

Oral Memoirs

of

Scott Kidd

An Interview Conducted by

Mark Barnes

February 12, 2014

Community Veterans History Project

Lone Sailor Memorial Project

University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida

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Interview Histories

Interviewers: Mark Barnes
Cameraperson Fernando Maldonado

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

The Community Veterans History Project, a RICHES of Central Florida Project at the University of Central Florida, includes interviews with Central Florida veterans from all branches of the United States military. Beginning in 2010, the UCF Community Veterans History Project is collecting, preserving, and making accessible to the public the experiences of Central Florida's veterans so that future generations will better understand the realities of conflict. It is a collaborative endeavor supported by multiple departments and offices at UCF. The histories, which are collected by students and faculty, are archived and made digitally available through the UCF library. The UCF Community Veterans History Project will also contribute selected veterans' histories to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Scott Kidd is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on March 7, 2014.

Abstract

Oral history of former United States recruit training Commander Scott Kidd. This interview was conducted by Mark Barnes at the University of Central Florida's Colbourn Hall in Orlando, Florida. This oral history was produced as part of the Community Veterans History Project (CVHP) and the Lone Sailor Memorial Committee for the purpose conducting background research for a memorial honoring the former Orlando Naval Training Center (NTC Orlando).

NTC Orlando was in operation from 1968 to 1998 and was one of three recruit training centers used by the U.S. Navy. It resided in the area that is now the community of Baldwin Park. During the 30 years that NTC Orlando was operational, more than 650,000 men and women were transformed from civilians to sailors.

Kidd was a former recruit commander at the Orlando Naval Training Center (NTC Orlando) in Orlando, Florida from 1989 to 1993. He also served in the Navy from 1983 to 1994. Kidd was the first recruit commander at the base to lead a fully integrated company of male and female recruits. He also served on the USS Ponce LPD-15, the USS Niagara Falls AFS-3, and the USS

Iowa.

Scott Kidd

Oral History Memoir

Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Mark Barnes

February 12, 2014

Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Barnes Today is February 12th, 2014. I am interviewing Scott Kidd, who served in the United States Navy. My name is Mark Barnes, and with me is Fernando Maldonado, who is working the camera. We are interviewing Mr. Kidd as part of the UCF Community Veterans History Project, and as research for the creation of the Lone Sailor Memorial Project. We are recording this interview at UCF [University of Central Florida], in the city of Orlando, Florida. Mr. Kidd, or Scott, however you would like to be directed.

Kidd Scott is fine.

Barnes Scott.

0:00:41

Biographical information

Barnes So, if you could just give us some of your early biography. Where were you born? Your brothers or sisters, mother, father?

Kidd Sure. I was born in Richland, Washington. I have six brothers and sisters. Single-parent family. Raised there in the [19]60s. Left home when I was 15, as part of the late 60s-early 70s liberal generation movement. Early – bounced around the California-Las Vegas area. Got married.

Decided I would join the military and clean my act up, at a certain point in life. And then spent 12 years in the service. After multiple experiences there, I received a medical retirement, due to some contamination from a command I was with.

And moved on into real life. I opened a couple of businesses. got into broadcasting. And now, I run a company that is involved in putting science and technology companies together with young students in order to do career guidance.

Barnes Good. And what year did you join the Navy? And what were your reasons for choosing the Navy over other services branches?

Kidd I joined the Navy in actually February of – yeah – February of 1983. And, at that time, we were busy – the United States, in particular, was busy – enjoying a massive recession. Huge unemployment. Eighteen percent – 18 to 20 percent interest rates on home loans. There was a lot of convulsions there, and I had a young family that I needed to be able to take care of. So, like many people, I joined for the job. I selected the military, because – quite frankly, I selected the Navy, because they gave me a bonus, which came in quite handy at the time. So like many people in the military who joined, it was for the money – for the job.

0:03:03

Assignments

Barnes And what were some of your first experiences coming out of boot camp – some of your first assignments?

Kidd Okay. here's a little entertainment. First place, I was – even though I was born in Washington, I sort of made my way to warmer clim[ate]s, like the L.A. [Los Angeles] and Las Vegas areas. When I joined the service, in February of 1983, the Navy and its infinite wisdom sent me to Great Lakes, Illinois, which is the north end of Chicago. Directly on the lake. Now for those of you unaware of it, it's frickin' cold up there [laughs]. So when you have a chill factor of minus 35 [degrees], it, ah, persuades you that – it gives you second thoughts about your [laughs] – your move to join the military. But any rate, I completed boot camp there, and my initial training – I was actually there for a best part of the year.

And my first duty assignment was in Norfolk, Virginia, with a ship called the USS *Shenandoah* – I forgot to mention it down there – brand new ship that had just been commissioned. I was what was known as a “boiler technician.” I was persuaded to become a boiler technician, because the recruiter I spoke to was a chief boiler technician who told me what a great job it was. And, oh, he lied [laughs]. I will tell you, this is not just for me, but through your conversations with anyone else in here, one of the most common refrains you will hear from folks who served in, ah – in any of the branches is that, “My recruiter lied to me.” [laughs]. That is just – it should be on Hallmark cards.

But regardless, when I started on board the *Shenandoah*, which was a tender ship – in other words, it was a repair ship, so it brought supplies and performed repairs on other ships while they were deployed. So we would accompany battle groups of ships that would go on cruises. For example, Mediterranean cruise would normally be scheduled to last for about six months. It would include an aircraft carrier, some destroyers, support ships, this-and-that, and we would – we were the type of ship that would go a long with that group in order to keep them functioning over that six month period. So my job was to work on propulsion – stuff which is what boilers were for. We built steam. Interesting experience.

It was also one of the first ships in the Navy that had a sexually-integrated crew. Because at that time, women were not permitted in contact – in combat roles.

Because this particular ship was considered a support ship it was—it did not put anyone in direct combat. Ergo, you could have women sailors.

Barnes What year was...

Kidd That was 1984.

0:06:24 **Transfer to NTC Orlando**

Barnes What—when did you come to NTC [Naval Training Center] Orlando?

Kidd I was stationed starting in June of 1989. I was—what was called? My first shore duty command, which meant that I did not have to go to sea for a while.

Barnes And how did you come about getting that assignment?

Kidd My assignment at NTC Orlando was actually with the subcommand RTC Orlando—Recruit Training Command. This is kind of important—an important distinction in that, as background, if—in order to get promoted in the military, you had to show your skill and availability, flexibility in different types of roles. Those roles would usually include assignments. Now, there were certain assignments that you could take in the Navy that enhanced your resume, and virtually guaranteed your promotion to the next level.

For enlisted people, promotion—you went through E[nlisted Rank] 6—is essentially strictly a test taking job. The Navy says how many it needs, you take a paper test, and if you score high enough on that test, you get promoted. The promotion to E-7—the E-7 through E-9 grades, which is senior enlisted, is based on different criteria, along with taking tests. It's also a lot of interview and examination of your service record, what type of assignments you had, skill sets, etc. Performance-based. So, if you wanted to be promoted to E-7, which is kind of important for a number of reasons, you had to take some demanding assignments. RTC Orlando recruit—being a recruit company commander slot, there was one of those type of assignments that would get you—if you completed it successfully, odds are you were gonna get promoted .

Barnes So you arrived in 1989 to...

Kidd I was there through—through 1980—from '89 through '93.

Barnes And what were your impressions of the base and/or the Orlando area when you arrived?

Kidd Oh, Orlando's beautiful, compared to Norfolk [*laughs*]. The base had—was a mixture of buildings that were 60 years old and brand new. From—the base, of course, was originally an [U.S.] Army—was an [U.S.] Air For—Army Air Force base built back in World War II. And it had been—in the 1960s—supposed to be closed, but Lyndon [B.] Johnson did a deal with one of the, uh, Congress people

here for Central Florida, in order to get the congressmen's votes for the Civil Rights Act [of 1965]. Lyndon Johnson did a deal with him – said, "Well, we'll keep the base open instead of closing it so you have jobs." And they transferred it over to the Navy. The Navy – you might note that we do live in Florida, and that Orlando is damn near as far from the water as you can get. So that might seem an odd place for a Navy base [*laughs*]. But any rate, that's why it was there. But it was a beautiful base, and the city of Orlando of course was growing at that time. Lots of great building going on, lots of energy, sunshine. All things you might expect.

0:10:08

Responsibilities as a recruit training commander

Barnes So while you were at RTC, what were your responsibilities? Your day in and day out responsibilities.

Kidd [*coughs*] I was what is known as a "recruit company commander." Many people recognize that from what they are in the other services called "drill sergeants." But the Navy being different, we're recruit company commanders. It was our job to supervise folks who were brand new to the military experience – Navy, in particular – from the time they arrived on a bus until they had met certain standards and were prepared to go on to their first set of actual technical schools. We trained them in how to wear uniforms, appropriate sense of discipline, how to recognize military rank, appropriate forms of behavior.

The, uh – the recruit training experience is something that's been around since Roman times. It is designed to take someone who is a civilian, with civilian values, regardless of where they come from, and first break down their identity as a civilian, for who they were in the first place, and then build them back up with a new identity – sense of recognition as a member of that military group. So that is what – that's what we did over the course of eight weeks. We spent a couple of weeks being very nit-picky about any – any deviation from standards, by the quarter inch. Sometimes sixteenth of an inch. Once you did that – that normally took about two weeks – and from that point on, you would spend your time having them involved in basic classes – classroom activities – and then participation in group activities in order to build up that identity.

0:12:32

Experience of the recruits

Barnes And how did the recruits – obviously, they may have all been different – but how did the recruits seem to act to the environment, to the training, to the region, did they come in raw and left as...

Kidd Left as sailors, which is what they were. It's such a wide range. It is. But when you say how they reacted when they came in, that's kind of the point. The point is you do have a wide range of individuals, and the point is to put them out in the end of that eight-week training as similarly as possible. So they all met certain standards. So we really didn't care how they felt when they got there. We

already knew that the system was designed to be uncomfortable for them. It was designed to be challenging.

An example is routinely you would – their first day of arrival, regardless, they would be scheduled to come in somewhere between ten o'clock at night and four o'clock in the morning. They would be herded into a – basically a dormitory room with bunk beds, regardless of what time they got there. With their stuff, whatever they carried on which was minimal, and their clothing. At 04:00 – or four o'clock in the morning – myself and another person would come in and wake them up. It was not unusual for us to wake them up by banging metal trashcans, or using an air horn, or both. The idea was – thinking of it as shock and awe, because they would lead, for the next couple of weeks, 18-hour days, in order to – as part of that process to change their value system.

Barnes Now did you guys – now you as an instructor, and you can answer for the recruits if you know as well, did you guys have normal off-base activities? Downtime? Anything that you guys liked to do?

Kidd The recruits did not. During that eight-week training, uh – let me rephrase that. During the eight-week training period, the recruits would normally go through six weeks basically [*coughs*] – six weeks of training of varying intensities. Initially, extremely intense, a little less so, and more cerebral[?] as it went along, more detailed-oriented.

By the end of six weeks – normally somewhere – the sixth or seventh weekend, they were there. they would be escorted by company commanders like me to some type of off-base activity. Go to SeaWorld, or something else along that line. The following week they'd be allowed to go without escorts. Like that weekend when they graduated, which was either – normally the end of their seventh week. When they graduated they would have that evening to go out and do whatever they were – then they would come back they would have two or three more days before they actually left the base and went onto their next command. Depends on the schedule, on the way it fell apart.

So by and large, the company commanders – no. We, the company commanders, were horribly mistreated [*laughs*]. I'm sorry, I'm just playing. It was a very challenging duty for a company commander, because in the shipboard Navy, normally you deploy for six months. You're gone from home, family, all the rest of that, the boat's gone. And you go for shorter deployments, depending on what type of command you were on. It was nothing for shipboard Navy to be gone, physically, nine months a year from your home and family. Very strenuous.

Well, when you came to a training command here, it was just as bad. Problem was it was even more intense, and worse your family is just down the street from wherever you lived. So when – when we say it was intense for the recruits, understand the company commanders did everything the recruits did, were with them that entire time. Plus an hour before and an hour after. So it was not

unusual for company commanders to have weeks where they averaged four hours sleep a night.

After – after three consecutive – the normal schedule was to train three companies, and then take a break from being a company commander to being an instructor in teaching classes, which was normal life. you actually had like weekends off. But for six months you were pretty burnt out [*laughs*]. The effect on company commanders being stationed there – the normal billeting there was a three-year duty. When you have orders to go there, you are expected to be there for three years. And the divorce rate there for married couples was an excess of 70 percent. It was just that strenuous, and demanding a duty. It was pretty intense. But for those people that survived it and did well, God bless them all.

Barnes But you mentioned classes that recruits went to. What were some of the classes that they take?

Kidd Recruits would go through classes – everything from an introduction to naval history. Teaching them about John Paul Jones – it was a very much – very light overview, very light, of the years the Mili[tary], the years the Navy got started, some of the high points, and very early naval history, etc. That type of thing. They would also go through courses – classes on basic hygiene, behavioral sense. I would call it “social and ethical education”, as in teaching what the standards were. We had class everything to naval history to rape awareness, all of which were taught by certified instructors like myself. So everything from how to wear your clothes properly, to the language of the Navy – as in, for example, what a “bulkhead” is. It’s a wall, by the way, if you didn’t know. All floors are decks. ceilings are overheads. There’s a shipboard terminology the Navy uses that no one else does. So you had to learn that. You also had to learn neat stuff like “bits,” “bites” as they applied to the Navy. They have nothing to do with high-tech, they have a whole lot to do with ropes [*laughs*]. So these are all things that – there’s a wide range of topics. Largely related to how to behave in a shipboard environment.

0:20:05 **The training of male and female recruits**

Barnes Now did you instruct male and female recruits?

Kidd Oh, yes. I did [*laughs*].

Barnes So – so what was that experience like for the recruits? For the officers?

Kidd For the – let me start with for the recruits, because I got a lot of feedback from them. This was a unique time in the Navy’s history – my particular time era – because of the fact that, while Recruit Training Center of Orlando had always – as long as the Navy had been accepting women – had been the training center for women enlisted recruits. In the late ‘80s-early ‘90s, the Navy as a policy made the commitment to do training of both sexes together in the same room. No

separation. this-and-that and the other things. The Navy was very, very concerned, from a policy matter, that they – there would be problems involving throwing a lot of young people together in a stressed environment, where they might be encouraged to look for some release from that stress. What a stunning idea [*laughs*].

So in the Navy's infinite wisdom, they made it the responsibility of the trainers and staff to emphasize to these young men and young women every day that having sex was not a good thing. So you might want to imagine telling a drunk, "Don't think about pink elephants." So yes. It became challenging in that respect, and young women and young men, being what young women and young men are, there were some rather creative attempts to get around the rules there. Not a big deal. In the big scheme of things, it's hardly – but it was more amusing than anything else. The point was that it added a note to the training environment that didn't exist elsewhere in the Navy.

And it also led to some major changes in the way recruits were actually trained. The history of training recruits is – regardless of branch of service, again – is very much tied into the process of breaking down the individualized identity in the first place, and rebuilding them. Anyone who has ever watched the movies knows that there's a certain amount of blunt language that is used, and historically has been used. Well, the United States Navy, as training command, decided that that type of language was no longer to be used.

So within an environment where you have certain expectations by many of the recruits – come in expecting that this is going to be the toughest thing they ever did. some of them were a little disappointed. Probably a minority, but nonetheless you had folks who were very highly motivated to be there looking for the challenge of a lifetime. Those are a lot of recruits who came to the military simply because they were looking for direction. That was their number one reason for entering. It wasn't because of job. it was because they wanted a sense of who they were within a larger community. I cannot count the number of kids – and I'll say "kids," because I was in my mid-30s and most of them were in their teens – who came to me after, upon completion of training or during it, and expressed their pride about being part of the organization, knowing what they were doing, having goals that were clear to them at that time. So by and large, for the vast majority of recruits coming through, boot camp – RTC Orlando – was a very positive experience. I think most of them – I never met one who afterwards[sic] – many of the kids I trained here, even 20 years later, are in touch with me via Facebook or something else, who haven't expressed what a positive impact the experience had on their lives.

Funniest thing I ever – I actually had probably over the course of my three and a half years, 13 companies that I've pushed, which was pretty much the record. More than once, at the end of the training cycle for the kids, the eight-week period, when they approach their graduation, the night before their actual graduation ceremony, their parents and families would come to visit. And more

than once, I'd have some young man come introduce me to his single mother. And then come to me afterwards and say, "I wish I had a dad like you." Which was a little scary when you think about all the horrible things I said to that boy [laughs] not two months before that.

But that gives you an idea of how many of them looked at the experience – was something to go through. It was finite. They did it. They knew they were changed. For us, as the trainers, the vast majority of us were already set in our career goals. We already knew where we were headed, so it was a job to be done. Most of us took a great deal of pride in the job. Sometimes it was challenging. By and large, I can say this from my own experience. and I stay in touch with five or six folks from those times. Everyone shares relatively similar experiences. Both the joys and the frustrations. So, uh, it's a job.

0:26:26

USS *Blue Jacket* and the Grinder

Barnes There's[sic] two features of the base we just want to kind of get your feedback on, and then you can let us know how they relate either to the base or to what you did. So that would be the *Blue Jacket*, USS *Blue Jacket*...

Kidd Right.

Barnes And then the Grinder.

Kidd [laughs] I almost forgot about that being called the "Grinder." The USS *Blue Jacket* was, at the time I was there, pretty much an unused reminder – mainly because by 1989, it had been there for 30-odd years. It was broken down, unsafe. Never went on board it. Never took recruits on board it. Because it would have cost money to fix, and that's not what money got put into. But it was a little bit of humor for all of us there, because the *Blue Jacket* was physically located at one end of the "Grinder."

The "Grinder" was – I think was a huge patio space – cement, you name it. But it was located there. you could see it. And it was nothing to march around in, or run around in, as the case may be. And there were people from the base maintenance crews who had the job of keeping it painted, and all the rest of that. But other than that, it really did not have – while I was there, and subsequent, because the base closed two years after I left – three years after I left. It really was nothing more than an ornament. Before that, I understood they used to do some facsimile training onboard simply to say, "This is a boat." "This is a rope." "This is a gang-way." "This is a flag or pennant." [laughs] And that's fine. You need those things, but it was not used for that in my time.

Now the "Grinder", on the other hand – one of the primary tools of training for all the boot camps – for all the services boot camps – particularly here, is marching. Marching means that you get a group of people together, you teach them to march in step as one. Their arms and legs moving at the same, each – left

arm, left leg. Everything moving at the same time, to a certain rhythm, dressed a certain way. And the “Grinder” was where you taught them to do that. And you yelled at them a lot. And, you know, you played loud music – loud marshal music, in a lot of cases. In other cases, you played some serious, four-beat, rock’n’roll, because it all has the same beat if you get them to march to it. The fun – I won’t say fun, because it certainly wasn’t for them [laughs].

After the first six hours, if you’re out in the middle of the sun, it’s far less entertaining than you might think. But this is Orlando. It gets hot here. Certain times of the year you’d be out on the “Grinder” – you’d had companies who were out on the “Grinder” every day, or at least in the evening, for two or three hours at a time. At other times of the year, when heat and humidity didn’t allow for it, because of heat stress factors, you had companies that never – did not spend a single day on the “Grinder,” simply because physical requirements were such. they weren’t allowed to. They may have gone through basic swim instruction at some point, where they had to cross the “Grinder” to get to the training facility, but other than that, they simply never saw it. Which made a challenge for company commanders like me who had to teach them how to march. “It’s where?” [laughs] “Oh, okay.”

So – but you would also use the “Grinder” as a – let’s call it a “training tool.” As in, the companies would be in their particular barracks, and as a company commander, perhaps you were dissatisfied for some reason with the level or performance, or moral, or whatever other particular instance. So you might send your people out the back door, out onto the “Grinder”, and have them run around the “Grinder,” uh, at sometimes two to three times, and then report back in. And woe unto to anyone who fell behind [laughs]. And so you could use those as disciplinary, but...

Barnes So were there any other structures on the base that you remember vividly that you used a lot? or recruits may have remembered vividly, because they trained a lot?

Kidd Well, uh, classroom building, which I believe is still there. uh, but you had other than the cafeteria, uh, which of course was the primary spot for all of the recruits. Um, you had the firefighting command. You had what’s call WSMP, uh, which was – I hate to say water sports – water systems and physical training, which was the gymnasium and pool. Those are pretty much what the recruits saw for those eight weeks. They simply did not spend that much time unsupervised or as individuals. They just weren’t given it. Once they left that – that recruit training command portion of thing, there was a lot of the base to be seen, but they were not allowed to do that while they were recruits.

0:32:50

Additional training

Barnes Now did you ever spend on NTC as a non-recruit commander?

Kidd Yes.

Barnes And what did you do in that capacity?

Kidd I taught at nuclear power school.

Barnes Okay.

Kidd I taught remedial mathematics. neat stuff like that. Kids who had, or for young men – it was always young men – who had signed up to go into nuclear power training. It was very high-end stuff for them. Some of them needed refreshers in their math in order to be able to handle the theoretical stuff in there, but that was just like being a classroom teacher anywhere. Normal 8-5 working hours. Monday through Friday.

Barnes Now, at the time, was that the only nuclear training facility in the...

Kidd It was the initial.

Barnes The initial?

Kidd The training pipe. I'm going to use the word "pipeline," which many people recognize – as in like, there are varying points along there. Uh, in the military in particular, there's always ongoing training, regardless of what you're in. Recruit training is simply the very beginning of the pipeline. From that point on, regardless whether you're going to be a, uh – if you're planning on just going out as an E-1 to a ship someplace – "Congratulations. You're gone."

You are a seaman apprentice or a seaman recruit is what a[sic] E-1 is. You are going to go through additional training, just to teach you what a boat is all about. That's called "apprentice training," and that was also at Naval Training Center. It was separate from recruit training. Uh, for more technical schools, then there was[sic] various pipelines.

For example, nuclear power, which was one of the most restricted – restrictive – qualifications. Um, for someone to get into it they had to – well, of course, they had to be a high school graduate, but on top of that, they had to have certain score on Navy-wide entrance tests when they came in. Um, certain behavioral records, etc. Uh, we used to go by what we called AFQT scores – Armed Forces Qualifying Test. They were scored on a 0 to 99 basis. You could not be accepted into nuclear power program, unless you scored above 90 on that test. Trust me. there were a lot of people that didn't. I trained recruits that were as low as 13. You can imagine the level of literacy for those folks.

Um, so – but at any rate, you also had, uh, initial training for electronic weaponry. Uh, electronic – you had training for folks going into, uh, basic seamanship, like boatswain's mates school. A variety of things took place on the Naval Training Center Command. These are all initial and secondary schools,

prior to sending someone out as qualified in that particular field to, uh, command. And some of them might move on to a different training command. When you spoke about the Nuclear Power Training Command, it—about a two, at that time—it took roughly two and half years from the time someone came in, as a recruit, to the time they actually went to a command to be around—to a seagoing command that had a nuclear reactor on it. So some of the training is intense.

0:36:30

Development of simulation training

Barnes And you were at the base at the infancy of the simulator training? Was that beginning to develop why you were there?

Kidd Yes. It was. Uh, first off, all military training for years, has been—there's simulation involved. You need to understand what simulation is, of course. Not all of it is high-tech electronic gizmo games. And that's—you mentioned earlier the *Blue Jacket* was a stab at simulating seagoing environment. Um, many of the, uh—for example, I give the example of firefighting school as the single best example.

Oh, I almost forgot, because you earlier asked about one that the recruits would remember. They all remembered the tear gas chamber. All of them. And that's another example of simulation, because, uh—well, for firefighting, of course, you would walk people through and train them in class about the basics of actual firefighting skills. Then you would walk them through donning the shipboard firefighting gear—boots, heavy jackets, facemask, oxygen breathing apparatus, this, that, and the other thing. Put them on fire hoses, put them into a building, and light controlled fires. Then have trained groups operate the hoses in order to work those. Firefighter is a major, major skill that is consistently trained onboard ships all the time. For the obvious reasons that you don't call the fire department in the middle of the ocean. So [*laughs*] that's kind of—so when you talk simulation, obviously there's[sic] varying levels of simulation and varying degrees of realism. The more realistic you can make the—the training more effective it was. Does that answer that question for you?

Barnes Yes. It does. Thank you.

0:38:48

Assignments following time at NTC Orlando

Barnes So when you left—you left in 1993?

Kidd Yes.

Barnes Was that your final year in the Navy or did you have another assignment?

Kidd Oh. No. From there I went out to Guam. I was attached originally to a ship that was getting ready to be decommissioned. Um, the refrigerator services ship that was being decommissioned. A ton of fun. The ship was already 40 years old and,

if you can imagine driving a car that's 40 years old, now [laughs] drive a ship that's 40 years old. It's got a few miles on it. But, uh, one of the problems with a ship that's 40 years old is that it's got a lot of things on there that were older than 40 years old, including asbestos and this, that, and the other thing, so which I was part and parcel of discovering. So subsequent to that, I thought it was time to stop being Navy, and the Navy agreed with me, but fortunately it hasn't killed me yet.

Barnes Now did you return to this area immediately after leaving the Navy?

Kidd No.

Barnes Or you just settled here?

Kidd Um, two years later, I returned here. I owned a home here I had bought. The fact of the matter is that Central Florida is a beautiful place in comparison to a lot of other places. Um, Orlando was a medium-sized city, uh, so it didn't have quite the problems of the [Washington,] D.C. area or San Diego[, California], or some of the other places I lived at. Sun always shone and I had this odd thing about I was going to learn to play golf. That lasted about two days [laughs].

Barnes I can help you with that, if you decide to change your mind

Kidd [laughs].

Barnes So what were your initial thoughts when you heard that NTC Orlando was closing?

Kidd I wasn't concerned about it at all. Um, largely because for me, my experiences in the Navy were pretty broad. Um, while many people—if you were career Navy and worked all the way through retirement, which would be 20 years, at least, uh, you were stationed at multiple commands. Lots of them. And that meant that things came and went—people you knew, people you were intense, great friends with for a short period of time. You lost track of shortly thereafter, simply because you were separated.

So, uh, losing Naval Training Center Orlando, largely because it wasn't on the ocean anywhere—it was just a set of buildings—really wasn't a whole lot different than any other set of buildings any other place. And of course, the Navy did not get rid of recruit training. They simply consolidated it all up in Michigan—or Illinois, rather. So it was never about the location. It was all about the process.

0:40:43

Legacy of NTC Orlando

Barnes What do you think is the Navy's legacy to the Central Florida region?

Kidd A lot of folks are unaware that Central Florida is the location of the second largest group of retired military – military retirees – in the nation. It tends to concentrate a lot of people here. The fact that we had the Navy base here for so long is really a very vital part of that. Um, and those retirees have a very strong commitment to the values they were trained in, and they live and work with those every day. They bring that as part of the palate of colors that is here in Central Florida. Um, people who have a strong memory of learning about responsibility, decency, reliability, ethics, in general, and that shared commitment – those shared values. They live here and there's a lot of them.

So the effect of that command, that physical base, and the people that worked there is something that will – that doesn't only exist now, but it's going to echo for quite a while. Um, that, uh, is something that the Orlando and Central Florida community should be very proud of and they should recognize that that contribution, while again, because we're not located on the water, people don't necessarily grasp. But for the number of retirees here, who came specially because – either returned because of that, or came because there was that presence here – the impact is really immeasurable.

0:44:17

Lone Sailor Memorial

Barnes So as a former recruit commander, or as a former recruit, why do you think someone would want to come back? Or what do you think someone would like to see or be reminded of if they came and visited the Lone Sailor Memorial [Project]?

Kidd Being. First place, there's[sic] several Lone Sailor monuments throughout the nation, and this is a great location for them. And in the public mind, uh, whether you've been in the service or not, uh, that image is rather striking. It implies a lot of things. For the people who served, the people who were Navy and went through basic training – regardless of where they went, but specifically here in Orlando – it reminds them of a dramatic change in their lives where they took control of themselves and their destiny. They made that choice to say, "I don't want to do what I was doing. I'm going to be different." And they learned a new value system. They learned to be part of a generations-old organization that had a history they could be proud of, and that they could carry with them and they could then share with their own friends, children, subsequent generation. It means a lot. It means a lot to a lot of people. and far more than just movies that no longer get watched [*laughs*]. The fact that we trained a lot of people – we sent a lot of people out to represent and defend the nation – some did not come back – needs to be remembered. We need to be reminded of why that happened. What those values were. And why they're still important.

Barnes Very good. Is there anything I missed that you think would be relevant either to the project or to your story?

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Kidd I appreciate that y'all took time to ask me the questions. No. I think we pretty much covered everything we'll do on camera.

All [laughs]

Barnes Well, very good. We appreciate your time.

Kidd Not a problem.

End of Interview