

Christmas -1943

*By Hap Hansen*

I was eight years old. My two older brothers were stationed on battleships in the South Pacific. My next oldest brother was still in basic training in Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. My younger brother and I were at home with mom and dad.

My parents had recently lost the farm they owned because of debt they could not repay. We were living on a rented farm where the landlord did not charge rent but took 50 percent of all cash crops we produced.

As an eight year old, I looked forward to Christmas to see what I would get for a present. I wanted a bicycle in the worst way. With my parents in dire financial straits, there were few presents under the tree. There was only one box with my name on it. Christmas morning came. I anxiously looked for a bicycle. There was still only one package for me. I swiftly tore it open.

In it was a box of four handkerchiefs, all embroidered with the letter 'H'. No bicycle! I still have that box of handkerchiefs. On occasion I still open the box and remember how fortunate I was, and am. Because of their age the handkerchiefs are no longer white, but just a bit off-color!

As an aside, my four brothers and I, along with my brother-in-law, all have served in the military. I am proud of that. All of us returned home safe and alive.

I am fortunate to have gone through most of my life with no serious illnesses. I obviously don't know how much time I have left. No one does! But God willing, I will make the most of whatever time I have left.

Have a great Holiday Season!