Horace R. Hansen wrote long letters to family and friends about his experiences following the Allied front through Europe during World War II. He spoke with many people whose lives were disrupted by war. He witnessed the opening of the barn near Gardelegen where the Nazis burned more than 300 slave laborers alive to hide them from approaching Allied troops. He served as chief prosecutor at the Dachau war-crimes trials, where he also conducted interviews of five of Adolph Hitler's war-conference recorders.

After his return from Europe, Hansen conducted a private law practice in St. Paul, Minnesota, for more than 50 years. He worked to advance the cause of justice by seeking to better the lot of the common man, often favoring the side of David against Goliath. Among his many legal contributions was establishment of the first health-maintenance organization in Minnesota—Group Health.

In his later years, Hansen prepared a manuscript, using the letters he wrote home during the war as one source. After his death in 1995, Hansen’s wife, then his daughters, sought its publication. Witness to Barbarism is a unique and powerful story including eyewitness material on Hitler and his obsession, written in the hope that what happened then will never happen again.