

Lester "Jack" Hansen

As interviewed by Judy Hansen

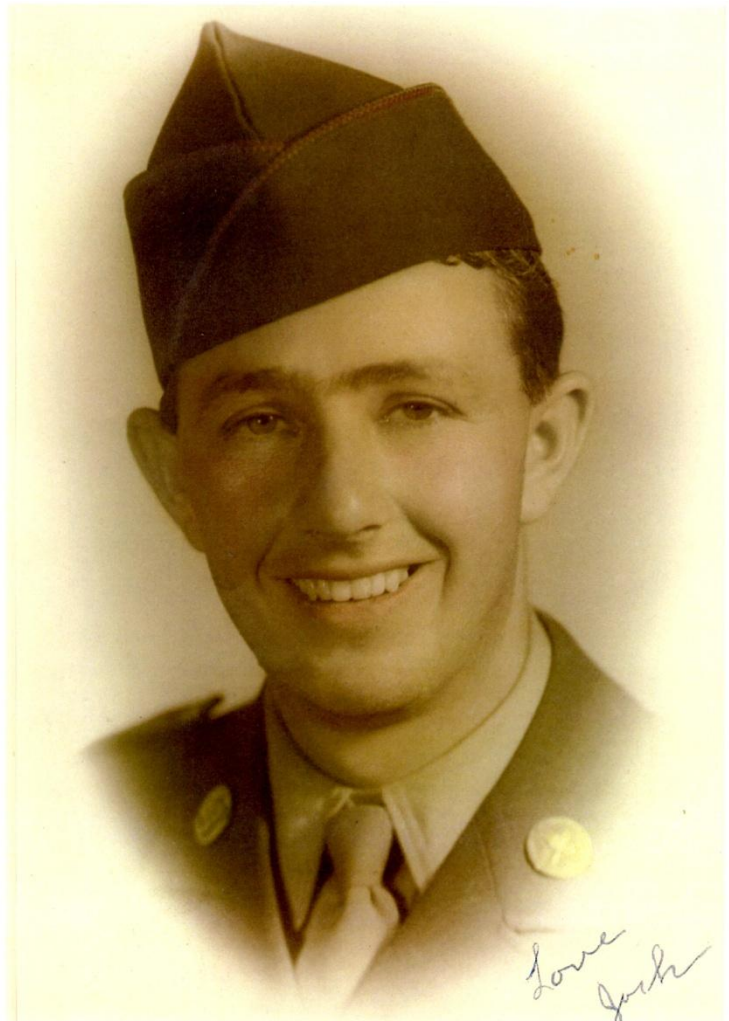
Jack was born to Oliver and Vinnie Hansen on December 1, 1920. He grew up in Bear River City, Box Elder County, Utah. When Jack was 14 (1934), his parents moved to Salem, Oregon. They didn't stay in Salem long before they moved to Vale, Malheur County, Oregon in 1936. Vale was a farming town and his parents never sent him back to school after they moved so he never graduated High School. It was more important for him to help with the farm. During war the most important thing was food so the farmers had to produce the food for the soldiers.

In the beginning of WWII they had to send soldiers over to the war so when a man reached a certain age he was drafted into the service. Jack was drafted while he was living in Vale November 30, 1945. He went to basic training in Harlingen Air Force Base in Texas. The United States

picked him and put him into the United States Army Air Corp (USAAC). They sent him to Keesler Air Field in Biloxi, Mississippi where he attended A & M School. Keesler was a technical basic training center and they sent men there to become airplane and engine mechanics, while others transferred to aerial gunnery or aviation cadet schools. He was in the 3704th AAF Base Unit. Jack said, "It was fascinating to learn all about airplanes and how they worked. We had heard so much about B-17's, B-24's, and the Mustang and now we were learning about them."

While Jack was in taking this training he was the top in the class where his grade was 3.9. He got such good grades they asked him to be an electrical instructor in mechanic school. He taught others about starters, generators, voltage regulators, ignition systems, etc. He received an award for his high grades. He ended up getting his high school equivalency and a couple years of college. He taught his colleagues how to repair the electronics of the airplanes. The airplanes had two of everything on them. Jack taught them how important it was to make sure everything was working, especially the magnetos. He was an instructor there for a little over a year.

The US Army Air Corp sent Jack to England after he left Biloxi. He was assigned to (376th) bomb group¹. Jack was a Flight Engineer which meant he was in the plane guiding them to the target where they should drop the bombs. He was never too worried about being shot down because they would fly so



high that the anti-aircraft guns of the enemy couldn't reach them. They would fly over and drop bombs on Germany's railroad so they wouldn't have any way to transport their supplies.



Jack always rode in a B-17 during his missions. There were seven people in the plane; the pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, nose gunner, tail gunner, turret gunner, and flight engineer. They would carry about 20 bombs. He left England once a day to fly to Germany to drop the bombs. It took them a couple hours round trip to complete their mission.

The English didn't like the American's very well. They had a saying, "Over-sexed, over-paid, over-here." Jack didn't see a lot of the war because he was overhead in the airplanes dropping bombs. They lost a couple planes during the war but they didn't lose many. There was also some B-24's but Jack didn't work on them too much because they just didn't use them as much.

The engines of the B-17 were air cooled and had 9 pistons. He loves looking at the engines.

Jack was discharged December 30, 1946 then he went back to Vale and started farming but it wasn't long before he went on an LDS mission to Denmark. Denmark had been occupied by Germany during the war. During the whole war nothing was allowed into Denmark. The only thing they had was what they could produce themselves. They never saw things like an orange at all during the war. They had to follow curfew and be in at a certain time. Everything had to be dark at night. Jack went on his mission to Denmark right after all that had occurred there. He was 27 and served in Esbjerg from 1947-1950.

Jack had met a young lady in Denmark from Løgumkloster and was quite taken by her. After he came home and was released from his mission he returned to Denmark and brought Ruth Seegert back to Vale, Oregon where he married her in 1951. They had three daughters Ingrid, Caroline, and Jacklyn.

Jack divorced Ruth and he later married again. They moved to Lehi in 1974. He divorced his 2nd wife and married Lila Hamilton Cossey in 1983. She passed away in 2010. Jack has remained in Lehi the rest of his life. He is loved by all his neighbors. He has loved to garden and has always left the spoils of his harvest with everyone in the neighborhood.

¹ There is paperwork that Jack was an instructor. However, his discharge papers do not indicate he was overseas during his service. Jack started having memory problems later in life but stated he was overseas in England during the war on several occasions. He is very detailed about the description. His family does not know if this is accurate but he mentioned years ago before the onset of memory problems that the first time he had seen a television was when he returned to New York City.