

Melvin Jansen

Hi, I'm Melvin John Jansen. I was born in Little Chute on May 25, 1925 to Joe and Hattie (De Bruin) Jansen. I was 1 of 7 Children; brothers, Stan, Rollie, Lloyd (Dusty) Dave (Butch) Gene (Whitie) and one sister, Buelah. We lived on the corner of Willow St and Monroe St. There's a nice playground there now. Back then, both streets and backyards were our playgrounds.

I graduated from St John's High. I missed out on the graduation ceremony as I left early to serve in the Navy. While attending St John's, I was an altar boy, Sophomore class treasurer, was in the Jr. Holy Name, and in the Victory Corps. My ambition in life was to be an Admiral in the Navy. I got the nickname "Sluggo"—guess from being in boxing for 2 years. Like anyone else in Little Chute, I enjoyed swimming in the Fox River.

Shortly after the 28th of April, 1944, my parents received a telegram stating I was missing in action. In April of 1945, I was legally declared dead. Supposedly, I'm buried at sea near London, England. It wasn't until 1984 that my family found out how I died. At that time ABC aired a program on the Freedom of Information Act.

I was on a LST (Landing Ship Tank) number 531. I was among hundreds of U.S. Servicemen taking part in Operation Tiger; a rehearsal for the Invasion of Normandy. While crossing the English Channel on April 28, 1944, 2 German speed boats caught the US landing crafts off guard and sank 2 and severely damaged a 3rd ship sending approximately 749 soldiers and 197 sailors to their deaths. The family found out later over a thousand men died that day.

Since it was "practice", we weren't prepared for live action. We were about 13 miles out on the 21.4 mile wide channel. The water temperature was 43 degrees and hypothermia was responsible for many of the deaths.

The dead were buried in the Brookwood Cemetery near London. The injured were treating at many different hospitals. Some of them and other survivors did participate in the Invasion of Omaha Beach. They lived with the secret of Operation Tiger for over 40 years.

There is a memorial at Torcross England dedicated to the US service men that died on April 28, 1944. My brother, Stan, was stationed in England at the same time I was but we never got the chance to get together.

I was awarded the Purple Heart and I am proud to have served my country and to be remembered here at St. John's Cemetery.

My name is Mark Jansen, a nephew of Martin and the son of Martin's brother, Whitie.



