

MAJ Kermit Read Hansen

1917 – 1999

BACKGROUND, EDUCATION, AND MILITARY SERVICE

Kermit Read Hansen, the son of Axel Theodore Hansen and Mary Wilhelmina-Hansen, was born in Ohama, Nebraska, on 26 February 1917. After completing necessary credits from a public-school education, Hansen entered the University of Nebraska, was Colonel of the Cadets there and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in 1939.

Hansen's military registration date was 16 October 1940. At the age of 22 on 5 May 1939, he became a 2nd Infantry Lieutenant and entered active duty on 19 August 1941. Following training at Lake Charles, Louisiana, in 1941, he became a member of an Anti-Tank Company, part of the 168th Infantry at Camp Claiborne. This was followed quickly by training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, on 1 January 1942.

As a 1st Lieutenant now, he boarded the USS Neville Transport as part of a convoy of 16 ships (plus 10 destroyers) bound across the Atlantic Ocean, landing at Portstewart, Belfast, Ireland.

The next date, 1 April 1942, involved Lt. Hansen's attendance while at the British Junior Officers School at Sandhurst.

During this time period, a very special event occurred in his life. This was reported in an Ohama AP article with the headline "Lieut. Kermit Hansen Walked with King, Queen, 4 Hours"

First Lieut. Kermit Hansen, 25, former Omaha radio announcer of KOWH, has met a few of the better people since he has been in England with the A.E.F. It happened this way, Lieut. Hansen said in a letter to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A.T. Hansen.

He has been assigned to announce a part of a demonstration for the king and queen in Northern Ireland. The night before the big demonstration, Col. Folsom Everst of Council Bluffs, Ia., informed him that the British general had requested the Lieut. Hansen handle announcements also for an earlier part of the demonstration.



The royal party arrived in an antiquated black sedan that someone said had been borrowed from an undertaker firm in Belfast.

For four hours, Lieut. Hansen walked beside the king and queen explaining weapons and other equipment.

“They were both very gracious, quite friendly and the queen in particular was most charming,” Lieut. Hansen wrote.

Lt. Hansen became Captain Hansen on 14 August 1942.

1 November 1942 North African Campaign, 29th Infantry Division, Algeria

While at Tidworth, the European Theatre of Operations created a provisional unit within the 29th Ranger Battalion. The Army’s lone ranger battalion recently demonstrated its worth in North Africa and planners in London wanted a similar elite group in England to prepare for the invasion of Europe. The picked men learned specialized assault tactics by training with British Commandos and detachments accompanied their instructors on three hit-and-run raids in Norway and in the English Channel. The 29th Rangers also performed well in allied pre-invasion exercises in England. A policy decision by the War Department awarded the ranger mission to others, forcing London to disband the battalion in October 1943. Fortunately for the Blue and Gray, the men returned to their former units and passed on their skills.”

Source: <http://29thinfantrydivision.com>

On 1 January 1943, Captain Hansen became Aide de Camp to LTG John Wilson “Iron Mike” O’Daniel, 5th Army Training.

[General O’Daniel’s son, Private John W. O’Daniel, a paratrooper in Company A, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division was killed at Operation Market Garden, in 1944.]
<https://delawarewwiifallen.com/2021/05/25/private-john-w-odaniel-jr/>



March 1943 marked the date of Captain Hansen’s promotion to the rank of Major.

Next, on 1 October 1943 Major Hansen was assigned to the 34th Infantry Division.

Upon mobilization on February 10, 1941, the 34th Division, also known as the Red Bull Division, went into intensive training at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the 34th was chosen to be one of the first divisions sent overseas. From Louisiana, the Division was sent to Fort Dix New Jersey, and then to Ireland for additional training. In November the 34th took part in "Operation Torch", the Allied landing on German occupied North Africa. It was involved in numerous battles, such as Kasserine Pass, Fondouk Pass, Faid Pass, as well as Allied landings at Algiers and Tunis. By the time the Germans surrendered at Tunis in 1943, many brave men had given their lives for their country. In Italy, the men of the 34th, also known as the Red Bull Division, were involved in the battles of Naples, Anzio, Cassino, Rome-Arno, North Apennines, and the Po Valley, where the U.S. Division captured the German 34th Division to end the war in Italy.

During the course of World War II, the 34th Division amassed 517 days of combat. One or more 34th Division units, including the 168th Regiment, were engaged in actual combat for 611 days. The division was credited with more combat days than any other division in the European Theatre. The 34th suffered 21,362 battle casualties including 3,373 killed and 3,460 missing. The men of the Division were honored with countless awards and decorations, including 10 Medals of Honor and 15,000 Purple Hearts.

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/arng-ia.htm>

The date was now 1 August 1944 when Major Hansen became the S-3, Operations & Planning Officer of armored task force, Southern France; Grenoble, France; Montliemar, France.

1 September 1944 Major Hansen became Battalion Commander, 3rd Battalion, 141 Regiment, 36th Division, 7th Army.

Military actions at the **MOESLLE BRIDGEHEAD**

*The leading battalion, the 2nd of the 141st, under Lt. Col. James Critchfield, moved downstream on the near side of the river to a point opposite the town of Boyes which it was to attack as a feint. The next battalion in column, the 1st, under Lt. Col. Victor E. Sinclair, deployed and moved toward the wooded banks of the river where it was to cross. The last battalion, the 3rd, under **Major Kermit Hansen**, got separated from the others and reached the river about a mile and a half upstream from the ford. With movement through the rough terrain in pitchblack darkness extremely slow and daylight about to break, **Major Hansen** decided that he would not have to cross where he*

was. He led a platoon of I Company, commanded by Captain Roy F. Sentiles, across the river by fording. As they reached the other side and started to fan out, they were hit by the fire of eight heavy machine guns centered on the shallows where the crossing had been made. Captain Sentiles and several others were killed, the remainder of the platoon were wounded and only four survived. Before he was taken, **Major Hansen** managed to send word by radio to move the remainder of the battalion downstream to follow the 1st Battalion.

<http://www.kwanah.co/txmilmus/36division/archives/moselle/moselle.htm>

On 21 September 1944, Hansen and his men were captured by the Germans in the Vosges Mountain Range in France.

OFLAG 64 PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

On 17 October 1944, Major Hansen was promoted to Lt. Colonel. While incarcerated at Oflag 64, his known rank remained Major Kermit Hansen.

The Oflag 64 Item No. 15, January 1, 1945, Page Two displays the following article.

Kriegy Sketches

MAJOR KERMIT HANSEN

High on the list of Oflag 64's biggest operators is the camp's hardworking new adjutant: energetic, graying 27-year-old Major Kermit Hansen.

Hailing from Omaha, Major Hansen arrived here last September and was volunteered almost immediately for the important job of S-1.

Soon thereafter he became M.C. and one-man sparkplug for Rankin's "Swing-land" the director of the Sunday afternoon recorded program and a leading light in the Glee Club.

His pre-kriegy career shows the same tendencies.

At the University of Nebraska, for instance, he was the Colonel of Cadets and honor graduate of the Class of '39.

Then for two years, he energized Radio Statin KOWH in Omaha as announcer, singer, scriptwriter and program director.

In August of '41 he came on active service as an 2nd Lieutenant, going overseas in February of the next year.

Since then, he made the African landing in '42 and gradually rose through S-1, S-2, and S-3 staff jobs to become a battalion commander.

Then one night in France he crossed the Moselle River with some advance elements of his outfit and here he is.

As for Item A, Major Hansen says he definitely thinks the war will end — someday.

OFLAG 64 TO HAMMELBURG AND BEYOND

Major Kermit R. Hansen appears on the roster of American POWs held at OFLAG XIII-B, Hammelburg, Bavaria. Initially held at OFLAG 64, Szubin, Poland, he and fellow POWs were force-marched to Hammelburg in early 1945. Hammelburg was abandoned in late March 1945 and POWs were railed to Stalag VII-A, Moosburg where they were eventually freed on 7 April 1945.

On 15 September 1945 Lt. Colonel Hansen was promoted to the rank of Colonel and discharged from Active Duty to Active Reserve Duty on 4 March 1946.

On 6 December 1966 Colonel Hansen became a Brigadier General of the 89th Division and retired from the Army on 28 February 1977.

According to COLTAUTO.COM, the following item was issued to Brigadier General Kermit Read Hansen, USA on 29 July 1967.

Subject: Colt Model 1903 Pocket Hammerless.32 ACP Pistol, s/n560567 with holster.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

United States Army Tank – Automative and Armament Command

1 Rock Island Arsenal

Rock Island, Illinois 61229 – 7630

SHIP TO ADDRESS

BG. Kermit R. Hansen

H/H Co. 89th Division

3130 George Washington Blvd.

Wichita, Kansas

CIVILIAN CAREER AND CIVIC CONNECTIONS

Editorial Columnist, Omaha World-Herald, 1946 –1950; Assistant Business Manager, 1951 – 1953.

Partner Allen & Reynolds Advertising, 1953 – 1959

With United States National Bank Omaha, 1959 – 1981, Executive Vice President, 1967 – 1973, President, 1973 – 1981. Chairman 1975 – 1978

Finance Perspectives Company 1981 – 1999

Graduate of the School of Finance and Public Relations, Chicago, 1962

Instructor Trustee Basic School Banking 1964 – 1968

President, Instructor Intermediate School Banking, 1968 – 1982

Listed as a noteworthy finance company executive by Marquis Who's Who

President Omaha Symphony, 1956-1962; United Community Service, 1969 – 1971; President Omaha Safety Council, 1959 – 1961; chairman 1961 – 1962

Member, United States Chamber of Commerce

Nebraska Chamber of Commerce (Vice President, Treasurer 1963 – 1965)

Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Bank Public Relations and Marketing Association (board directors – 1964 – 1967);

Association Reserve City Bankers

Ak-Sar-Benk (Councilor 1968 – 1979)

Omaha Club, Reta Theta Pi.

<http://prabook.com/web/home.html>

FINAL THOUGHTS

“Kermit Hansen Left a Legacy of Service”

Kermit Hansen in many ways could have served as the inspiration for Tom Brokaw's book praising the World War II generation.

Hansen, an Elkhorn, Neb. resident and former Omaha banking executive who died Thursday in Colorado at the age of 82, served courageously in World War II. Like millions of other veterans of the war, he came home, built a career, raised a family and became a leader in the business and civic life of the community.

Hansen went a step further. In 1970, he accepted an appointment to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, where he spent the next 21 years as a steady force during some of the university's more turbulent times.

Hansen was a great conversationalist, a broad-gaged individual who loved nature and donated an extensive collection of recorded music to UNO [UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA]. He was loyal to his community, state and country. Each generation he once told students at Burke High School, must understand and protect its freedom. "Freedom is perpetuated by enlarging it, understanding it and transmitting it. It is not imperishable."

Hansen's involvement in the community and his dedication to education were his way of enlarging and transmitting the values of his generation to the next. He exemplified the best traditions of service to others. He lived honorably and gave much back to his community and particularly to higher education in Nebraska.

OHAMA WORLD-HERALD "Editorial", July 1999

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Silver Star – 29 August 1944

Legion of Merit

Bronze Star with two oak leaf clusters – 10 August 1944

Purple Heart - 21 September 1944

Combat Infantry Badge

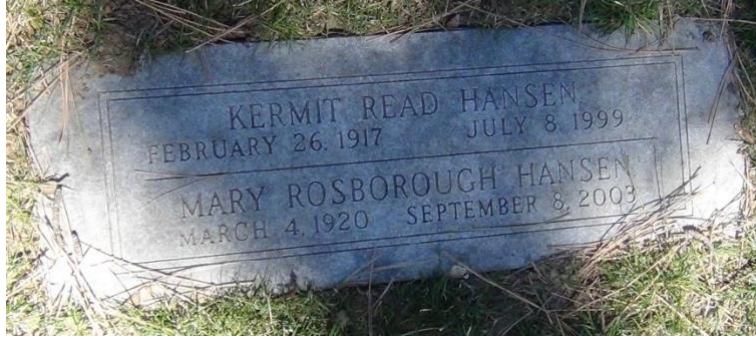
TAPS

Kermit Read Hansen died on 8 July 1999 at the age of 82.

He was buried with military honors at Forest Lawn Memorial Park at Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska, USA.

He was survived by his wife, Mary Elizabeth Rosborough Hansen, whom he married on 6 June, 1945. She died in 2003 and is buried next to her husband.

The couple shared four children: Kirt, Eric, Lauren and Kristin.



<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/177365230/kermit-read-hansen>

MAJOR BIOGRAPHY SOURCES:

COLTAUTOS.COM

http://www.coltautos.com/mmhsp_hansen.htm

Sites listed within the paper's contents

Oflag 64 Remembered materials

Written by Kriegy Research Group writer Ann C. Rogers