

Oral Memoirs
of
Jeffrey Edward Clark

An Interview Conducted by

Mark Barnes

May 6, 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: Kendra Hazen
Transcribers: Leanne Wiggins and Andrew Orleman

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 Jeffrey Edward Clark is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on May 28, 2014.

Abstract

Oral history of Jeffrey Edward Clark, former member of the United States Navy. This interview was conducted by Mark Barnes at the Shriners Temple in Maitland, Florida, on May 6, 2014. The interview was conducted as part of the UCF Community Veteran's History Project and background research for a memorial honoring the former 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.

Clark served in the Navy from 1985 until 1989. He attended recruit training in Orlando and also went to apprenticeship school at the base. He was a Signalman Petty Officer Third Class, E4, aboard the U.S.S Richard E. Byrd DDG-23, which operated in the North Atlantic and

Mediterranean Sea. Upon leaving the Navy, Clark returned to Orlando and attended the University of Central Florida.

Jeffery Edward Clark

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Mark Barnes
May 6, 2014
Maitland, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Barnes

Today is Tuesday, May 6th, 2014. I'm interviewing Jeff[rey Edward] Clark, who served in the United States Navy. My name is Mark Barnes, and with me working the camera is Kendra Hazen. We're interviewing Mr. Clark as part of the UCF [University of Central Florida] Community Veterans History Project, and as research for the creation of the educational wall for the Lone Sailor Memorial [Project]. We are conducting this interview in Maitland, Florida.

Mr. Clark, will you please just begin by telling us your name, where you were born – where and when you were born?

0:00:30

Biographical/background information

Clark

Sure. my name is Jeffrey Clark, and I am originally from East Hartford, Connecticut. I was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on January 31st, 1968. And in 1983, my family moved to Florida – to Flagler County in Palm Coast, where I attended Flagler Palm Coast High School.

And then I did drop out of high school at the age of 17, and joined the Navy shortly after my 17th birthday, where I went through the Orlando Naval Training Center here.¹ Upon completion of my active duty, I returned to – I did obtain my GED (General Educational Development) while I was in the Navy. And then upon completion of my active duty, I did graduate from DBCC – Daytona Beach Community College – and then transferred and graduated at UCF. Major in economics and a minor in political science.

Barnes

Do you have any brother or sisters or parents you want to tell us about?

Clark

Sure. I have two sisters and both of them still reside here in Flagler County in Florida. And then my parents are still alive and live in Flagler County as well. My father – I come from a military family. sort of on the – *Forrest Gump* movie, I believe, where Lieutenant Dan has an ancestor that had fought in every major

¹ The Orlando Naval Training Center will occasionally be referred to throughout the interview as “NTC Orlando.”

American war back to the colonial period. And I have that same line or lineage as well. Goes back to the *Mayflower* on my father's side.

My father served in the Navy and went through Bainbridge, Maryland, for his boot camp, and then was aboard an aircraft carrier – the USS *Chiwawa* CV40. And my grandfather – his father – served in World War II. Uh, he was in the Army and was stationed in the Philippines.

And then on my mother's side – my mother is also from – both my father and my mother are from Connecticut, as well. And my mother's side of the family – they were Italian immigrants. my grandfather immigrated in the 19 – well, both my grandparents immigrated from Italy to the U.S. in the 1920s. And then when they were younger, obviously – and my mother was born in 1945 and my father was born in 1939.

0:02:54

Decision to join the U.S. Navy

Barnes

And did you join the Navy for any particular reason?

Clark

Actually, that was a bit of an interesting story. Now, one time, when I was around eight or nine years old, I filled out this application to inquire about the Navy out of a magazine or something like that. And, obviously, you could tell that a child wrote it. Well my father took it as a joke and mailed it in, and I always wanted to join the Navy for – I don't know, because I enjoyed history and my father was in the Navy. So my father mailed this application form in to send information about joining the Navy, and I received this letter from a captain in the Navy that said, you know, "Sorry," you know, "but you're too young." And he gave me a couple posters and some other items to say, "Here's some stuff to help you keep thinking Navy, and when you're old enough," you know, "please come back." Well, pretty much came back at the minimum age possible, and I always wanted to join the Navy when I was a child. I think it was that TV commercial – "It's not just a job. it's an adventure."

Barnes

So was the Navy a must for you?

Clark

Pretty much. yeah. *[air conditioning unit comes on]*

0:04:03

Boot camp at NTC Orlando

Barnes

So you said you attended boot camp in Orlando?

Clark

In Orlando, at the Naval Training Center.

Barnes

And was that by choice, or did they just tell you where to go?

Clark

Um, I would like to think it was by choice, because when I joined in this February – and having lived in Florida and being accustomed to the warm weather – I told the recruiter that I would go into the Navy now, if I could go to

Orlando or San Diego, and not Great Lakes. Because there were three facilities for boot camp in the Navy – Great Lakes, San Diego, and Orlando, at that time. And I remember my father was very anxious. He said, “Well, you're going to go in now,” you know, “take him.” But somehow – luck, I would presume – I went through Orlando.

Barnes We'll come back to this, but what were you trained to do for the Navy? What was your job? Or your jobs?

0:04:52

Naval training

Clark Initially, when I went in, I was a basic seaman recruit to do basic shipboard tasks, such as, you know, chipping paint and painting, and in the boats and bay field, sort of basic deck board duties. However, during the course of the time, I did become a signalman, which was communications and navigation, primarily with Morse code, with flashing lights – semaphore, as well.

Barnes Semaphore?

Clark In the flags. And that “A” school by the way. If I had entered the Navy as a signalman instead of a basic seaman recruit, the training for the Signalman School was here in Orlando, as well, at the Naval Training Center.

Barnes We're going to circle back through your life as a recruit, and then we'll circle back through your life as a sailor. So when you first got to – your first day off the bus, so to speak, you know, what were some of the biggest adjustments you had to make going through?

0:05:50

Boot camp experience

Clark Alright. I'm going to take a step back from the bus over to the Orlando Naval Training Center, since we're in the state of Florida. I'll keep us in the state of Florida. So, when you enter the military, you go to your recruiting office and you complete all that, and they, I presume, do the background checks – similar – probably similar to any new employment process, if you're hiring somebody.

So one of the key things after you go through that, you have to go through what they call the “MEPs center” – Military Entrance Processing facility – and that was in Jacksonville. And up there you get an initial physical, and they determine if you're – kind of the final step – if you're worthy enough to go on active duty. So I went through that in Jacksonville, and I remember going through there and, for some reason, I had thought that I was not going to enter the Navy until the summertime. And this one naval chief overheard me say that, and he said, “What did you say?” And I said, “I'm not going on active duty until the summer.” I say, “I get to go home, you know, after I go through the MEPS

process today.” and he said, “Oh, no you’re not. You’re going in tomorrow morning, and I’m going to personally see to it.” I guess I was talking out of line.

So anyways[sic], we rode a bus from Jacksonville – and I remember I had to call my parents and say, “I’m not coming home.” [laughs] It was kind of sudden and quick. So we rode a bus from Jacksonville. and of course, we didn’t even take [Interstate] 95 and [Interstate] 4. It was like going on a Greyhound. I think it took about five hours to get there, because, you know, we went down, you know, [U.S. Route] 17, and then through Palatka, and all the back roads through there to get to Orlando. So we made it there, and they drop us off at the bus – at the bus area.

And then you kind of get indoctrinated where you come in and you start to, initially – so the initial shock was like, “Wow. this is for real.” But you still had your civilian clothes and you still had your hair. And so – and then that way you – you got your assignment, you know, where your – what your company you’re going to be, what building at the Orlando Naval Training Center would be your home for the course of boot camp. And then the next day was kind of, you know – the first couple days were kind of intrigue, you know – kind of getting indoctrinated. And you go through a health screen, you go through and get your hair cut, and your clothes and all that assigned, then you begin your boot camp.

Barnes Do you have anything that stands out from your time?

Clark Oh yes. Yeah. definitely. So, for example – and at this time I obviously had more hair than I do now – but I was very proud of my hair. You know, “pretty boys,” as they would say in the Navy. and when I got my head shaved, I didn't look at myself in a mirror for about five or six weeks. I remember I would feel it and be like, *Oh*. And luckily they didn't have mirrors or anything in the boot camp berthing area – you know, the living area. So I made a purpose not to look at myself. That was the biggest, biggest shock.

The other shock that I had was I was going to have to learn how to fold clothes, because – kind of like out of a movie, where, you know, my mommy is able to wash, fold, and put my clothes away for me. But that changed, and I had to learn how to fold clothes.

But I was a baseball player in high school and very physically active, so the physical nature of boot camp that everybody thinks about – the physical activity was really not an issue for me. I was already in pretty good shape from playing baseball and other physical activities.

Clark Do you have any memories from when you graduated? Did your folks come down?

Barnes Yes. As part of the process, there was a graduation ceremony. And, like, my family, including my father's parents—my grandparents—came down and they went to the graduation ceremony, and they were able to get a tour of the facility. And it's like a parade ground, and they set up these bench area bleachers. and the families were able to watch us do our Pass and Review and hear the speeches from the—from Captain Nice, who was the Recruit Training Center commanding officer and NCS (National Call to Service) conductor of ceremony. Then afterwards, everybody went home.

But, you know, we were able to meet up and, you know, it was good for my family to be there to see that. And that was, you know, an equivalent of like a high school graduation. I would say very similar, but you know dressed in military and military ceremony.

0:10:35

Naval training and assignments following boot camp

Barnes When you graduated from boot camp, what was your next assignment?

Clark Sure. upon graduating boot camp—boot camp lasted about eight and a half weeks. I actually entered active duty on February 26th, 1985, and then boot camp officially started March 1st. And, as I mentioned, those first couple of days were, you know, getting your hair cut, and getting your clothes, and getting indoctrinated.

And then when I graduated, I started—I continued at the Orlando Naval Training Center. They did have additional training schools there. The one I went to is—when I entered the Navy, I entered the Apprenticeship Training Program. and that was open to individuals who wanted to focus on more of a general—kind of like a liberal arts, if you want to call it that—to compare it to college. So there was a Seaman Apprenticeship, a Firemen Apprenticeship, and an Air Apprenticeship.

And then once you completed that training, then you would get assigned to a permanent duty station. So seamen went in to, you know—were eligible and did a cross-range of duties, such as, in the boatmen mate field, which is the deck duty. And then airmen, you know, went and supported, you know, aircraft either on carriers or as part of a detachment. And firemen kind of could go on ships, because they were the ones who worked down in what we called “the pit”—the boiler room and the engine rooms where the boiler technician rates and the machinist mates ran that. So I went through the Seaman Apprenticeship Training program.

Barnes Were there certain classes you had to take, or do you know about the classes from the various—from the three places you just—the three schools you just described?

Clark Yes. So basically how the Orlando Naval Training Center was set up is you kind of had – there were – if I remember – I think there were 10 buildings – 10 or 12 buildings. And it was set up very, you know, military-style. On one end, you had sort of – and they were called – I forget what they were called. But there's like Building One, Building Two, etc. So on each end was kind of like the administrative offices, and then in between and in sequential order on each side, I think there was[sic] 12. There was[sic] 2 on the end, and five this way and five that way. And then on one side – and, in the middle, there was a divider, like a road that went through the middle. And on one side was strictly where boot camp was conducted. and on the other side is where the schools were conducted. They were the living quarters basically, or “berthing areas,” as they’re called in the Navy.

And so I went through the Seaman Apprenticeship Training. It was a series of classroom training and on-the-job training. They did the USS *Blue Jacket*, which was there – which was a training, you know – simulation of a ship and so we would go perform for seamen apprenticeship training. You know, how to tie knots, how to tie up the ship, how to raise flags, and other things associated with the Seamen Apprenticeship. And then the fireman did similar things, where, you know, they went in and simulated what jobs they would do once they went to the fleet. And that apprenticeship training was approximately four weeks for that.

0:13:50

Apprenticeship versus boot camp differences

Barnes How would you describe the relationship between your instructors on that side versus your instructors on...

Clark Sure.

Barnes The recruit side?

Clark On the recruit side, the boot camp, you know, was very strict. Very boot camp. very structured. You know, very military. You know, “controlling” is – I guess, would be a way to describe it. You know, your day was fully planned. You, you know – we woke up at four A.M. We went, you know – we did some initial drills and then we have our set breakfast time. You know, Company 101’s breakfast was from say 5:00 to 5:30.

You came back, you washed up, you know, brushed your teeth – whatever. Then you had set criteria of everyday what you would do. And most of it was practicing marching for your graduation ceremony, as well as other, you know, stuff that was boot camp related. You know, physical activity, swimming, firefighting drills that everybody needs to know for the military, and other basic stuff.

Now this was a little bit more specialized, and it was, like I said, classroom and on-the-job training. I would say that there was a bit more freedom. It was like a 9-to-5 job. You know, you woke up, you started class at eight o'clock, you had lunch from 12 to 1, and you were free to go do what you want.

In addition, I guess the big thing was—you were free on the weekends to go do whatever you wanted. Whereas in boot camp, you know, you were in boot camp and you were not allowed to leave. The only time that we left boot camp was after six weeks, we were granted what they called a “restricted liberty,” where it was kind of like an elementary school field trip. You know, like SeaWorld or [Walt] Disney [World], or somewhere like that. And it was very restricted. And, you know, it was covered.

And then you had an unrestricted liberty, like the week before you graduated, and that’s where you could stay within the city of Orlando, and kind of go anywhere you want and you had to be back at a certain time. And I guess a story for this would be—everybody—all the instructors and the officers—would say South OBT [Orange Blossom Trail] is off limits, because it’s kind of a dodgy area. But of course, where does everybody go? South OBT.² So that’s pretty much where unrestricted liberty went.

And then, like I said, during the apprenticeship training you were free to do[sic] on the weekend. and then I used to go home, you know. My mother would come pick me up or my father would come pick me up, and I’d visit my friends on the weekend, and then I had to be back Monday morning by eight o’clock to go to class. So it didn’t really matter, but I’d usually come back Sunday night, because we were still living in our living quarters. I guess the way I’d compare, you know, is boot camp was kind of like, you know, elementary school and high school. Very structured, very strict, limited. And apprenticeship training was more like college, where, “Hey, this is what you got to do,” you know, “Here’s your times. the rest of that’s up to you.”

0:16:35

Living quarters on the base

Barnes

Now you had—when you said you were living there, did you guys have apartments almost when you were an apprentice?

Clark

No. It was very—it was the same as what we had in boot camp. You know, the same structure. So basically it was an open area, like a barracks, and it was for enlisted. Now, officers tended to have the equivalent of more like the hotel or a small apartment, and they would usually share that with one other officer, depending on their rank. But general enlisted—and this even continued into the Navy with various living quarters on ships—whether you were enlisted or if you

² South OBT refers to a portion of U.S. 441, known as Orange Blossom Trail in parts of Orlando, Florida.

were chief, which was a senior enlisted person—kind of like middle management. Where if you were an officer, different living quarters. So it was an open area, and it had bunk beds and lockers for you to store your stuff. It was the same as in boot camp.

0:17:25

Types of training schools offered on the base

Barnes

Now, outside of the schools—the training schools—the command schools that you went to—do you have any recollection of the other schools that maybe were offered at the base?

Clark

Um, yes. from what I recall, because, as I went—during my time in the Navy, I went on, and—they call it “striking out”—I don't know why they call it that, because it's actually a win, you know—but basically, you get to move on from sort of a general, seaman apprenticeship-type role to a more specialized one. And I became a signalman, which was the shipboard flags communications and navigation, as well as communications with flashing lights via Morse code and semaphore. And the Signalman School was here in Orlando.

And also—and then—so basically the school structure was as follows. You had the generalists, the Apprenticeship Training Program that I talked about that I went through. Then you had “A” schools, which was[sic] schools that were for a specific job in the Navy, whether you were a storekeeper, a signalman, or, you know, something like that. Then there were also “C” schools, and “C” schools were for very specialized skills which normally required and extended enlistment period, such as six years active duty.

And so, during that time, people were kind of classified based on what their enlistment was that they signed up for. There were the 3-by-6s, which meant you were three years active and then six years of inactive reserves. Or IRR, right—“Inactive Readiness Reserves” I believe is the military term. There were 4-by-4s—and I was a 4-by-4—which meant four years active, four years inactive. And then there were the 6-by-2s, which were the specialty folks who went to extended training. They were six years active and then two years inactive reserves. Unless, of course, if they re-enlisted on active duty, then they would continue.

And the key thing about “C” school was that, once you completed about a two-year classroom/on-the-job training program, you automatically became an E[nlisted Rank] 4—a petty officer third-class. We used to call those people “boot camp thirds.” Because, like, as you go through, you know, you'll be an E-1, E-2, E-3, and then E-4. whereas these guys automatically got credits, basically like college, you know—you got some free credits. So there were some “C” schools here, including the Nuclear Program was here, and the Signalman School was

here, and I think – no. The Storekeeper School was in Mississippi. that wasn't here. But from what I remember, Apprenticeship Training, Signalman, and there was, like, Fire Control Technicians, Radar Schools.

Barnes Any other – anything else you think about – life off of base, special to base?

Clark I guess just kind of life on the base. There was Navy Exchange, so if you were a retired naval person – and Florida accumulated a lot of, you know, a lot of retirees and a lot of military retirees, because of the history with Sanford and Orlando – so the Navy Exchange store was there. So if you were active duty or if you were retired military, you could do your shopping. In certain cases, get things a lot cheaper than out in the regular market.

Other than that, it was pretty much, from what I remember, just a training facility. I remember there was a high school on – right on the outside of the base. Seemed like – sometimes we would joke like we were kind of in prison, you know, and you could see the freedom on the other side. I remember, you know, like we would be marching on the grinder and doing all these drills, and you'd look over and see these high school kids running track and field, or, you know, something like that at the high school, and you're thinking we're in prison, but...

0:21:15

Ship board duties and experiences

Barnes When you left Orlando, you boarded a ship?

Clark Yes. Upon completion of my apprenticeship training course – a little bit more of the story here is I had a chief petty officer. I forget his name, but you received your orders where you went to go, and I was always kind of joking around a little bit with the chief. And sure enough, where I get stationed, but the same ship he had come from to the Orlando Naval Training Center. so I remember he told me it was going to be tough, and that he was gonna – he arranged to have me go to the USS *Richard E. Bird* TDG-23 – guided missile destroyer – ported out of Norfolk, Virginia. And that's where I went. And, interesting enough, this chief I then met years later when I was attending UCF and I was working at NationsBank – now Bank of America. He was a customer in there, and I remember him when he came in. we chatted and caught up, and he was living out by UCF at the time, and he was a customer at the bank.

But I caught my ship and I remember it was in the middle of deployment, towards the tail end of the North Atlantic – NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] cruise. And I remember I had received my orders and I had to go there, and I had all my airplane tickets. They arranged and all that. And I looked on there and I'm like, *Where is this place called Ponta Delgada?* And there was no Internet in 1985, so I had to go look in the encyclopedia, and it was in the Azores Islands – Portuguese islands in the Atlantic Ocean. I remember I flew from

Orlando to New York, and then caught airport to Lisbon[, Portugal], and had a couple night's stay in Lisbon overnight, and then caught the flight to Ponta Delgada, where I caught my ship. And I still remember the first people I met, who I'm still in contact with today, on board my ship. Gary Hayne[sp], Kurt Kiesden[sp], and Alan Welch[sp] in particular, because I was assigned to deck division, and I was assigned to them.³ And then from there, you know, I was assigned to the ship and that became my permanent duty station that I stayed at for the remainder of my term—three years and eight months.

0:23:25

Experiences after leaving the Navy

Barnes So you left the Navy when?

Clark In February '89. Four years active duty, and then served in the inactive reserves, which just meant if there's a call up, then you were subject.

Barnes What did you end up doing when you left the Navy?

Clark Okay. When I left the Navy, I started attending Daytona Beach Community College, which I think is now Daytona State College or something. and so I stayed in Flagler County and just did kind of odd jobs. I worked in a warehouse, primarily while I went to DBCC. And then I started working in the bank as a bank teller and then a sales and service rep[resentative].

And that actually worked out well, because, at the time, with the state, you could complete your first two years at a community college, then automatically transfer into any of the Florida state university system campuses. So I transferred to Orlando, because I worked at the bank it was quite an easy transfer to move over. So I started UCF in the Fall of '93, after graduating from DBCC in the Spring of '93. And then I graduated in Spring of '95 from UCF.

And also, I guess, during the—some other good things—when I became a basic seaman apprenticeship and I was assigned to the deck division on board, besides just chipping paint and doing all the deck stuff, the favorite thing—and I still remember it today, and it was one of my favorite things—you know, I barely had my driver's license—but at age 17, I qualified as a helmsman, and I drove the ship. I was at the wheel, and I qualified to run the ship's engines—the lee helm. and I used to stay on lookout watch. So here I was at 17 years old—and I actually saw a video on YouTube, like a Navy video, and it shows, like, the 22-year-old guy says, "Yeah. this is my job." He says the same thing.

And I still remember to this day how to take the helm. You would go up—if you were to take the helm—let's just say you're at the wheel now—now I would walk up to the—well, I would first come to you and say, "Hey, what's[sic] the

³ Note that names are spelt as they sound and may not be accurate.

coordinates? Where do you steer and where do you check in?" And that's sort of the numbers from the compass of where – what direction you were going. I'd collect that, I'd go check what the speed was in knots, and then I would go up to the Officers' Deck and salute, and he would say, "Officer of the deck, request permission to take the helm, steering course 225, checking 222 starboard unit, starboard cable, all engines ahead standard, 17 knot." And the officer on deck would reply back and say, "Relieve the helm." Then he would go over and then I would – I would take over. Yeah. it's cool.

Barnes Well I was getting ready to ask you, what were some of your favorite memories of the...

Clark Oh, okay. alright. That's a great one.

Barnes Do you have another one there that...

0:26:15

Lasting memories of the Navy

Clark Oh. Yeah. There's[sic] plenty of them – and then really anything you tend to do, you know, in your life, it's really about the people. And, you know, made some great friends. Still in contact with a lot them today. And lessons learned, you know, as a young kid – 17 to 21, while I was in the Navy. And there's a lot of memories, you know, of growing up doing stuff.

And I guess another thing is – I was always kind of a prankster a little bit, and I used to come home on leave for spring break, so I could be with all my friends. And we'd go to Daytona [Beach] and all that. One time I went off-base and I got – the senior chief, Senior Chief Moses, who was in charge of deck division, who I worked for – his plan was, you know, you had to look like a sailor. He was very strict with inspections. Well, one time I was trying to sneak and I went off-base and I got what he would call a "pretty-boy haircut." So I came back and sure enough someone told on me and he personally walked me down to the ship's barber and butchered me or whatever.

And so, as a retaliatory, I decided next day, *I'm going to go put some red mousse in my hair and go stand inspection in front of him.* Big mistake [laughs]. I remember he walked up to me, put his face in my face, and he goes, "Take your hat off, punk." And he was this Texas – Texan guy. Big Texan guy. I took it off and I was smiling, and I wasn't smiling much after that. He told me I had exactly two seconds to wash that "expletive" out of my hair or he was going to personally shave my head. [laughs] Let's just say I jumped down the forward hatch and had the stuff out pretty quickly. [laughs]

Barnes This kind of ties into this whole project that we're doing and you mentioned it, but you made a lot of personal friends. You're still in contact with them?

0:28:00

Returning to Orlando and changes in the area

Clark Yep. Yeah. Out on Facebook. They're all in on Facebook. We have our ships – we have a page of our ships, and so a lot of us connected through there, but even before that there was like a newsletter and some reunions that go. Because I was on an older ship that was commissioned in the early 60s and then decommissioned shortly after I left in 1990. So, you know, there's[sic] 30 years of history pretty much with my ship that I was on. So the reunions – you have 30 years of people who served on board. So it's quite large and extensive.

And then I always try to make the effort to visit some of the folks. I travel extensively for my current job, and if I go to a city where one of those guys are, you know, we always try to meet up. And a lot of them are kind of joking when, you know, I first got connected with them, say on Facebook, and they say, "I can't believe you're this corporate guy in a suit. You're the last guy we would have thought as a corporate guy in a suit."

Barnes Is this your first trip – you've been back to Orlando since?

Clark Oh, yeah. And actually, I guess after I finished the Navy, I graduated from UCF, and then worked locally in Altamonte [Springs] at the Kirchman Corporation, which was a banking software company. And then I worked for Pro Systems in Maitland. and then I went to – on an assignment to Luxemburg in Europe. I was there for a couple years. and then I came back and I was on a project in San Francisco[, California]. And then – then this was 2001.

So basically the time scale goes from exited active duty in '89, college until '95, Kirchman Corporation and Pro '96-'97, Luxemburg from '98 to 2001, and then San Francisco for about a half a year. And then I came back to Maitland, and was working in Maitland and lived in Apopka from 2001 'till 2005, when I moved to Atlanta[, Georgia], and I've been in Atlanta since 2005.

0:31:05

Legacy of NTC Orlando

Barnes What do you think about all of the changes of the area that used to be the base?

Clark You know, it's kind of somewhat sad. There's really nothing left there. Karla Novak was a personal friend of mine from when – from UCF days – gave me a tour around the Lone Sailor Foundation and the plans for that. And she showed me where the statue is going to be, you know, we're kind of – both her and I went through there. So we were thinking this is – and she says, "Well, this is the old grinder." and she was saying, "Remember we'd go over here and have to do these drills?"

Well, now it's this open grass area. or over there is the housing where our berthing area – but now Baldwin Park is there. So it's somewhat sad to think

that – and I'm kind of one that – I like to preserve history. I wouldn't want to say you have to preserve the base as-is, but you know, I think how important and how many lives, you know, were shaped, such as mine, going through boot camp. You know, going from being a kid to being an adult basically. you know, that there's really not much left there.

Barnes Well, what do you think the legacy of the base is?

Clark I would say the legacy of the base is going to be, you know, the individual experiences of the people that really went through there. I mean, there's not much left to see of, you know – what was left there, what was done. It was, you know, a training facility, classroom, and on-the-job training basically. You know, so there's not much left as far as what you think of the Navy. You know, ships or aircraft or weapons or anything like that. I really think it's about personal experience. And everybody had a different experience. You know, what they went through there.

Barnes As a returning sailor, what would want to see if you returned back to the area to see the memorial? I mean, what would resonate with you?

Clark I think some pictures, you know, of the facility itself, you know. Kind of like, if you went into a museum, you like to see this was Orlando Naval Training Center was here from 1968 'till 1992, or something like that. Here's the pictures and, you know, kind of what, you know – like for my boot camp book – went there, you know. There's[sic] pictures in there that show the activities and kind of what went on there, and everything's changed from, you know – boot camp is probably similar, but there's a lot of changes, you know.

And I think preserving the history and at least showing that, while we can – would be, you know, a good thing. You know, to show there with the Lone Sailor – the Lone Sailor is a great thing to – to reflect their – well, I think any memorabilia or, you know, pictures that show at one point in time this is what was here and quantify it. You know, x-number of people went through during this time who were the commanding officers, you know, kind of like any similar memorials or stuff like that.

Barnes That's about all I have. Is there anything that we missed that you'd like to add or a story you'd like to share?

Clark I think I pretty much covered everything. You know, that was my time here in Orlando at the Naval Training Center for boot camp and then kind of post activities. So I think we've pretty much covered the full spectrum of your questions there, so.

Barnes Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Clark Thank you. I'm glad to help.

End of Interview