

Transcription: Frank Hansen

Today is Friday, August 18, 2014. My name is James Crabtree, and this morning I'll be interviewing Mr. Frank Hansen. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm at the General Land Office building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Hansen is at his residence in Pflugerville, Texas. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for our program. The first question, sir, I always like to start with is please just tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the military.

Frank Hansen: All right. I was born in Fluvanna, Texas. That's out on the caprock out in west Texas, just past Snyder, Texas. I came on the seventh day of November 1922. So I'm a 1922 model. All rightee. Then we . . . My daddy worked on ranches around in that area for quite a few years. That was our homeplace for many years. He decided to be a tumbleweed.

And what is that, sir?

Frank Hansen: A tumbleweed? You don't know what a tumbleweed is?

Oh, a tumbleweed. Okay. I know what a tumbleweed is. I don't what that means with your father.

Frank Hansen: He moved around.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: But my mom was a polio victim and she was totally handicapped and in bed. So I roamed the pastures and picked up buffalo skulls and things like that, along with my brother and two twin uncles that was two years older than I. But this was some of our childhood stuff that we did. My dad, he worked on all of the, just about all of the ranches up there whenever they would need some help. He only had one hand. It was his left hand that was missing. But he did a real good job with his right hand, roping and branding and all of that sort of stuff. Myself and my brother, we did a lot of outside exploring. We would go out in the pasture and pick up arrowheads and things like that. This is my childhood, so we would go out in the pastures and pick up arrowheads. The reason why I'm telling you this . . . I'm 91 years old and my next one is 92. So we had lots of privileges as to pick up all that sort of stuff. There wasn't too many people out picking up stuff like that back in my days. Then, as I grew older, I always wanted to be a soldier. So finally, when I got up to the age of going into the Army, I chose the Army. When I went down to the recruiters, they wanted to send me to Puerto Rico for the Air Force. Of course, I didn't want to go that far away from my mommy. Being she was a paralytic. So she didn't want me to go out of the country. But I told 'em, I said, "No, I don't want to go . . . I'd like to go to the Air Force, but I don't want to go off down there to Puerto Rico."

How old were you at this time, sir? Were you 17?

Frank Hansen: Well, just before 18 years old. I was going around and seeing what all I had to do to get in the Army. I finally waited until my 18th birthday and I told my dad. I said, "I've always wanted to be soldier." And he said, "Well, that's a good deal. That's what you want to

do, that's what you go ahead and do." So I kissed Mommy and Dad, and I went down and I said, "I want to join up." They said, "Okay, here's a ticket. Catch the bus to Fort Sam in San Antonio." So I did that on my birthday, on the seventh of November."

Of 1940?

Frank Hansen: 1940. Yes sir. After I got in there, there was three other guys and myself, we talked to the sergeant, DI, and he said, "Well now, if you want to go overseas, you get double time for over there. But here in the States, you have to serve your full term of three years and you have to do 30 years here. But if you go overseas and get foreign service, you'll double your time. You get twice for one." So we put our names in the pot for Philippine Islands. So that was where we wanted to go. We got all of our paperwork and everything ready to go. We had a 35-mile hike to go on to. When we fell out of the barracks that night it started raining on us and it rained on us the entire way. There and all the way back. 'Course the last three miles was quicktime. We had full field pack and all of this, you know. And when we got back I had formed a fever. I got on sick book and they sent me to the hospital and I had pneumonia. Double pneumonia. The other three guys, their paperwork was finished and they sent them to San Francisco. One of them decided he didn't want to go to the Philippine Islands, and I guess it was a good thing because Jody Thompson and Hal, they went on over. They were both full-blood Indians, Cherokee Indians from Oklahoma. They went over and both of them were killed on Corregidor.

I was going to ask, sir, because I know that it was shortly, about a year plus after that, that the war started and the Philippines fell. McArthur had to flee. When you went in in 1940, obviously the war was going on in Europe and the Pacific. The United States was not yet involved, but did you think that you, at some point yourself, might be involved? I know at that point they had started doing the peacetime draft, the Lend-Lease Act, and that sort of thing. Did it feel like it was potentially coming?

Frank Hansen: Yes sir. They told us that, "It's not going to be too long before we're going to be totally involved."

What did your parents think? I know you said your dad was supportive. What did your mom think of you going in the Army?

Frank Hansen: Well, my precious little mommy, she cried because she didn't want me to go. She was afraid that the worse would come. Sure enough, had I gone on to the Philippine Islands, well, there was a possibility that the ultimate would have come my way.

Were you the oldest? You had a younger brother, is that right?

Frank Hansen: I had an older brother.

Older brother, okay.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, he was four years older than I.

Okay. What did he think of you going in the Army?

Frank Hansen: He didn't think too much about it. No, when I was about, I guess, 15, 17, something like that, I used to go out to Camp Mabry and the guy that wiped out Bonnie and Clyde, I used to pitch cans for him.

Really?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, he would shoot from the hip.

Was he a Texas Ranger?

Frank Hansen: Yes, he was a Texas Ranger. I would pitch cans for him, and he would draw and shoot from the hip, and he never missed.

Wow.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, he was shootin' that 45.

So they had a range there at Camp Mabry?

Frank Hansen: Oh yeah. That's where all of the troopers, the Highway Patrol troopers and the Rangers, they all practiced down there.

That's great.

Frank Hansen: Then too. That was a military base then too.

It's just a lot smaller now. The city's grown around it. They don't have a range there any longer.

Frank Hansen: Yes sir. Well, they got kind of a hill out behind there.

I know where that is.

Frank Hansen: Their shooting range. I would go out there quite often and he would ask me to, "Okay, boy, you ready to pitch cans?" And I'd say, "Yeah, I'm ready." And he would tell me how high to throw 'em and all of this, you know. And the guy was good. After that, well, I didn't have anything to do with him. We moved from the Austin area then and went down to Port Lavaca, Texas. My dad rented a farm down there. That was where we were when . . .

When you went into the Army?

Frank Hansen: Yeah. Yeah. I came back to Austin and went in the Army.

So where were you then . . . Because you got sick, so you didn't go to the Philippines right away. Where did they send you after you got better?

Frank Hansen: Well, I was just here in the States, wherever they wanted me to go. They'd put me on a cadre and I would go. I tried everything under the sun to get out of my company. I didn't like what we were doing and I wanted to get in some action.

Okay. Where were you then when Pearl Harbor was bombed?

Frank Hansen: I was in Fort Sam. I was in quartermaster and they changed me over into the ordnance.

Do you remember that day very well?

Frank Hansen: Yes, I do. Everybody was wantin' to know where's Pearl Harbor.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, there was 26 of us, we got a six by and came to Austin from San Antonio and we watched Texas and Oregon football teams get out there and butt heads. Texas beat Oregon 74 to 7.

Okay. That's a bit one-sided.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, it was pretty much. But anyway, we got back in San Antone and, of course, we'd been hittin' Johnny Barleycorn. I was asleep the next morning.

Sunday morning?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, on Sunday morning. There was a guy upstairs and he was from Wichita Falls, Texas, and he was stomping on the floor and cussin' and all of that sort of stuff. Every time he'd slam his foot on the floor, my head would go "rrrrring." I got up and went up and I told him, "Shut up and quit stompin' on the floor," because I had a headache. A hangover.

Yeah.

Frank Hansen: Of course, everybody was wantin' to know where in the name of heavens is Pearl Harbor? And nobody could tell us, not even the sergeant could tell us where Pearl Harbor was.

Interesting.

Frank Hansen: Yeah. Ain't that the truth? Well, you know, nobody had war on their mind.

At that point everybody knew you were going to war. I'm sure you heard President Roosevelt's famous address and that sort of thing.

Frank Hansen: Oh yes. Yeah, and Walter Winchell. He was burning the air up, Walter Winchell was.

So then at that point, I'm sure things changed pretty quickly.

Frank Hansen: Yes, they did.

Tell us what your memories are of that.

Frank Hansen: Well, we began to train real hard and heavy. We were told that it wouldn't be too long before we'd be headin' overseas. Well, we put our time in and it was, you know, an hourly thing. Sometimes it was night. We worked or did problems at night. So we would kind of get acclimated to the dark and seeing what we could accomplish. So that's where we stood there.

But I was always proud. I stuck my chest out. Of course at that time, I only weighed 136 pounds. My chest wasn't too big to stick out but I stuck it out as far as I could because I was proud to be a soldier.

Sure.

Frank Hansen: I loved the Army. But I had a little problem with me and first sergeant. He told me he was going to leave me on KP so much that I'd think I was a mess sergeant without the stripes.

Okay. That's not good.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, right. I did a lot of snipe picking. But anyway, I was real proud. I made PFC. Then after that I made corporal and I was given charge of a platoon.

You were in for over a year before the war even started, so you saw a huge influx, I'm sure, of these draftees and people that signed up after Pearl Harbor.

Frank Hansen: Oh yes. I was in 13 months before the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor.

So what was that like? You had to have had . . . You got all these new guys coming in, you've got a little bit of experience. What was that like for you?

Frank Hansen: Yes. Well, I was kind of proud of myself. Of being a squad leader. I thought, "Oh boy, here I go." So I was real proud of that. I stuck my chest out a little bit more.

Sure. Were you in infantry squad?

Frank Hansen: Well, we were training infantry and everything.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: And so then they took us out of that and put us in the ordnance. Then, our company transitioned to working on trucks. I didn't want to be a mechanic. I wanted to be troop soldier. But I still had my squad and I was proud of that. But that's where I stayed, as a squad leader.

I know you were at Fort Sam Houston.

Frank Hansen: Fort Sam Houston, yes.

When did they finally move you and your unit out?

Frank Hansen: Well, they started to moving us around in the first part of '42.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: Incidentally, during the moving around in '42, in April I got a weekend pass from San Antone to Austin. I got out there on the highway and stuck my thumb out and the first car that come by, well, the gentleman stopped and give me a ride into Austin.

You had to be in uniform, right?

Frank Hansen: Oh yes.

You weren't allowed to wear civilian attire during the war.

Frank Hansen: Oh no. No. I was always in uniform. I got into Austin and I met my brother. He asked me if I had a date for the night and I said, "No, I don't have a date for tonight." He said, "Well, go get one." And so I told him okay. I went across the street from where we were. There was a drugstore over there. Groves Drugstore. Still there on Sixth Street.

On Sixth Street?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, in Austin.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: I went across the street over there, Groves Drugstore. I went to the back where the telephone was and I got my nickel out of my pocket and I picked up the phone and I dialed. There was only five numbers then. I dialed the first number and I got to looking around in the place and I saw two little chicks sitting at the table. So I thought, "Well hey, ain't no use in me telephoning anybody. Here's potentials right here." So I hung the phone up, got my nickel and put it back in my pocket. I walked over there to that table where the girls were and I asked them if they'd mind if I sit down there and talk to them. Both of them said, "No, go ahead." So I asked them, "What are you all drinking?" They said, "Cherry Coke." I told the girl at the counter, "Bring me a Cherry Coke." We sat there and chatted for about an hour. One of the girls said, "Oh, I've got to go to work." So she got up and left. Well, that left the other girl. So we talked for a little while. I asked her, I said, "Do you have a date for tonight?" And she said, "No." And I said, "How 'bout you and I datin' for tonight?" She said, "Okay." We talked for a little bit further. We had been told that we were getting ready to ship out and go overseas. Our being it was '42. So I didn't want to leave the United States without leaving a seed. So I asked this girl, I said, "How 'bout you and I gettin' married?"

Wow. You said that on the first meeting?

Frank Hansen: Yeah.

Wow.

Frank Hansen: And she said, "Okay." And I said, "Tonight?" And she said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, okay. I'll go get the marriage license." I told her, I says, "I'll get my brother and he'll take me up to the courthouse or wherever the county clerk is and get the marriage license." So the courthouse was closed and I found out where the county clerk lived, so went on out to her house on Enfield and looked this lady up. I told her what my situation was. I wanted to get married tonight. She said, "Well, come right on in here and sit down. I'll make your marriage license out."

Wow.

Frank Hansen: "Give me the girl's name, her age," and all of this. I told a fib. She was 17. I told her she was 18.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: So that made her legal, you know.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: I was 19.

All right.

Frank Hansen: So she said, the county clerk said, "Now, you'll have to have witnesses." I said, "Well, I might get my mom and my dad to be my witness, okay?" So we got the marriage license and I went back to where the girl was working and I told her. I said, "I got the marriage license." And she kind of turned pale.

She might have thought you were just joking.

Frank Hansen: I wasn't joking though.

But that's what she maybe thought?

Frank Hansen: Well, she didn't answer it that way.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: She just said, "Okay." So when I told her that. She got off work at 12 o'clock at night, and we went out. My mom and my dad was there for our witness. So we went out to this preacher's house and woke him up. He got his wife up for our witness there. We went in and sat down. Of course, it was after 12 o'clock, and it was on the fourth day of April.

1942?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, 1942. My little girl left me after 72 years. I'm sorry.

Oh, no sir, I'm sorry to have heard that. So you were married . . . You two got married and were married for 72 years after that?

Frank Hansen: Yes.

That's amazing.

Frank Hansen: And five months after we were married, they hooked us up and put us aboard a floater, and we went west.

Okay. Out to the Pacific?

Frank Hansen: Yeah. And then on through the Pacific into China-Burma-India area. We went down in the jungles toward Burma and China. We were down there attached to a British outfit.

Let me ask you sir, to back up a little bit.

Frank Hansen: Okay.

So you and your wife met at Groves Drugstore on Sixth Street in Austin.

Frank Hansen: Well, that was where we got engaged.

Within a day you were married, right?

Frank Hansen: No, we were married that night.

That night. What was it, do you think, that she saw in you that made her be willing to marry you in that short a time?

Frank Hansen: Well, 72 years and I haven't figured it out yet.

That's an incredible story. That's a great story.

Frank Hansen: Yes, it is.

Because you know, you hear a lot of these stories of war brides and stuff who got married and that the marriages didn't last very long and that sort of thing. The fact that you two were married for 70-plus years, that's an amazing blessing.

Frank Hansen: Seventy-two years. Yeah, yeah. And oh, I did my spell of crying this morning thinking about my darling. Every place I turn here in the house, I see it and I think of my precious little darling.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: I go down to the cemetery and visit her nearly every day.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: And sometimes it's two days, but I don't want it to be too long because I loved my little darling.

That's a true love story. That you met like that and the fact that for whatever reason you decided not to make that phone call. Instead keep the nickel and talk to them.

Frank Hansen: And that was a Buffalo Nickel.

Oh yeah. That's great. So when you got shipped out then, I'm sure that you two wrote letters to each other.

Frank Hansen: Oh yes. And the first letter that I received from my darling was about four months after we had gone over. They couldn't keep up with us.

Yeah, you're moving too quick.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, we was moving everywhere. Here and there and everywhere else. Finally, I received a letter and the first two or three lines on it was, she had a miscarriage. So there went my seed. So that's my goings on over there. I was real sad because I did want a child.

Sure.

Frank Hansen: Wanted to have one to me to come back to.

Sure.

Frank Hansen: Along with her. We were over there in total absentee from each other. Was almost three years.

That's a long time.

Frank Hansen: Yeah. And when I came back from overseas, we landed in San Antonio. Then we got dispersed out from there because we were going to Columbia, South Carolina. That was where we were supposed to back up and come and go to there. And we were training hard and heavy, hand to hand stuff. Because what they were going to do was take us back over there. They were going to ship us out on the 17th of November '45, and we were going to land on the island of Japan, shoulder to shoulder. A million and a half of us. And just walk right across the island of Japan. But thank God for Harry.

Exactly. It didn't have to happen that way.

Frank Hansen: No, it didn't have to happen that way, yeah. So I got my discharge on the 16th day of October 1945, and I guess it was, oh, two or three months after I got my discharge that, you know, the Korean War started pretty shortly after 1950.

That's right, it did.

Frank Hansen: And I got a card, reenlistment card, and I was classified as 1-A. Of course, I was married and they sent me another card in about a month I guess it was, and reclassified me as 1-AM, married.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: So I called 'em. I wanted to go back in and make the military my career. Of course, I wasn't going back in that same company. I was gonna make sure of that. But I could have gone into most anything that I wanted to, but that was what I wanted to do is go back in, make the military my career. And I talked to Edna about it, and she said, "Well, whatever you want to do." But said, "I wish you wouldn't." So when they classified me as 1-AM, well, I fell in rank with her then, and so . . .

Did you come back to Austin after the war was over?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, I came back to Austin because she lived here in Austin. Edna lived here in Austin. And her mom and dad . . . Her dad worked for Katy Railroad.

Oh, okay.

Frank Hansen: He was a section foreman for the Katy Railroad, and they lived here in a place that's not very nice now. It's really run down but back then in those years, it was real, real nice area.

Where was that?

Frank Hansen: Way down on 2508 East Sixth Street.

Okay, yeah, East Sixth.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, it's kind of a rough part of Austin now. But they didn't stay there too long. They moved them to a little bit better location. Of course, he retired from the railroad. You know, he was trying for his 50 years, and he worked for the Katy Railroad for 49 years and 11 months.

Wow, that's a long time.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, they didn't want him to get 50 years so . . .

Oh, Jeez.

Frank Hansen: Because he would have gotten his 50-year pin and he's already number on the roster for working the longest.

That's a long time.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, yeah. But, hey, I was looking for a job when I got a discharge and he said, "Frank, come go to work for me." And I told him, "Okay." I'd never worked on a railroad in my life. WOOO, you talk about hard work!

Oh, I bet.

Frank Hansen: Good heavens!

So you worked out of Austin then?

Frank Hansen: Yes.

What type of work did you end up having to do?

Frank Hansen: Well, on the railroad? Shoveling gravel and tamping ties, lining rails. Good heavens. Man, don't never let anybody tell you that working on the railroad is easy.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: But, of course, they got machines now to do all of the gathering of the gravel and everything, to tamp the ties. They got machines that do that. But I worked with him. One evening we came in and there was a note in front of the motor house, and it said to get rid of one man, and who do you think that was? I was low man on the totem pole, and it was me. So I lost my job on the railroad, and I went out and . . . Of course, you could hardly find a job. People didn't want to hire ya.

Because there were so many troops that had come back from the war?

Frank Hansen: Right, oh, yeah. They overrun the work force, and so I finally wound up as a finish carpenter, and my boss thought enough of me that . . . With a hammer and a hand saw and a block plane and I built all of the kitchen cabinets.

That's great. That's a skill you had to learn? It wasn't something you had any background in prior?

Frank Hansen: Yes sir. No none of that. I learned that and I built the kitchen cabinets for all of his houses.

Oh, that's great.

Frank Hansen: Then one day there was a man come up to me on the job, and he said, "Frank, we're having a revival." He said, "I want to invite you and your family." "Yeah, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." I wouldn't let him talk. I kept saying, "Yeah, yeah." And I turned around and walked away from him. I didn't want anything to do with religion. And so there was three or four times it was very, very, very close that I could have been snuffed out. And I knew there was a God but I was not a Christian, and I said, "Lord, if you'll get me out of this, I'll serve you when I get back to the States." And that was almost two years later when he come up and told me about that. And so I watched the man the rest of the day real close. I watched his actions, listened to his talk, and when 4:30 come, I gathered my tools up and put 'em in my toolbox and went out and put my toolbox in the trunk of my car, got in there and I was shedding a tear of two. I was on the conviction of the life that I was leading, and I drove in my driveway at home and my little wife, Edna, come running out to the car, and she was crying. And I said, "What are crying about?" And she said, "Honey, I feel like we need to go to church and give our hearts to the Lord." And I said, "Well, how 'bout that." I said, "Just this morning I was invited to a church where they're having a revival." And she said, "Well, supper's ready." We called it supper then. It wasn't dinner.

Sure.

Frank Hansen: And so she said, "Supper's ready and it's on the table." And I said, "Well, I'll go in and take a shower and change clothes and eat supper and we'll go." So we did that. We went to church that night and both of us gave our hearts to the Lord.

That's great.

Frank Hansen: I drank a fifth of whiskey a day. I smoked four packs of cigarettes a day, and my vocabulary was wild, wild, wild. I couldn't say two or three words without one of 'em being a swear word. And we both went to church that night and both of us gave our heart to the Lord, and God delivered me from my alcohol, from the cigarettes, and would you know, the boss . . . I was in there working on my kitchen cabinets, and I would leave every few minutes and go talk to somebody about the Lord. I wanted to see them saved, and giving their heart and their lives to the Lord. And my boss come up and ask me, he said, "Frank, what in the name of heavens happened to you last night?" I told him, I said, "Well, I gave my heart to the Lord." He said, "Well, I figured it was something like that." Turned around and walked away from me.

That's good. That's great.

Frank Hansen: But thank God.

Absolutely.

Frank Hansen: Thank God.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: I loved my military life, and it was wonderful. 'Course me and the first sergeant, we didn't see eye to eye.

Well, let me ask you a little bit because I cut you off at one point. Tell me a little bit more, sir, about your service then overseas because you mentioned you were in, I guess, India-China-Burma Theater.

Frank Hansen: Oh, yeah. I was there and we went down into the jungles, like I said, and we were attached to a British outfit, and they fed every other day.

You were a transport company?

Frank Hansen: No, no. Well, later on we went into Iran on the supply line and to Russia out of the port there in Iran.

What type of unit were you? You weren't an infantry unit. Were you like a truck company?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, we were transferred over to a trucking company, and I was . . . They obliged me with 75 of those natives over there. When a truck convoy would come in, my job was to see to it that all the flats were fixed, all the vehicles were gassed and oiled, and the trailer jobs were, the fifth wheels were greased. And I had eight guys that were pretty doggone good, and they took care of all of the fifth wheels being greased and all the . . . There was a group, there was 10 or 12 of 'em, that was doing nothing but taking flat tires off and repairing and replacing. And I had four guys that were parking vehicles. I had a hard time training 'em to back a trailer.

That can be hard.

Frank Hansen: No lights out there though. You had to turn those little ol' dim lights on, and you had to watch those lights, which direction they went, and finally they got to where they could get in that truck and never look . . . Just look in that little round mirror and back up and put it right there in place. But then they moved me over to the . . . I had 16 men that were soldiers. They were on the wreckers, and two men to a wrecker. I had eight wreckers assigned to me. And those 16 men would go out in pairs and go and retrieve burned-up stuff, wrecked stuff, and bring it back in, and then there was a full crew working in repairing, cannibalizing and all of this stuff.

Sure.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, my job was 24/7.

I bet. And so where were you then during most of that time in that area?

Frank Hansen: In Iraq.

Iraq, wow.

Frank Hansen: I mean, excuse me, I mean Iran.

Iran, okay.

Frank Hansen: That was where we were stationed.

Wow.

Frank Hansen: But I got to go over into Iraq, and, well, we went over into Iraq anyway. And I went to Daniel's Tomb and Queen Esther's Castle, and I saw a lot of that stuff. And I took pictures, and I had a little ol' 12-exposure box camera and take a couple of rolls of films with me and go out and shoot some film. I have some pictures of over there.

That's great. We'd love to see those at some time, and possibly get copies of those because there's not many people that served over in Iran or Iraq. When you talk to World War II vets, it's kind of a forgotten area.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, oh, yeah.

When you were there, did you have much news from the outside world? Did you have a good idea of what was going on in the rest of the war?

Frank Hansen: No. They kept all of that to themselves. But every now and again, I imagine it was eight or 10 times, that they would put a notice on our bulletin board, the company clerk would, from the orders of the captain about wanting volunteers. And every one of them that went up there, I put my name was the first one. I wanted to get out of that company so bad, I could taste it.

And this was the same company with the first sergeant that you had issues with?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, he rode me like a wet towel. Anyway, I . . . You know what he would always tell the captain, "He's essential to the company."

To keep you there.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, keep me under his thumb. But I kept my corporal rating, and, yeah, the lieutenant and I, we always got along real, real good. And he favored me and I favored him, so we had things in common. But that Leo Baker was that first sergeant. I hate to mention that name on this tape. You can erase it.

No, no, that's fine.

Frank Hansen: Well, ol' Leo, he was something else. He was a World War I vet.

Okay. Did you have him as . . . Were you in that outfit for the duration of the war?

Frank Hansen: Oh, yes.

So you had him as your first sergeant that whole time?

Frank Hansen: The whole time.

Okay, wow. That would make the tour a lot longer then?

Frank Hansen: Oh, yeah, yeah. When we got to Columbia, South Carolina, I tried to keep as much distance between us as I could possibly muster, and every time he'd tell me something that he's gonna do to me, I told him, well, the old saying was back then is, "Whatever melts your butter." Now it's "Whatever melts your oleo." Yeah, I told him just, "Whatever you decide to do, I've got my shoulders not very broad but they're broad enough to carry anything that you dish out."

So tell me then, sir, because it sounds like it was a long tour for you being over there in Iran and that area, dealing with the first sergeant you didn't like. Do you remember the day you got back home to Texas, what that was like?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, I cried because this nation was not the same nation that I left.

How so?

Frank Hansen: Everybody that you saw was either coming in or going out of a beer joint.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: And everybody was drinking.

Yeah.

Frank Hansen: That hurt me worse than anything, getting back home, coming back home.

Yeah.

Frank Hansen: Oh, it was sad, sad, sad.

What was it like though getting to see your family again and that sort of thing?

Frank Hansen: You know, I walked right by my darling. I didn't recognize her.

Wow, because it had been three years.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, and, well, she was 17 when I left, and when I got back, well, it was three years later. She was 20, and she had changed some. I imagine I had changed a whole bunch. But anyway, I walked right by her and I'm talking about shoulder.

Where was this, at the train station?

Frank Hansen: No, at the bus station.

Bus station in Austin?

Frank Hansen: We came in on the Greyhound bus, and off-loaded. And the place was just jam-packed. It was shoulder to shoulder.

Where was the bus station in Austin back then?

Frank Hansen: On 10th Street. Tenth and Congress.

Tenth and Congress, okay.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, 10th and Congress. And my mother and my dad were there. My brother was there, and my little sister, and my little darling wife and her mom and dad were there. But she was milling around in the crowd there looking for me, and I walked right by her, and I got about two steps past her and she said, “Honey.” And I turned around to see who was calling me honey, and it was my little darling.

Had to have been a good feeling to be home.

Frank Hansen: Oh, my. Cry, cry, cry. Happy tears.

I bet. That’s great.

Frank Hansen: Went over then and greeted my mom and my dad.

I’m sure they were relieved to have you home as well.

Frank Hansen: Oh, yes.

Especially your mom.

Frank Hansen: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And she had gotten to where she could stand a little bit.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, and she had her walking cane, and she was standing leaning against a wall of the bus station, and when I got over to her, of course, she took one step out and then, of course, I held her up, and I didn’t want her to fall or anything. Yeah, that was some wonderful time. There was something else that I wanted to tell you but it’s slipped my mind right now and it was . . . I think it would have been right in here along with this other . . .

Talking about your homecoming and that sort of thing, okay.

Frank Hansen: Oh, when it come time for me to leave and depart and go to Columbia, South Carolina, well, Edna and I had already talked it over and as soon as I would arrive in Columbia, South Carolina, well, I would look up an apartment and send for her. And I guess it was three or four weeks after I got there that I finally found an apartment ’cause it was a jillion soldiers there at Fort Jackson.

That’s right.

Frank Hansen: And the apartments were . . . Of course, some of them, they were vacating being shipped overseas. But finally I found a reasonable apartment, and one of the guys from my company, he found it first, and then he said, “Frank, why don’t you and Edna come down to our apartment? There’s an opening, a couple just moved out.” And so, man, I went to the lieutenant, told him, I said, “I want to go into town and get an apartment for my wife and I.” And he said, “Okay, just don’t be gone too long. You’re slipping off.” I told him, “Okay.” So I went down there and talked to the landlady and she said, “Yeah, you can have the apartment.” I told her, “Okay. So I’ll get my wife up here.” And that little darling, she got on the train in Austin, and

beings her daddy was Katy Railroad, some of her time was spent, I mean, her cost was free for traveling, and some of the railroad companies honored Katy Railroad too.

Well, that's good.

Frank Hansen: And so she got to Columbia, South Carolina. And, of course, time changed in Atlanta, and she got lost. And I was walking up and down the dock out there at the train station, and there was a soldier and his wife. I was really concerned about my darling because it was around 9:30, 10 o'clock, and she was out there by herself walking up and down the dock also, and this soldier asked me, said . . . Well, his wife did first. She said, "Are you looking for a little girl from Austin, Texas?" And I said, "Yes, I am." She said, then he chimed in, he said, "She's down at the other end of the dock down here, and she's just about to start crying. She's lost." So I ran down there, and there was my darling.

That's good.

Frank Hansen: And that girl hadn't ate a bite since she left Austin. And there wasn't any restaurants open, and so I told her, I said, "Baby girl, you gonna have to do without and I'll get something from the mess hall and bring it back to you tomorrow." And she said, "Well, okay."

Yeah.

Frank Hansen: So I fixed up a couple of, three sandwiches for her there at the mess hall, and I took 'em down there to her. But, yeah, we were up there from, let's see . . . Well, oh, incidentally, I was in Atlanta the day that President Roosevelt died.

Okay.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, I was right there. And, man, of all the goings on. People . . . You know, the military, they swarmed the place.

He died down in Warm Springs, right?

Frank Hansen: Yeah, in Warm Springs just out of Atlanta. I really loved my president. That was one of the losses that . . . He was only the first president that ever was elected to third term.

Yeah, he actually was elected to four terms.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, four terms.

He died early on in his fourth term. That's a long time.

Frank Hansen: Well, he was a good man. Of course, there's a lot of people didn't care for him just like there's somebody that I don't care for.

Sure.

Frank Hansen: Up in the White House.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: But that's every man's privilege.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: They have a mind of their own, don't they?

Yeah.

Frank Hansen: Yes sir. Anything else that . . . ?

Well, sir. I tell you really I'm just honored to be able to get your story today. You know, Julia Ruiz is a coworker and a friend of mine, and she had said she had talked to you at church and you were someone we needed to interview, and I told her, "Absolutely." And so I'm just honored we were able to get your story and especially the story of how you and your wife met. I think that's exceptional. I don't think there are many stories like that . . .

Frank Hansen: I doubt if there's any others like that.

Yeah, I really think that's a great story, and that's outstanding. You know, I don't know if I've told you or not, sir, but here at the Land Office we have archives that go back to the 1700s. We have the registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of the settlers that came here. We have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received when he was killed at the Alamo. And so what we're going to do with this interview like we've done with the other veterans we've interviewed is to save this for posterity. And so our hope is that hundreds of years from now after you and I are long gone, somebody might listen to this and learn something from it or study it.

Frank Hansen: Well, there's one part there, that my grandmother on my mother's side, he was at the Alamo. His name was Baker.

Baker, okay.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, his name was Baker.

You know, there might be some paperwork on him here at the Land Office then.

Frank Hansen: Well, there might be.

Because they have all sorts of amazing documents that they've kept through the years, and, in fact, a lot of those that were killed at the Alamo and in the War of Texas Independence, they got, their heirs got land, free land from the state. That was really the only way the state had of paying those that had served. And so that's why, you know, there might be some old land grants from your ancestry here.

Frank Hansen: Well, my grandmother, she received . . . I remember her going to her trunk and getting some paperwork out. And she was talking about her uncle that had died in the Alamo.

That's amazing.

Frank Hansen: Yeah. So actually, that's pretty close.

Yes sir, it is. When you think about it that way. Seems like a long time ago but when you start putting it in human context of people that know people across the generational link, it's not all that far back really. Sir, again, I really want to thank you for taking the time to share your story with us, and more importantly, on behalf of Commissioner Patterson and everyone here at the Land Office, we want to thank you for your service to our nation.

Frank Hansen: Well, you're more than welcome.

Yes sir, and in a week or two we're going to send you copies of this interview on CDs along with a letter and certificate signed by Commissioner Patterson as just a small way of the State of Texas saying thank you to you for your service.

Frank Hansen: Well, it will . . . I have a plaque hanging on the wall here from my governor, and then I've got another picture hanging on my wall here of he speaking with Edna and I.

Oh, wow. That's great.

Frank Hansen: He wanted to know, he asked me, "Where were you during the war?" And I told him where I was at, and he said, "Oh, I've been over there a number of times in Arabia trying to get that king to reduce his oil prices." He said, "I'm going back over there again." And we were talking about this and that, and about this time, his security walked up on both sides, and he looked up and saw them, and he said, "Oh, I gotta get up from here and go to work." And he said, "We will finish this conversation later." Of course, he never did. He's got things on his mind now.

Well, we're glad that we were able to have this conversation with you, sir, because this is, again, an honor for us. Hopefully you enjoyed it as much as we have.

Frank Hansen: Yes, yes, I have. Yes, I have. Well, there might be some gaps in there that I've forgotten about.

No, it was a great interview, and you've got my number as well so you can always call me. You can always talk to Julia and she knows how to get a hold of me too.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, okie dokie.

All right, sir, we'll talk to you soon, and be looking for the package we're going to send you in about a week or two.

Frank Hansen: All right.

All right, sir, take care.

Frank Hansen: And Mr. Crabtree . . .

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: Mr. Crabtree, God bless you, sir.

God bless you too.

Frank Hansen: And I thank you for being interested in . . . I don't whether it was boring or informative or . . .

No, this was great. This was a great interview and of all the hundreds of veterans that I've interviewed over the years, you're the first person I've talked to that has the story about how you and your wife met. That's just a remarkable story so I think that's great.

Frank Hansen: Yeah, well, all of my experience in the military wasn't quite what I wanted it to be, but I suppose it's . . . I put in for a transfer to the 82nd Airborne and that was the day that I got married, and Edna said, "I saved your life."

That's great.

Frank Hansen: I said, "Okay, sweet thing."

Well, you did your job during the time of war and that was the key thing.

Frank Hansen: Yes.

Yes sir.

Frank Hansen: Okay, Mr. Crabtree, God bless you.

God bless. Take care, sir. We'll talk to you soon.

Frank Hansen: I hope this is not the last time we get to sound off verbally.

I agree. Yes sir. All right, take care, sir.

Frank Hansen: Okay, thank you, sir. Bye-bye and God bless.

Bye-bye.