



“Living The American Dream”

Loving Life

Hans Nilsen was born in Oslo, Norway, on Feb. 21, 1944, to Erling and Dagmar Nilsen during World War II.

Erling took a job in America working on blueprint making machines, and after a year, he returned to Norway to bring his wife and son to the U.S. to begin their lives in the new country. The entire Nilsen family departed Norway in 1951 to escape the country ravaged by the tyranny of the Nazi regime.

“I’ll never forget the morning the ship arrived in the New York Harbor,” Hans recalled. “My father awakened me at 6 a.m., explaining that the United States was a special country, not just for the freedoms, but for the free enterprise that would allow his father, a mechanical engineer, the opportunity to succeed.

“The words and impact of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty towering over the ship changed my life,” Jack said. “I instilled that in my sons and daughter and grandchildren. What an amazing country we live in.”

By GARY GRAHAM



Hans Christian “Jack” Nilsen, February 21, 1944 – December 24, 2020

They arrived in New York.

Alhambra, California, was their ultimate destination, capping a 6,500-mile journey to begin new lives on the West Coast. However, Hans' school brought challenges. As a skinny kid, not only was he teased about the fact he couldn't speak English when he arrived, but the kids taunted him about his funny clothes and odd name. Hans beat the crap out of one of the classmates who was heckling him and convinced his parents to buy him blue jeans and tennis shoes. Another classmate decided, "You are not a Hans, you are a Jack!"

That afternoon, he told his mother and father that he wanted to be called Jack. His mother wisely answered, "You can be Jack at school, but you are Hans to me."

Shortly after graduating from high school 57 years ago, Jack went to work at Leed's shoe store while taking classes at Pasadena City College. It was at Leed's that he met Linda Demarco, the cashier. Two years later, in 1966, they married and enjoyed 54 years together before Jack's passing.



Many years have past.
God Bless the the U.S.A.

After being drafted into the Army in 1967, Linda and Jack lived in Heidelberg, Germany, for two years before he was honorably discharged in 1969. That was followed by the birth of their twins, David and Douglas, in 1970.

Using his GI Bill, Jack started college. Knowing he had to work to support his growing family, Jack went to work at McDonnell Douglas. When the office he was working in was relocated in the early 1970s, Jack requested a short-term assignment from his father-in-law, Mike Demarco, until he could finish school. Mike had established Accurate Grinding in 1950 in East L.A., unparalleled in the high-precision grinding of turbine shafts and manufacturing parts for the first jet engine with Garrett AiResearch.

His father-in-law was tough and demanding, and Jack began at the bottom. He learned every job, running and repairing every machine. Before long, Accurate was more than a temporary job, it was his career.

In 1978, Jack oversaw the introduction and operation of the sophisticated, high tech CNC (computer numerical control) lathes and grinding ma-

chines, and CNC was integrated into the operation. He quickly understood their value, realized that this was a transitional time for machining, and to compete, Accurate had to be all in or all out.

Joe Demarco, Linda's brother, proved his expertise in the financial arena, setting budgets, planning expansion and negotiating contracts. Working as a team, Jack and Joe discarded old school techniques in favor of the



Nilsen twins David and Douglas.

new technology as soon as it became available.

After he graduated from Cal State L.A. with a degree in business administration, Jack worked six days a week, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., at Accurate.

Jack's daughter, Debbie, observed in her eulogy, "Dad made sure he finished his degree, taking classes at night and in the summer. He set an example for us – to finish what you start, to keep your word, and to do your best even when no one is looking."

In the early '60s and '70s, Linda worked alongside Jack, her father, Mike, and brother, Joe, handling all the accounting. By the time they were 4 or 5 years old, twins Douglas and David were playing on the shop floor of Accurate Grinding.

Jack had begun fishing when he was 5 years old. Throughout his life, sportfishing continued to be one of his passions, and it remained a favorite family activity.

Douglas and David became involved in the business during high school, working after school and on weekends until they enrolled in college. When they returned in 1989, that summer helped shape the future of Accurate Grinding and Manufacturing.

During the summer, the boys and Jack often fished together. "We were out shark fishing on a six-pack charter when we noticed the gaffs kept bending," David recalled. "Dad suggested that by applying Accurate's aerospace technology, we should be able to create a better solution."

With the vision and remarkable talents of the 20-year-old twins, the first gaffs were manufactured in 1990. Next, the twins contacted Lois Hall and asked her permission to sell gaffs at the Fred Hall Long Beach Fishing Show; she agreed, and they showed up with their first run of 180 Accurate hand-crafted gaffs. They sold out in March 1990.

The three of them built Accurate Fishing products from that simple beginning.

Said Debbie in her eulogy: "A happy man, Jack took great joy and pride in the achievements and talents of David and Douglas. He loved being in the shop, designing and building things that people loved; he loved being on the boats, watching people use their products; he loved spotting planes and rattling off the part numbers that they had manufactured for that particular plane; and he loved knowing that they built things that worked."

"Beyond all of that," she said at the memorial, "the thing that defined Dad was family. Everything he did, he did for us. He was the best. A man whose handshake meant something. My dad's life embodied the American Dream."

The twins were young, self-assured and eagerly sought additional items that would be a good fit for the manufacturing potential of the new company.

At the time, Jack was working at Accurate Grinding, but he had dreamed of having a business with a product line of his own. He had never found the time but when he realized how innovative the twins were, he saw an opportunity and he was convinced to "let these kids roll!"

In the beginning, they were running a small 15-employee aerospace manufacturing company that could have faltered while also risking capital with little or no return.

According to the boys: "Our shop wasn't designed to produce gaffs with straight handles and bent hooks; we were a shaft (things that rotate) type of business for aerospace."

Somehow, Jack managed to navigate through the risk, and David and Douglas along with their dad worked out any glitches until their venture turned the corner.

"We were doing OK selling the gaffs," Douglas said, "but it was a tough business to run since the item wasn't really in our product line."

Turning them loose in the shop was



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one of the greatest gifts Jack could have given the twins, allowing them the freedom to be creative, and, by their account, go crazy. They admitted Jack's patience was remarkable, and the mistakes they made were without consequence, which permitted them to become stronger in the process.

David continued, "In 1993, a salesman walked into our shop and suggested that we should consider fabricating custom side plates for Penn 500s. We kind of blew him off because we were so busy manufacturing other things."

However, when work slowed, the Accurate team agreed to give it a shot.

When the company began manufacturing custom side plates, they purchased their first CNC mill machine.

Their big break came with the design and manufacture of the upgraded kits for Penn Jig Master fishing reels. Their model improved on an already solid product. The process took an old Penn Jig Master and made it into a superpower. They were able to create the side plates and frame prototypes, and Accurate Fishing took off. Kit sales in one month generated more cash than the gaff business did in two years.

In the beginning, the team worked 24/7 on the project. There were ups and downs. Sometimes, Penn parts wouldn't match their prototypes – maybe a slightly different tolerance – and they would become frustrated with the issues that cropped up.

Then one day, Douglas and David had their "aha moment." They conspired to design an Accurate reel. They didn't even bother to tell Jack what they were attempting.

"We had been in the shop since we were very small – our whole lives – so the mechanical part we understood. And always when we got together for family events with our dad, we would talk shop ... fishing reels and making stuff ... that's the language we spoke."

"So, we would ask about anything we worked on, 'Dad, what do you think of making this out of 17-4?' 'What about 440 stainless?' 'How hard or soft should we make it?' 'Should we plate it?'"

"That's how we communicated.



He loved being in the shop.



on one side was answered quickly. Because the spool and shaft each have to rotate independently of the other. This made it exceedingly difficult to figure out!"

"But that answer led us to conceive of the TwinDrag idea; we shared three years of hard work and many setbacks. We drew the reel in 2D on paper and when finished we had 180 parts that had to be fabricated individually."

It certainly was not an easy task to design or build the prototype, but after many months, the first TwinDrag was born – the Platinum ATD-30 TwinDrag.

Once the prototype was completed, the testing began.

Fastening a line to Douglas' Jeep Cherokee, he would speed down the parking lot with the line attached to



We were thirsty for information and loved hearing his answers. Same thing from our Grandpa Mike, who had been there from the beginning. Their knowledge has been passed down from one generation to another."

In 1996, the twins came up with a business-changing question for their dad: Why are there drags on only one side of the spool?

They continued, "Our dad always had answers from the aerospace side. We knew the questions to ask, and it was an ongoing conversation that has gone on for decades. It's been fun for us."

Going further: "Our question as to why drags were only



"The thing that defined Dad was family".

the reel, which David was hanging onto for dear life.

"Then by running back and forth, we saw that it worked. We did that with a 5-gallon bucket from the stern of the boat when we had the opportunity, as well."

And while the testing was happening, and even with Jack and the twins in the same building, Jack continued to deal with the ups and downs of Accurate's aerospace operation, working from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday. He was aware that the twins were working on



Left to right Doug Nilsen, Joe DeMarco, Hans and David Nilsen.

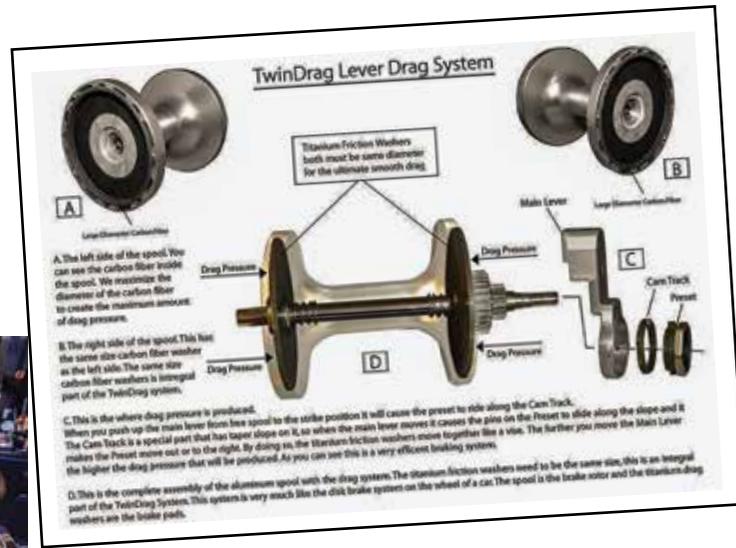
something, but he wasn't certain what they were up to.

The prototype two-speed ATD-30 reel was to be a birthday present to Jack that the twins hoped to have ready before his February 1998 fishing trip. They had worked night and day for two months to finish the first model, but the reel still wasn't quite ready to go.

"Dad's going fishing," they told each other. "Let's just give him this thing and see how it holds up."

"We believe it was one of the happiest moments of his life! It still gives us goosebumps when we remember how thrilled he was," the twins recalled.

When he left on his fishing trip, according to the twins,



he said to anyone within earshot, "I've got my own Accurate Fishing reel that my sons created. My boys made this!" The twins were equally as proud. The reel turned out to be an industry game changer for landing big fish.

Jack adored his twins and was proud of their accomplishments with Accurate Fishing. "My sons are the driving force," he often said.

Douglas and David have excelled in designing and developing the ever-expanding product line for Accurate Fishing.



This successful undertaking of the two-speed Twin-Drag 30 reel encouraged them to proceed with a new concept – a family of TwinDrag reels. This created an entirely new market of products.

Today, the ATD Platinum line has raised the bar in reel manufacturing. They offer ATD, Dauntless, Valiant, Boss, Fury and Tern, all of which are sold worldwide.

The Accurate brand continued to grow, and Jack's responsibilities grew as well, which prevented him from spending as much time on the water as he would've liked.

Jack recognized the tremendous potential that the growing long-range fleet represented. He had always assumed the mantle of spokesman, advisor and sounding

board for both Accurate Grinding and Manufacturing and Accurate Fishing. Now, he began immersing himself in the world of sportfishing in a variety of different ways.

He began attending Fred Hall Shows where he introduced Accurate Fishing products both to the public as well as to other members of the industry. He became friends with Del Marsh, a member of the Tackle Specialties/Calstar Rods team at the Fred Hall shows in Long Beach and Del Mar. Del willingly shared his knowledge about the industry with Jack, which led to a friendship filled with pranks, laughter and camaraderie that endured for several decades until Del's death in 2009.



"One of the hurdles for customers wanting to fish a long-range trip was not only the expense of the trip, but also big fish tackle is some of the most expensive tackle and it's used the least," said Rock Cod wRick Maxa, co-host of the Let's Talk Hookup radio show. "We always recommended Accurate trips for first-timers, because Accurate provided so much gear for passengers to try out."

"They could use a 30 or a 50W outfit and not have to shell out all that money right off the bat. Nilsen seized the opportunity and became aggressive by capitalizing on the Accurate Fishing trips. No doubt about it. I didn't know anybody that didn't get along with Jack or that he didn't get along with," Maxa said.

Capt. John Klein, *Q-105*; Capt. Andy Cates, *Red Rooster III*; Capt. Frank Lo Preste, *Royal Polaris*; Capt. Art Taylor, *Searcher*; Capt. Tony Reyes, *Midriff Islands*; and many more were



Pete Gray during the Let's Talk Hookup.

try so well and he knew how to guide people. His diplomatic style was remarkable. I never heard him say a bad thing about anybody." For 30 years, Jack fished and supported the East Cape Classic by Lynn Rose Tours. He always said it was his favorite because it gave back and helped local kids.

"My best memory is arranging for Jack to meet George Bush Sr. and Norman Schwarzkopf at Safari Club International," Rose said. "He was thrilled, and we had such a good time. Jack always had a cheerful smile for everyone



Del willingly shared his knowledge.

all part of the growing fleet of long-range boats over the years that Accurate Fishing sponsored, with trips ranging from several days to several weeks. An industry-changing method of showcasing Accurate's growing product line on the long-range boats had grown.

Pete Gray during the Let's Talk Hookup tribute to Jack, credited him for helping shape the radio show into the success it became starting in the 1990s.

"I always appreciated his feedback because it was so constructive," Gray said. "He knew the fishing indus-





say. Here we are, 57 years later, and I look out at you today and I see what he and my mother have built. A 54-year marriage, three kids, nine grandchildren. A third-generation company that builds things that people use and love. He was the patriarch of our family, our foundation. He was our North Star.” 



Hans Jack Christian helps young Jack Erling to catch his first fish.

and was a man that loved his family.” Capt. Jack Webster remembered, “Jack brought a lot of smiles to a vast number of folks whose lives he touched throughout the world of sportfishing and beyond. Jack brought joy to many passengers.”

Debbie concluded: “He worked hard his whole life, he built a family with my mother. ‘It all started at Leed’s shoe store,’ he used to