we have lived here 60 years. We have five children; Bruce, Sandy, Julie, Bill, and Emily. Emily is here with us now and her new little baby 18 months old and we sure have fun with her (he laughs).