



SGT. IVIS HANSON was with the 320th Signal Corps Wing in Ascot, England, during World War II. That's him on the back row, fifth from the left.

## Classmates in 1940 served during World War II

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As people make plans for Veterans Day on Friday, four Decatur Community High graduates of the Class of 1940 will be remembering not only their time in military service, but classmates who also served in World War II.

Bob Fraker, Ivis Hanson, Gail Marcuson and Allen "Bus" Wurm are the only living men from the class, and all returned to Decatur County to live after the war ended in 1945.

Little did they realize that when Gov. Payne H. Ratner delivered the commencement address to 91 graduates in May that they would be facing military service after Pearl Harbor was bombed the next year.

The governor told the class, "The vital message I want to leave with you tonight, the one thing I hope you will believe and remember, is that every one of you can make a success — a real success of your life — if you want to badly enough to follow a few simple rules which are indispensable.

"You need not be brilliant, you do not need to be a genius in order to be a success in this world today. You need only to have average intelligence and that includes integrity, courage, perseverance, initiative and personality. You either possess or can cultivate all of these essential qualities.

"While everyone of you cannot be president, and perhaps every one of you cannot reach the top rung of the ladder of success, yet it is entirely within the power of each of you to make a substantial success of your life if you will it."

These words undoubtedly made an impact on the class, as well as the nearly 1,400 who gathered that evening to hear the governor's talk.

"After taking a bus ride with about a dozen other men from Oberlin to Fort Logan, Colo.," Ivis Hanson, who grew up at Kanona, recalled, "I was drafted into the Army on Aug. 17, 1942. After a week's furlough at home, I returned to Denver on Sept. 1, just a day before my 21st birthday, to start serving in the Armed Forces.

"After about three days at Fort Logan, I boarded a train for Tampa, Fla., the only one from Decatur County going to Florida. I was assigned to the 292nd Signal Corps, a newly-formed company, at Drew Field, which became a B-26 and B-24 bomber base.

After basic training, we were all called in for an interview and asked what branch of communications we preferred. I chose teletype.

"In early November, the unit was assigned to the 320th Signal Corps Wing. From there, we went to Camp Shanks, N.Y., in July 1943, and while there, we got a chance to enjoy a little sightseeing, which included

seeing a Yankees baseball game. "We boarded a troop ship and about 9 or 10 days later, docked at Liverpool, England. After traveling all day through the beautiful English country, we arrived at the small town of Ascot, where the famed Ascot Race Track is, some 20 miles from London.



Ensign Bob Fraker



Cpl. Allen "Bus" Wurm



Sgt. Ivis Hanson

seeing a Yankees baseball game.

"After the North African Campaign was over, the 9th Air Force moved in and took over the base and my old company continued working out of the same office until January.

"In January 1944, we finally became our own boss and moved to a base at Haseley Court to run communications for the Advanced Air Depot Area, a smaller base that dealt mostly in supplies for the Air Force.

"We stayed in England until August 1944, when half of our company flew to France and set up headquarters at Chartres. The rest of us stayed in England until November, then convoyed across France and joined up with the first group at Reims. We remained there until April, when we made one or two stops in Germany before the end of the war.

"After the war, we were placed in a large housing complex which was a former German air base for the summer.

"In early November, we began the process of getting back to the United States. In late November, we set sail from a port in France and after 10 days of riding on very rough seas, we landed at Camp Kilmer, N.J. From there, we went to Fort Smith, Ark., where I was discharged on Dec. 9, 1945, followed by a train ride to Norton and on to the farm at Kanona on Dec. 10."

Mr. Hanson became a full-time farmer after completing college at Kansas State University. He is retired and lives at Wheat Ridge Terrace in Oberlin.

Bob Fraker said, "After graduating from high school in the spring of 1940, I got a job with the county engineer. I worked there until I enrolled at Kansas State University in August of 1941. During the semester at Manhattan, I enrolled in a program the Navy sponsored to train naval aviators.

"It was a year before I was called up to start training. This started in

Mount Vernon, Iowa, then continued at Prescott, Ariz.; Oakland, Calif.; Norman, Okla.; and Corpus Christi, Texas, where I received my wings as a naval aviator.

"We then began six weeks of intensive training to qualify for carrier landings. I was assigned to the carrier Franklin D. Roosevelt, where I served until I was discharged from the Navy in August of 1946.

Since returning home, he has been manager of the Oberlin airport. He married Marian Norton of Oberlin and they have three sons, Mark, Phil and Steve.

Allen "Bus" Wurm returned to his farm in Decatur County after his military service in the U.S. Army.

He entered the service Sept. 8, 1944, which was also his birthday, and was sent to Louisville, Ky., for basic training.

After going to Fort Knox, Ky., he became an instructor at an Armored School for a little over a year for tank engines.

He was discharged on June 26, 1945, at Camp Atterbury, Ind. He married Carolyn Nelson of Oberlin in 1949 and they have a son, Ward, and a granddaughter, Alicia. He retired from farming 15 years ago and the couple moved into Oberlin.

"World War II made a big change for young people my age," Gail Marcuson said. "Most all young men were called to serve. My brother Glenn entered the Navy in August 1941, so I was deferred to help on the farm. I didn't like it that I had to stay home, but I realize now that



GAIL MARCUSON served in the U.S. Navy for a year in San Diego during World War II and met his future wife, Kay, while stationed there. They married Nov. 29, 1945.

God has a plan and all the things that happened were so I could meet my future wife.

"I joined the Navy in August 1944 and that became a very big change for me, a little farm boy from Kansas. I was sent to Faragut, Idaho, for boot camp, then more training (aviation ordnance) at Norman, Okla., then from there went to the San Diego area.

"That turned out to be the best thing that could have happened, since I met Kay Dillane. To spend a year in wonderful California, and to meet and get the girl of my dreams, couldn't have been better."

They were married on Nov. 29, 1945, in Chula Vista, Calif., and after his honorable discharge on

July 2, 1946, he said, they bought a used 1937 Buick coupe in California and drove with all their earthly belongings to Kansas.

"I still remember how I thought it was very important that I get back to help my dad on the farm as soon as I could, since he was getting 'so old,'" he recalled. (His father was 53.)

The couple farmed and raised four children, Diane, Julie, Rick and Brad, in the Lund area and now live in Oberlin.

One of their classmates, Raymond M. Hague, was killed in action when he went down after the Germans sank his ship, the destroyer USS Maddox, off Sicily on July 11, 1943. Others members of the class who

served, according to the Alumni Directory of 1957, included Raymond Adams, Norman Bainter, Leo T. Bendon, Melvin Beneda, Martin Chapman, Virgil Davison, Robert Emerson, Eugene Guinn, Oren Hughes, James Jackson, Russell Jenkins Jr., Harley Kathka, Louis Lorenson, Martin McKisson, Kenneth Matheny, Kenneth Muirhead, Leo Neff, Lowell Olson, Harold Van Pelt, William Pryor, Fredrick Rezner and Prensyl Ruzicka.

All are included in "The Greatest Generation" of World War II veterans who will be honored, along with all others who have served, died or are presently serving their country this Veterans Day.