

Transcription: Boone Kemp

Today is Monday, June 24th, 2013. My name is James Crabtree and today I'll be interviewing Mr. Boone Kemp. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Kemp is at his residence in Mason, Texas. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us.

Boone Kemp: Yes sir, and you're welcome.

Sir, I always start off with this question in pretty much every interview. Please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you entered into the military.

Boone Kemp: Very well, I was born October the 13th, 1923, in Hays County on Ranch Road 1826, Camp Ben McCulloch Road, about halfway between Austin and Driftwood. I lived in the country until about 1930, and my dad who was a World War I veteran moved to town to work at the post office. We moved to town, I went to school and graduated May, 1942.

Was this Austin, sir?

Boone Kemp: Austin High School. It was when there was only one Austin high school at that time. And then in August of 1942, I volunteered and enlisted in the United States Navy.

You said, sir, your dad was a World War I veteran. Did you talk to him much about his service?

Boone Kemp: Some, he had two unique experiences. One of them was that he was on the USS San Diego, the battle cruiser, the only war ship that was sunk in World War I off of Long Island in the Atlantic, and he was one of the few survivors from that ship.

What did he tell you about that experience, sir?

Boone Kemp: He just said that he had came up from the engine room, got to the weather deck and the guns were firing, and they didn't know if it was a mine or a submarine or what, but he said the gunners were firing the guns as long as they was above water, and I don't know if further investigation has ever revealed what actually sank the USS San Diego, but to my dismay, I've heard recently the San Diego is being used off of Long Island for scuba divers. What a – that's not a very sacred thing!

Sure, no, I agree. Well I'll have to look that up. I'm not familiar with -

Boone Kemp: The second event, my dad was the 13th of 23 children.

Wow, that's a lot of kids.

Boone Kemp: Yes, my grandmother, of course I never knew on my dad's side. She passed away a couple of years after my dad was born, and he was the 13th son and they always considered 13 was a lucky number and I was born on the 13th. Later on during his time in the Navy or before the San Diego, I don't remember just which, he was transferred. He was on a

ship down in Rio de Janeiro, and as _____ come up, his name was on the draft of some sailors to be transferred to a ship called the USS Cyclops.

I've heard of that, yes sir.

Boone Kemp: At the last moment, he said I have no explanation why only my name was taken off of that draft. And the other folks, other sailors went to the Cyclops. It sailed through the Bermuda Triangle and was never heard of again.

That's right, I'm familiar with that. In fact I think the crew completely disappeared, correct? The ship made it through but the crew was gone if I remember that correctly.

Boone Kemp: Well however it was, it was supposed to have vanished. During World War II, a lot of mysterious things happened in the Bermuda Triangle.

That's right. Yeah, I've read a little bit about the Cyclops and I know the crew disappeared and they never understood exactly what happened, very sketchy. So sir, because of your father's service in the Navy, was that part of the reason why you chose to go in the Navy then?

Boone Kemp: Oh yes.

Did he give you some good advice when you decided to enlist?

Boone Kemp: My dad was a quiet man. He didn't ever say a lot to me. The important thing that he told me when I was a young teenager was just remember, a good name, and that comes straight from Proverbs, a good name is to be chosen above all else.

So when you enlisted, I guess it wasn't a surprise then to your family that you had chose to go into the Navy.

Boone Kemp: No, not at all.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Boone Kemp: I have one brother and two sisters. One sister was killed in a vehicle accident on Highway 71 just above the Y there back in 2002, and a pickup pulling a boat rammed into her car and killed her on the street.

I'm sorry to hear that.

Boone Kemp: My brother is a lawyer there in Austin. His name is William Kemp, and he was in the Naval Reserve.

Was he older or younger than you?

Boone Kemp: Younger, about 10 years younger.

So you were the first one then in your family to go into the service during World War II.

Boone Kemp: That's right.

Where did they send you? Did you go to San Diego for your training?

Boone Kemp: Took us three days from Houston on the train to San Diego.

What are your memories, sir, of basic training in San Diego?

Boone Kemp: It was brief because the war was going on. We was only there about 30 days and most of the time we were done peeling potatoes.

So that is very quick.

Boone Kemp: But we did get familiarization with rifles and that didn't come as any problem for me because I grew up in the country and I learned to hunt squirrels and rabbits and fish, and hunt with my dogs. So country people are very good people, and country and rash people did very good because they were already experienced in the firearms.

Sure. How about some of the other recruits that were with you – did they have any issues with what they were learning in terms of marksmanship or swimming or that sort of thing?

Boone Kemp: The main thing that struck me was that when we got to San Diego and there was rows after rows of double bunks in the barracks there, that I hadn't been away from home before spending time with, after we moved to the country, had to go back out to the country and stay with my grandparents, uncles, and because I left the country, but when we got to San Diego, many, many of these young boys, and there were young boys there that had never been away from home and you could hear people crying all through the barracks because they was not accustomed to being away from mother.

I'm sure that had to have been difficult for a lot of those young men.

Boone Kemp: Of course we thought that the DI's, our drilling instructors, was pretty tough, but nothing like what was in the Marine Corps, and we did all of our calisthenics and we were of course all the better for it.

Sure. Did you know, sir, at that point, what your specialty would be in the Navy?

Boone Kemp: After I finished boot camp, I was sent to a Class A school, that was Chapman College in Los Angeles, and I was there for I think it was, I don't know, 4, 8, 12 weeks, I don't remember now because as soon as we got out of there, I was sent to Vallejo, California, Mare Island, where I was commissioned, was a plank owner of a small warship, a destroyer escort, USS Doherty DE-14. It was only 1300 tons, and when it hit the open sea it was like a cork and I'd never been out like that and I got sea sick as a dog.

What was your specialty, sir? What was your job in the Navy?

Boone Kemp: Electrician.

How did you get chosen for that? Was it based off of an aptitude test?

Boone Kemp: I guess, but I didn't know more about electricity than to turn a light bulb on.

You said a lot of your training for that though was at that Chapman College first.

Boone Kemp: Yes, it was at Chapman College there in Los Angeles, California, not far from Hollywood.

Once you got aboard the Doherty, were you one of the ship's electricians?

Boone Kemp: Yes.

Tell us what that was like. I'm sure that had to have been a little bit challenging.

Boone Kemp: It was because this was a new type of concept in Navy war ships. This one was a combination of diesel and electric. Diesel engines with great big electric turbines.

How many men aboard your ship were electricians?

Boone Kemp: I would say in the small crew that there was probably not over 10.

So you were in a pretty small section I guess.

Boone Kemp: Right.

Tell us, sir, what it was like the first time you went out. I know you mentioned the waves and kind of bobbing your ship around. Tell us what your remembrances are of finally heading out to sea.

Boone Kemp: As soon as we left Vallejo and went out under the Golden Gate Bridge and hit those heavy seas out there, like I said, and I wasn't the only one that got sea sick, and I wasn't the first landlubber to get on aboard the ship and it was like a cork, and of course all the old timers on there that was used to it, they always challenge you, oh, wouldn't you like to go eat some greasy pork chops? And all that kind of stuff. But it was, after a while you got used to it and we made our shakedown cruise on muni commissioner ships, too, we made our shakedown cruise to Pearl Harbor, and that wasn't an awful long time after it had bombed, and it was a very, very solemn situation to sail into it.

This was in 1942.

Boone Kemp: No, this was early '43.

Yes sir. So you got to see Pearl Harbor then, and see kind of the effects still from the bombing.

Boone Kemp: Right, absolutely.

What stands out in your mind, the strongest memories?

Boone Kemp: Seeing the half of the ship sitting in the water and particularly the Arizona which has become such a memorial today, but still with a lot of destruction and buildings and facilities around there. That had not all been recuperated or restored, but very sobering occasion.

Sure. How long did you spend in Pearl Harbor before you were back aboard the ship?

Boone Kemp: Well I was on the ship the whole time that we was there, but I did get ashore for a moment or two because I had a great, great uncle who was the chief justice of the supreme courts of the territory of Hawaii.

Wow, so you were able to get to see him I guess.

Boone Kemp: Yes I did, and later on, and that will fit back into part of my other story ahead.

Tell us sir, then you get back aboard the ship, where do you go at that point?

Boone Kemp: We went back to San Francisco and then we joined up with a task force to go to the, of all places for a tiny ship to go to, to go to the Aleutian chain from there on out to Russia. In our task force, we had, I don't remember the names of them, but we had old, old four-stacker light cruisers that was as modern ships, and we was up there, I guess we'd been up there about a year, and the weather was atrocious. You didn't even have to worry about fighting enemies. The weather was your enemy at that time. But we did get to go ashore at Sitka, Attu, Giska, those places where the Japanese had been on the island. There was what they called willowah's, extremely severe storm that would come up in the harbor in Sitka. We dropped both hooks, kept the engines going at one-third speed ahead just to stay in place.

Wow, and you rode out the storm that way.

Boone Kemp: We did, and it was said up there that when the willowah blows and it's a real strong one, if you were to hang an anvil on a chain and it was parallel to the ground, you had a pretty strong wind.

How many men, sir, were aboard your ship or crew?

Boone Kemp: It's hard to say because later on when I was on a destroyer, we only had about 330 people on there, so I know we didn't have, probably a third, maybe somewhere around 100 including officers, too.

Do you remember your ship's captain?

Boone Kemp: I'm ashamed to say I can't recall his name.

Do you remember if he did a pretty good job or got along with the crew pretty well?

Boone Kemp: Yes, and I might as well go ahead and inject this right now. When I was up there, I ran, when we had an opportunity, we ran a movie projector and showed movies at night time aboard ship. I got a dollar each time that I ran the movies, so I didn't draw my pay off the books for over a year because I was running the movie and I didn't gamble or drink or smoke, so I didn't need much money and that was enough. But one night after being up there about a year, and seeing there was nothing going on up there, of all things, I was showing a war movie! I don't remember the name of it, but I was showing a war movie on the ship on the Doherty. And as soon as I got through with that, I got the happy idea that I was going to see about trying to get off the ship and go to where the war was. So in World War II especially, and in most wars, getting a transfer is something that they don't want to fool with because they want to keep things

stable. But anyhow, after running the movie, now get this, I wrote a long letter to Admiral Nimitz.

Directly to Admiral Nimitz?

Boone Kemp: Yes. And I wrote him that, told him I was from Texas, and he was from Texas, and my great uncle was from Texas, and I went to sea to go to war and I was up there with icebergs and there wasn't nothing going on, and would he please help me? And then of course finally my realization was how are you going to get this letter off the ship? Because these junior officers, they may even let it go, but they'll probably tear it to pieces. So one thing that you don't do, and you learn that early on, one evening I went up on the bridge to the captain's cabin and I went up there, and not following protocol or train of command at all, I went up and knocked on the door of the captain's cabin and he came to the door, and I apologized and I told him what I was there for and I showed him my letter. He said I'll take care of it for you. And he said if you do not hear anything from it, I will do all I can to help you myself. Now this is unbelievable, too. In about a week or 10 days, the ship got orders to go back to Vallejo and I got a radio message to be transferred to the USS Dyson 4572.

Yes sir.

Boone Kemp: Destroyer 572. I guess beings that the message came in over the radio that I didn't have a friend on the ship because here I'm sure the officers whenever they tried to get a change of duty station or something, like I said, in war time things like that don't happen, but unfortunately, but fortunately, it does come back at some time or another, it's who you know.

Yeah, it's pretty amazing that you were able to get that letter off and get a transfer as quick as that.

Boone Kemp: I thought it was, too, and I was just flabbergasted. And when we pulled back into the Navy yard at Mare Island, Vallejo, the Dyson was tied up there and it had been in to repaired because it had been down in the Solomon campaign. And Admiral Orley Berk who later became Admiral Arleigh Burke was skipper of the Dyson and he was known as 31 knot Berk. They earned the presidential unit citation for their actions in the Solomons. I wished I'd have been there then.

I was going to say, was Berk the captain of the Dyson when you came aboard?

Boone Kemp: Yes.

Wow, that's pretty amazing.

Boone Kemp: It is, and so we tied up right astern of each other and so the captain said I'll go over there to the ship with you, and can you imagine that? Here I'm 3rd Class. And so he goes over there with me and they're saying we're sorry, we can't take somebody aboard, we're leaving and ya'll are just coming back. And the captain says I have orders here from Admiral Nimitz. So the transfer was made and then when we got to Pearl Harbor, the Dyson got to Pearl Harbor, I called up Admiral Nimitz's office and the Marine officer answered, told him who he was, and he said, "where are you at?" I told him. He said, "we'll send a car down for you." You know, a war is going on.

Yeah, this is hard to believe. That's amazing.

Boone Kemp: It is, a war is going on, so the Marine attaché for him says “we’ll send a car down for you.” They did, picked me up, took me up to headquarters up to SENPAC and then I went in and met the Marine officer, and he asked, he said do you want any pictures? My heart was crying for them and I wished I had ‘em today, but I did not want to seem like I was there for publicity. So I told him reluctantly, I told him no. So he opens the door and I walk into this humongous room, war room, of Admiral Nimitz. He comes out from behind his desk, walks around, shakes hands with me like I was some long lost relative. We’d never met before. And here was a war going on, and he took out 20-30 minutes just to visit with me.

That's great, that is a great story. I guess you talked about Texas.

Boone Kemp: Talked about Texas and my uncle there, a bit about the war naturally mostly because that's what it was all about. So then we went on out into the Pacific and we was in the Leyte Philippine campaign out there, and we was in that, in history you've read about the terrible typhoon of 1944?

I have, yes sir.

Boone Kemp: We were caught in that typhoon, and we survived, but our sister ship, DD-571, the Spence, capsized because they couldn't refuel. You've probably read of the Spence's capsizing, and there was a handful of people, and I'm telling you during that typhoon when we were being tossed about, every now and then a bow would appear and it looked like we were all just gonna crash together. But the visibility was zero, but by the grace of God, we got out of it and then we went on down and participated in campaigns in islands in the Philippines, Pene, Negros, and Leyte, and we went into Tacloban, and went to the Straits of Saragaol several times and I felt like the straits was so narrow I could reach out on each side and touch a palm tree. Of course it wasn't that close, but it felt like it.

During this time, sir, Arleigh Burke was the captain of your ship?

Boone Kemp: No, we had a change of command and I don't remember what the other, I have it in a log book. You wasn't supposed to have log books, but I have it in another log book some place.

But you did get to see Arleigh Burke though at least at some point while he was still the captain of the ship?

Boone Kemp: Yeah.

What are your memories of Burke?

Boone Kemp: You stand in awe of people like that. That's it.

Obviously Nimitz is very well known, but with Burke, they've got an entire class of ship named after him as well, so those are definitely two legendary Navy men.

Boone Kemp: Absolutely.

During the time you were at sea during the war, were you able to get and receive letters from your family?

Boone Kemp: Yes I was, and of course I wasn't married during that time, and my dad wrote to me, and I didn't know until after I had been at sea for a while that my dad had rejoined the Navy also and he had gone to, him and my family went to San Diego, and being as he worked in the post office in Austin, he was assigned to the post office there in San Diego and he later became chief while he was there.

OK, that's great. So they had moved to San Diego during the time you were gone.

Boone Kemp: Right, and then I got a letter from some captain, I don't know if it was in Nimitz's office or San Diego, that says this is the first time the son didn't know that the father had joined the Navy.

That's pretty wild. Sir, tell us then, too, what the rest of your time aboard the Dyson was like.

Boone Kemp: Well, there was several highlights of it, but one of them was when we was ordered to stand offshore of Corregidor and to provide gun power from our 5-inch .38 guns, just pounded the island day and night, and then when we expended our ammunition, we would go around and pull into Olongapo. That's where Subic Bay was at. And when we tied up there, the captain said "everybody below me will carry 5-inch projectiles on their shoulder and re-arm the ship." So there was nobody exempt from re-arming the ship except the captain. And after we got the ship armed, then we went back around to Corregidor and sat there offshore. It seemed pretty close. I don't know how many hundred yards it was, but it wasn't very far because we could see the paratroopers still hanging in the trees that had parachuted onto the island there before. Then one wonderful day, here come this PT boat returning to Corregidor with General MacArthur and he goes over there and runs the colors up on top of Corregidor.

That's great. What were your thoughts at that time, sir?

Boone Kemp: I said this is history. And we did pick up Japanese prisoners that tried to escape the island. I don't know where they thought they was going because Corregidor, you can see shore but it's not close, but they were trying to get off and of course they just had the bare necessities on, and we picked up several of them out of the water and had 'em on the ship until somebody else came along for us to turn them over to. They was always treated like human beings, you know.

Sure. Where were you, sir, when you learned that Hiroshima had been bombed? Do you remember that day?

Boone Kemp: We was, I believe at that time we was either off of Iwo Jima or Okinawa because that's where we first encountered the new type of warfare with the kamikaze planes.

Do you remember the feeling that you and your fellow sailors had when you learned that the bomb had been dropped? Did you think the war was going to end pretty quickly at that point?

Boone Kemp: Well actually, I guess we had a feeling that being as we was up to Okinawa which wasn't secure, that we were getting closer to the Japanese homeland, but as to, I guess this was before the bomb because we still had no idea what was ahead of us.

You mentioned, sir, the kamikaze attacks. Tell us a little bit about your memories of those.

Boone Kemp: They come diving right out of a perfectly clear blue sky, diving at you. What we heard about the kamikaze pilots was that they was on a mission for the emperor, their god, and all they was taught to do was to fly this little light plane with enough gas to get to the area where the ships was and the bomb, and that as soon as they carried out their mission and hit the ship, then they'd go to heaven. But by the grace of God, the ones that dove at us, we had one very, very close encounter, and I was in the after area of the ship, and of course a doorway on a ship is called a hatch, and so I was in the after part of the ship for some reason or another and I'd just got to the weather deck level and I was starting to go out the after starboard hatch and I looked up and I saw this plane, and of course I'm exaggerating, but at the time it didn't seem like it. It just seemed like those wings and that engine was just about to come in that hatch. Finally one of our 40 millimeter or 20 millimeters, or 5-inch .38's gun hit the plane, and it was close. You could look through the cockpit and see the pilot in there. Just before it connected with the ship it exploded.

Wow, that's amazing.

Boone Kemp: I thought this is it.

So tell me about some of the other sailors aboard your ship. Were you close to any of them in terms of friendship?

Boone Kemp: Oh, there's a couple that I knew, but the closest friendship that I had when I was on the destroyer escort and we went plank owners and there was a man from Nederland, by Port Arthur. His name was Larry Dubose, and we got acquainted and he was a person that was my closest friend, and backtracking a little bit, he kept always wanting me to go ashore with him. I told him, I knew he was drinking, I said I don't want to do that. But he said oh, come on, go. He kept on, and so one day I went with him there in Vallejo. Of course the first thing he wanted to do is he wanted to go drink. And after that he wanted to go to a Chinese restaurant and eat. And after that he came out on Georgia Street there in Vallejo and began throwing up and the shore patrol picked him up. So old me, I said I came with him, I've got to go back with him, so they put me in the stinking paddy wagon with him to take him back to the ship. I told him, I said Larry, we're friends, but that's the last – I'm never gonna do that no more. But on the Dyson, we had friends, but I don't, there was one man who was from Idaho, and he was a hunter and I'm a hunter, and I can't recall his name sadly, but he was a big, strong man and he used to say for days at a time, he would just take out in Idaho with a backpack and a rifle and out across the mountains and he'd stay out as long as he wanted to until he came out on some highway and then he'd come back home. I guess he was about my closest friend, but I'm ashamed to say I can't recall his name. But I was friendly with most of the people, but I was, when it come to chow time and time to eating, well we all sat down at a table and they had the tureens that they would pass through the center of the mess table. You'd take out what you want, and of course the ones at the beginning, they got the most. When it got to the end of the table, you got what's left.

Yeah, that's not good.

Boone Kemp: And of course it wasn't always very pleasant eating because our mess hall was in the bow of the ship. But the people in there, they was all good people. There were some that

would get into big gambling games and oh, they would almost go to the city over that. Wasn't anything else to do when you was off.

Did you ever get to show any movies aboard the Dyson as you had on the Doherty?

Boone Kemp: No, I didn't, as well as I remember, yes I did, yes I did because when we were in the Philippines I would take movies over when we pulled into Tacloban, take movies over there to a beach facility and exchange movies over there. Sometimes when we were at sea we'd exchange movies between ships.

How did it come about that you were one that knew how to show the movies?

Boone Kemp: I can remember the first part of it is, kind of the last, but I wouldn't have been dealing with the movies if I hadn't been showing them.

I mean my question was how did you know how to run the movie projector? Was it complicated or was it something - ?

Boone Kemp: No, it wasn't complicated. It was a vertical machine and we'd run 35mm movies in those days.

And the guys would pay you a dollar each movie.

Boone Kemp: Yeah.

That's great. Sir, describe for us where you were once the war ended. I know you were in the Pacific. Do remember near what island you were when the war ended?

Boone Kemp: I'm pretty sure that we were up, well we was, we was up off Okinawa, because then we was hoping that we would be able to go with the fleet into Tokyo Bay, but we were assigned a duty on picket line between I think Naja and Okinawa, to Japan, because they was flying on occupational troops, and so we were on picket line in case any planes went down.

OK. How long was it then before you were able to get back home to the United States?

Boone Kemp: It was pretty quick because the war ended in August the 5th or 6th -

'45 -

Boone Kemp: Let me see, I know it was before Christmas we left the Pacific with a homeward bound pennant streaming, and I think the orders was to throw everything over the side that had to pertain to the war and you didn't need. And I think that sea was full of junk from Pearl Harbor. We did also carry some Marines back to the States with us because we went through the canal and that was very interesting also. Then after we left the canal and I'm trying to get to a point here, after we went through the canal, then we went to port in Charleston, South Carolina, and I believe it was Charleston and we offloaded the Marines that we brought, the combat Marines.

So you had a pretty full ship on the way back.

Boone Kemp: Yes we did. We through a lot of stuff over, but we had a lot of stuff on it. So then we went on up to the Washington Navy yard, and this here had to be probably about a month, approximately a month give or take before Christmas – wait a minute, I think it was probably along the latter part of October when we was in the Navy yard and the ship had a big dance at the hotel. I have a picture of it but I can't recall the right name, had a big ship's party and dance at a hotel. We was there, while we was there at the Washington Navy yard, was when the ceremony took place that the Dyson received its presidential unit citation ceremony. I could wear the presidential unit citation medal, ribbon, while I was aboard the ship, even though I wasn't there when it earned it, but I couldn't wear it after I left it.

When the war ended, did you have any plans to stay in the Navy or did you want to come back home to Texas?

Boone Kemp: Well, when we left the Washington Naval yard we went to the Brooklyn Naval yard directly from there, and we hadn't been there, I think soon as we threw the ship's rope ashore that everybody who had, you got released based upon how many points at that time, it was a point system, and I think I had 36 points, and so I was able to be in the first bunch to get off, so I went home to Austin because I hadn't been back there since I left in August 1942.

Wow, what was that like when you got back home?

Boone Kemp: Well I'll tell you, of course everything was still by train in those days, so I rode the train from New York down to Austin and the train pulled into Austin about 4 o'clock one morning, don't remember the day, but about 4 o'clock one morning. I got off the train and I just walked out in the middle of Congress Avenue and looked up and down each way. Then I guess I called a taxi, being that time in the morning, and then I went over to where my dad had been released earlier after the war was over, he had been released early and they were back and they were living in south Austin, not far off of South 1st Street and West Monroe, so I got a taxi and went home.

Did your family know you were coming?

Boone Kemp: No, I don't think so.

So you surprised them.

Boone Kemp: Yes, I felt like I was like I told you on the Doherty, and on the Dyson, I never drew my pay, and so when I got paid off, oh yeah, when I came back I was on the train, and I came from New York to Camp Wallace down by Houston. Camp Wallace was a place where they also had German prisoners, and that was my release point. Then I guess I rode the bus or train, maybe it was a train because I definitely remember getting off the train in Austin, when I got back there. So I was home, I had a 30-day leave, and I know I had to leave to get back to the ship in New York before Christmas, and just two or three days after I had been home, I went down to Western Union where it used to be in the 600 block of Congress on the east side next to the American Bank, and so I went into the Western Union office to see a girl who lived, who I'd been writing to, who lived up around Driftwood, and to show you how the Lord works in things, when I went in there, there was another pretty girl in there, but I asked her, I said is Jane here today? She said no, she's off today. So I turned to walk away and I said you're a really pretty lady. So I got me out a telegraph form and I wrote out a telegram and said hi beautiful, how about a date tonight? And I signed my name.

And you gave it to her?

Boone Kemp: Yeah, and she started to write it up and she looked and saw my name and she said I've heard your name before.

And I said well how about a date?

Boone Kemp: She said no, I don't think so, I'll pass, not quite so fast. I think she went to go home and check with mama and daddy, because people did things like that in those days. My dad always whenever I did get ready to get married, he said where's she from, what's her name? Because people were not as populated in those days, and people usually knew people. If they had a bad reputation you'd certainly know about 'em.

Sure, yeah Austin was definitely a smaller town then than it is today.

Boone Kemp: I remember just before World War II, believe it or not Mr. Crabtree, that the city limit sign was where Madam Morse's restaurant on South Congress? The population sign there said 40,000.

Yeah, I believe it.

Boone Kemp: Anyhow, so I came back and asked her another day and she said OK, she went out on a date with me and she was a lovely, lovely young girl, 17 years old, and her name was Dorothy May Kieke, and her folks had a farm out around Buda. And Mr. Kieke came in town and started an electric business, but he didn't live very long. He lived long enough to see his first born grandson, but then he passed away before his second was born. But anyhow when it came time for me to, after I'd been going with Dorothy, it came time for me to go back to New York and I just opened up my mouth and I said I'm going to get out of the Navy and I'm going to come home and marry you. And I said what did I say? But I went back to New York and as soon as I got there I came down with pneumonia and they put me in the hospital, Long Island Hospital, and then while I was in there, I don't know what happened, the doctor said you've got appendicitis, you need to be operated on. So I said OK, take it out. So I had an appendicitis operation and then by the time I was all well from all of that, I never did get back to the Dyson after I left it when we arrived in the Brooklyn Navy yard from the Washington DC Navy yard. So when I got well in the hospital, then the end of, oh this is when it was, the end of March – oh this is how it all come to play. When I went home after I had been discharged, I was sent to Camp Wallace. When I came home on leave the first time in November, that's when I arrived in Austin on the train and stood on Congress Avenue at 4 o'clock. That was a little while ago, you know.

Sure. And did you end up getting married to the young lady?

Boone Kemp: I got out of the Navy on March the 9th, and on April the 6th we were married.

OK, that's pretty quick.

Boone Kemp: It was.

That's great. Where did you get married?

Boone Kemp: I got married in St. Mark's Lutheran Church there in Austin right behind the state capital.

Oh that's great.

Boone Kemp: She was Lutheran and I'm Baptist.

I think that church is gone now, correct?

Boone Kemp: I wouldn't be surprised.

Because just north of where the capital was, yeah, there's a sign right out about a block from this office where I'm working right now that's a historical sign about the Lutheran church that used to be at that location, so I know exactly where you're talking about.

Boone Kemp: And the pastor's name was Reverend Roesner. I remember him very well.

Did you decide to raise your family in Austin then, or did you move to the country?

Boone Kemp: No, we stayed there in Austin, and my father-in-law, he died on April the 13th 1948 while my Dorothy was pregnant with our second son, David. I might add that my first son, his name is Chester Lawrence Kemp, and I named him Chester after Admiral Nimitz. So I sent a clipping out of the paper and a letter to Admiral Nimitz in San Francisco and I have two letters that he wrote back on his five-star letterhead.

Wow.

Boone Kemp: His postage on it, not government expense, and commended my son on his port of arrival.

That's great, and you still have those letters?

Boone Kemp: Yes I do.

Wow, that's awesome. That's really neat. And then I think you said, sir, your father-in-law ran an electrical business?

Boone Kemp: Yeah, Kieke Electric, but he died on April the 13th 1948 and then his son ran the business for years until, and he was an ex-service man, until he died of cancer back in the 90s.

Did you work for them because you were an electrician as well?

Boone Kemp: I worked a little while for them, but I had an opportunity to go work at the post office and work steady, and so I went there and I put in 8 years at the post office. I worked there, and in the latter part of 1946, a Commander Wilcox, and the yeoman first classman name of Sims, they started, they opened up the Naval reserve program there in Austin, and in December 1946 I found out about it, and I joined up and in the Reserve, made several cruises down to the Caribbean, but then Korea came along in August, I was called up back in the Korean War and was in there and I was extended a year, but then I got out in December 1951. So I was in the

Korean War and then after I came back, I wouldn't have anything to do with the Naval reserve for a while, and then I was back down there and reenlisted again and I stayed in the Navy and went on to serve aboard the USS Saratoga CB-60 with six feet in the Mediterranean when the Cold War with the Russians there, and then I went to Little Creek and I was on an LST landing ship dock for a while. Then they decommissioned that, and so my wife and I was having marital troubles at that time, so I said I don't care about anything, I'm just going to volunteer for Vietnam. So I did and I was selected for it and I went home in December of 1967 on leave there, and then in the spring of 1968, I went to Coronado, California, and was there for 16 weeks in survival training, language learning and all of that at Camp Pendleton. And then in early spring, I think it was just barely after TET in May of '68, I arrived in Saigon. I was with a Naval advisory team 35, we were stationed at Natrang, Vietnam. That was like the Vietnamese naval academy. Most of our work there was to instruct them in the English language and to help in whatever, whichever that we could, and I was there until early part of November, 1969, when I flew back to a C-TAC in Washington and then was transferred to the ____ preserve and then I came home.

And you retired from the Reserves?

Boone Kemp: I retired from the regular Navy.

Regular Navy. And what was your rank when you got out, sir?

Boone Kemp: I just only got to E6.

E6, yes sir. And then after that I guess you settled in Austin and now you're out in Mason, correct?

Boone Kemp: Yes, my first wife and I, my deceased wife, we had some good years but we had some bad years, but we saw it all out and in 1984 we sold some property on the edge of Austin, came up to Mason and bought some pasteurage up here that had a mobile home on it. So we begin coming up here on weekends and doing that, and so I was up here May the 22nd, 2001, and my heart had, my wife Dorothy said atrial fibrillation, but we just went to see a primary care doctor. He said everything is OK. So I said well, if you're not going this time, I'll go up to Mason. That was May the 22nd. That night she called me, never sounded better, never sounded younger. We had a very wonderful conversation. Next morning I called back, couldn't get a hold of her. I had somebody go over there and she had passed away in her sleep.

Wow. That's hard to deal with I'm sure.

Boone Kemp: And then, to show you how God continues to work, during the time we had this place up here in 1984 until 2001, when we would come to town up here, my wife would go into a Winn's variety store here on the Mason Square and she got acquainted with a lady in there whose name is Betty, and unknowingly, I got acquainted with her husband because he had a gun shop. So to make a long story short, I never hardly ever, I see Betty a few times but I never spoke to her 100 words I don't guess, but Betty and my wife Dorothy got so acquainted with each other that Dorothy told me that she had heart trouble. So anyway when Dorothy passed away, I had a very hard time, but then three months later in August the 21st, 2001, Betty's husband Dudley, who was a retired Air Force sergeant, he passed away. So he had a military funeral up here in Mason. I came and took pictures, took the pictures to see Betty and her son who is a retired Marine, and just visited a little while, and then went back to visit her another

time and then about the third time, we hugged each other just because we was in the same boat of loneliness. When we hugged each other, the Lord took charge of my life. We had nothing more to do with it. It was just like this is what you're gonna do, this is when you're gonna do it, and so not to seem like we was too urgent because we didn't hardly even know each other, but on September the 7th, 2002, we were married here in the First Baptist Church in Mason. So we are still married and still together and we had no idea. We said if we have a couple of years, well that would be wonderful, but we've already been married now the 2nd around 11 years.

That's great, yes sir. Well sir, I tell you, I really appreciate the time you've taken today to share these memories with us and I know everybody here at the Land Office from Commissioner Patterson on down is thankful to you for your service to our nation. Like I mentioned before we started recording, we're going to send you copies of this interview on CDs so you have extra copies to give to friends and family, and we're also going to send you a nice signed letter and certificate from Commissioner Patterson in a commemorative binder. Then we will save a copy here for our archives, and we have archives that go back to the 1700s here.

Boone Kemp: Wonderful.

We have the original Registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of the settlers, and we have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received when he was killed at The Alamo. With that in mind, is there anything you'd want to say to anyone listening to this interview years from now?

Boone Kemp: Well, I would like to say that the Kemp people are dedicated to Americans, they're dedicated Texans, and to confirm that the Kemp name is on the monument at Goliad two times. I think it's Sam and Tom, I'm not sure, but they were great, great uncles. One of them was massacred and one got away. We've always been people that we truly have red, white, and blue blood, and our blood, and we are so disturbed about this land America, I look at it as God's second promised land, and the way that it was established and the high prices that have been paid for this, and to see now that it's in jeopardy, it just cuts into our heart. But let me tell you, you might know, but June the 14th, black day, Friday week back, I went with 35 veterans on the honor flight to Washington DC.

Oh that's excellent.

Boone Kemp: The guardian young man that met me up there and was with me on Senator John Quarantz met us at the plane, shook hands with each one of us, and had a whirlwind tour, but I had a young Marine who was on his second hitch, got a lot of rimmers on, I didn't get to talk to him about his activities, but he stuck to me and every one of the guardians with all the people, whether it was at Austin or whether it was in Washington, they just stuck to each person like glue, and he took me around everywhere. Then had a picture taken with he and I both, and he sent me some colorful tows of things that we saw there, and I will tell you, Mr. Crabtree, that one of the things we went to that will tear your heart out was the museum of the Holocaust.

Yeah, that's true.

Boone Kemp: Have you ever been to that?

No, I'm familiar with it though.

Boone Kemp: It will tear your heart out. And the terrible thing about it is, as you go along and see, Hitler first began to rise to power and the things that happened, the same things are happening in America right now, same pattern. And I would like to add, in 1954, I think Jerry Sadler was the Commissioner of the Land Board, and my dad and I, we both made loans from the Veterans Land Board. It's back there in the record somewhere.

I'm sure it is, somewhere in the archives, yes sir. Well sir again, I really do appreciate you taking time today to talk to us, and more importantly, thank you for your service to our nation.

Boone Kemp: Well thank you kindly, and I appreciate, you know at these, the time we left Austin and on our flight when we got up there, the arrivals and departures, there was many, many, many young married couples with children, that gives me hope.

Oh that's great, yes sir. Well, sir, again, we greatly appreciate it and like I mentioned before, a couple of weeks be looking for us to send that package to you in the mail with all these CD's and the letter and certificate.

Boone Kemp: Thank you kindly and please accept my extreme gratitude for you doing this.

Yes sir, thank you very much, and we'll talk to you soon, sir.

Boone Kemp: Thank you kindly.

[End of recording]