

National Museum of the Pacific War

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

**Jack D. Kaney, Retired
Sonar Anti-Submarine
United States Navy**

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This is Eddie Graham. I'm interviewing Mr. Jack D. Kaney today in the Bush Gallery, September 26, 2003 and the purpose of this interview is for the historical library at the Nemitz Museum.

Mr. Graham: Mr. Kaney, where and when were you born?

Mr. Kaney: I was born August 8th, 1925, in Spring Lake, New Jersey.

Mr. Graham: Where were the names of your parents?

Mr. Kaney: John Kaney and Ruth Sullivan Kaney.

Mr. Graham: And your children?

Mr. Kaney: Two boys, Jack Jr. and Kevin, and two daughters, Deborah and Susan.

Mr. Graham: Where did you go to school?

Mr. Kaney: I went to school in Middletown, New Jersey.

Mr. Graham: And tell me this, where were you and what were you doing December 7th, 1941?

Mr. Kaney: I was home listening to a football game, I don't know which game and I heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and it didn't mean a thing to me. (laughs)

Mr. Graham: How did you end up joining the United States Navy?

Mr. Kaney: My father was in World War I and he got shot and he didn't like laying in the mud for hours, he was in the Army and he thought it would be good if I got in the Navy rather than the Army. I was seventeen at the time.

Mr. Graham: And where did you join?

Mr. Kaney: I was in this small town, Red Bank, New Jersey, and for some reason I went up to New York and joined up there with some moral support from about five high school kids, they came up with me. They didn't join but they wanted to see how it worked.

Mr. Graham: Wanted to give you some moral support, right? Where did you take your basic training?

Mr. Kaney: Newport, Rhode Island.

Mr. Graham: How long was your training at that time?

Mr. Kaney: It was five weeks.

Mr. Graham: It was five weeks and then what was your first assignment?

Mr. Kaney: From there I went to fleet sonar school in Key West, Florida.

Mr. Graham: How long did you train there?

Mr. Kaney: I forget. I don't think it was much more than six or seven weeks. It must not have been longer than that. I don't remember. That's a long time ago. That was 1943.

Mr. Graham: What were the basics of the school that you were supposed to learn?

Mr. Kaney: Just operating the sonar equipment for anti-submarine, that was what the *USS Finch* was designed for, anti-submarine.

Mr. Graham: After you finished sonar school, where were you assigned?

Mr. Kaney: I was sent to Orange, Texas to get on a brand new destroyer escort.

Mr. Graham: What was, the name was what?

Mr. Kaney: The *USS Finch* #328.

Mr. Graham: Where did you go at that time?

Mr. Kaney: I went to training in Bermuda. We went on a shakedown to Bermuda.

Mr. Graham: Your shakedown cruise, did anything exciting happen?

Mr. Kaney: Yeah, well, we got a radar signal on the ship to Bermuda and all kinds of search lights were on and shells that light up in the dark.

Mr. Graham: Flairs?

Mr. Kaney: Yes.

Mr. Graham: Did you sense the signals were sighting a possible submarine?

Mr. Kaney: Yes, because they were around there at the time.

Mr. Graham: But, I assume it seemed all false, nothing happened?

Mr. Kaney: Yes.

Mr. Graham: After Bermuda, where did you go?

Mr. Kaney: Our first trip to Algiers, North Africa and that was interesting, we were next to a DE just like ours, with the fantail shot off by a torpedo.

Mr. Graham: Their fantail was shot off but not yours?

Mr. Kaney: Yes.

Mr. Graham: What did you do while you were there?

Mr. Kaney: We sold mattress covers to the Arabs for twenty bucks a piece or the equivalent, I think it was 2,000 francs or something like that.

Mr. Graham: You mean the ships loaded for that purpose?

Mr. Kaney: No, no.

Mr. Graham: You mean you did that on your own?

Mr. Kaney: Yes.

Mr. Graham: How long were you there?

Mr. Kaney: I'd say about at least a week.

Mr. Graham: You didn't see any action or anything like that?

Mr. Kaney: No, no. We made several trips back and forth. We went to Casablanca and Algiers, Naples, Italy.

Mr. Graham: Did you ever stop in any of them?

Mr. Kaney: Yes, all of them.

Mr. Graham: Well, did you have any particular different adventures in any of these ports?

Mr. Kaney: About the only, well, we did have a lot of sonar contacts. I had everybody on the ship cursing me because of these crazy ping jockeys, as we were called, but you know you never know.

Mr. Graham: After you got in the ports, did you have liberty?

Mr. Kaney: Oh, yes, we had liberty and roamed around the towns.

Mr. Graham: Anything exciting happen in any of the towns?

Mr. Kaney: No, it was interesting but not exciting.

Mr. Graham: Alright, and then after that, what did you do?

Mr. Kaney: We went to England on a couple of trips. When we were in Italy, (Naples), we had some kind of air raid or something there. I never saw what it was and that was right before the invasion of southern France. We had taken all the stuff over for that and Pearl Harbor was this thing but I never saw a plane.

Mr. Graham: Let's go back to what you were speaking of, you got all these pings and it ended up and turned out to be nothing. Now was this because the sonar was new and you didn't know how to operate it properly, you didn't know the full effects of it?

Mr. Kaney: No, one thing about being a sonar man, whenever you went into any port they had a set up where you had to go to a sonar school to refresh and we knew what we were doing but you never knew whether you got anything or not.

Mr. Graham: Could it be possible sometime you were passing over a sunken ship and that might have given you the ping?

Mr. Kaney: No, we didn't get anything standing still, we usually got something that was moving.

Mr. Graham: Okay, right after the tour you said you went to England and where did you go from England?

Mr. Kaney: The ship went right after the war, I was in the sick bay, I was in the hospital and the ship went to the Pacific. Unfortunately I was not on it because the war in the Pacific was just about over and I really feel bad because the guys that stayed on, (there were only sixteen of the original crew) had a trip around the world, when they came back, which was nice.

Mr. Graham: You didn't get a chance to do that.

Mr. Kaney: No, I wasn't one of the sixteen. They seemed to transfer them off and on a lot.

Mr. Graham: What happened after you recovered from your illness?

Mr. Kaney: I got reassigned to a *Charles S. Sperry*, a PT, #697, and by then the war was over, I started processing out.

Mr. Graham: Where did you process out?

Mr. Kaney: Long Island, Lever Beach, Long Island, New York.

Mr. Graham: Let's go back, of all the people you had contact with in the Navy, are there any particular ones that stand out in your mind?

Mr. Kaney: Oh yeah, on our ship at that time there were you know guys that had girlfriends and wives, mostly girlfriends, because you know, were were young kids.
As I said, I was seventeen when I got in but this big buddy of mine, who also came from New Jersey, kept telling me he was going to marry this girl when he got back so he wanted me to be the best man. That was in Newark, New Jersey. He's since died.

Mr. Graham: He was a good friend?

Mr. Kaney: Yes, I was godfather for his kids.

Mr. Graham: Okay, of all these experiences, are there any experiences you still think of?

Mr. Kaney: Not really. They were mostly good experiences. We were called the lucky ship of the Atlantic and the Pacific because we were there but we never had anybody hurt which is rather amazing I think.

Mr. Graham: Okay, is there anything else you would like to add that maybe we've missed?

Mr. Kaney: No, nothing about me. Since then we've had four kids, fourteen grandkids, and three great-grandkids. I enjoyed the Navy and this is our fourteenth reunion and I haven't missed one yet.

Mr. Graham: Okay, on behalf of the Nemitz Museum I want to thank you for sharing your experiences with us and we wish you and your family a most happy future.

Note: Jack Kaney deceased, November 20, 2008.
Edited by Alice Kaney, widow of Jack Kaney. Married for 58 years.

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