

Jerry Allan Hanks, Sr.

U.S. Marine Corps, Sergeant
1937 - 1993

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Jerry Allan Hanks Sr. was the son of Everett and Charlene Hanks, born on January 26, 1937, in Indianapolis, Indiana. He and his two sisters Karen and Sally grew up in an Indianapolis just returning to peacetime normalcy after the end of World War II. The Indianapolis 500 was starting up again after a wartime hiatus, and manufacturers in the highly industrialized city were returning to the production of civilian goods.

Through Jerry's childhood, his father worked as a U.S. Treasury Department payroll examiner, then as an accountant at the Veterans Administration. According to a local newspaper, as a teenager Hanks may have attended a vocational school in Indianapolis, the Arsenal Technical High School. He enlisted in the Marine Corps on September 26, 1955, nine months after turning 18. Arsenal Tech probably prepared him well for life in the military, since it organized classes into "companies" and placed a heavy emphasis on Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) activities.



Unit patch for Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, California. The logo was supposedly designed by Walt Disney Company artists in southern California. U.S. Marine Corps via Fold3

Hanks became a private in the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, which consisted of six aircraft groups. By July 1956, he was attached to one of these groups as an aircraft mechanic based at the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Jacksonville, Florida. The center specialized in aviation maintenance for both jets and helicopters. Hanks joined his unit just as it was preparing to transfer its operations to El Toro Marine Corps Air Station near Santa Ana, California.

As part of his Marine Aviation wing, the technically-inclined private may have been responsible for maintenance on three types of fighter jets and two models of helicopters. Jets could have included the F4-D Skyray, F-8 Crusader, and the FJ-2 Fury, all fighter aircraft. Helicopters may have included the Piasecki H-21 and the Sikorsky CH-37 Mojave, both transports.

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After five years of service, the Marines promoted Hanks to sergeant. He retired from the Marines shortly thereafter, on November 30, 1960. The 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing remained stateside for the entirety of his enlistment, but during the 1950s the threat of war with the Soviet Union or other communist nations was always a real possibility.

Still a young man when he left the service, Jerry may have been motivated to alter his plans by the presence of a new family. He had married Catherine McMahon on January 10, 1959. The couple eventually had one daughter, Monica Casker, and four sons: Raymond, Jerry Jr., Kevin, and Stephen. After returning to civilian life, Hanks settled around Orlando, West Virginia.

On July 13, 1993, Jerry Allan Hanks Sr. passed away from natural causes at the age of 56 years old. His final days were spent around Gilmer, West Virginia, and he was buried in the West Virginia National Cemetery a few days later, on July 16.



Main structures and runways of Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, date unspecified. *Santa Ana Public Library*

Wins Promotion
A former Tech High School pupil has been promoted to sergeant while serving at the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station, Santa Ana, Cal. He is **Jerry A. Hanks**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Everett A. Hanks, 2855 S. Walcott.

Hanks's promotion to sergeant was big enough news to print in Indianapolis. *Newspapers.com*

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Sources

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Resting Place

West Virginia National Cemetery
42 Veterans Memorial Lane, Grafton, WV 26354
(304) 265-2044

Section 1
Site 1529
Date of interment: July 16, 1993

About the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project

The West Virginia National Cemeteries Project is a program of the West Virginia Humanities Council, funded in part by the Veterans Legacy Program of the Department of Veteran Affairs and initiated in 2021. All biographies produced as part of this program are composed by West Virginia high school students, who conduct original research on veterans interred at the Grafton National Cemetery or the West Virginia National Cemetery, both of which are located in or near Grafton, Taylor County, West Virginia.

As home to one of the nation's earliest National Cemeteries, the community of Grafton has longstanding traditions of honoring America's veterans, including the longest continuously celebrated Memorial Day parade in the United States. The Grafton National Cemetery, located in the heart of the city and founded in 1867, is typically the endpoint of each year's parade. When the Grafton National Cemetery began to run short of space during the 1960s, the West Virginia National Cemetery was dedicated in 1987, just a few miles outside of Grafton in the community of Pruntytown. The same National Cemetery Administration staff cares for both facilities.

The West Virginia Humanities Council is proud to thank the following organizations for their participation in the West Virginia National Cemeteries Project: West Virginia Archives and History, the West Virginia University history department, Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society, Taylor County Public Library, and Grafton High School.

Please refer comments or questions to the West Virginia Humanities Council
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