

Janis Kozlowski: So, what did a Radioman do?

John Fahey: Well, we copied code from.... During that time they didn't have the modern communications we have now; they had stations around the globe that would send out messages in code to all the ships in the Navy. And Radiomen had to sit there and copy code, because it come [sic] over in code; it was not what they call plain language. You could sit there and type all these characters. You couldn't read them - you'd have to copy them and give them to the command, the Communications Officer, who would then de-code them. So, if there was a message there for your ship, you did know what.... If there was a message come [sic] in for your ship, you would recognize the call sign. So that message immediately went to the Communications Officer. The other communications, all the other stuff, and you'd copy - some of it would be general messages for the whole Navy, or that whole fleet, or whatever. But, we copied around the clock - 24 hours a day. Somebody was always copying code, and that was my job. I worked on, maybe four hours on, eight hours off; four on, eight hours off. And the only time you did shut the radios down, that was when you were in port somewhere. Like, when you get back to the states, why, you'd shut it down. But, that was the only time you didn't copy.

Janis Kozlowski: So, it sounds like you had pretty busy job, as a Radioman.

John Fahey: Well, it was busy, in a sense. The worst part of it was the four on, eight off - you never got enough sleep. [Chuckle] I can't recall getting a full night's sleep in the Navy, because you ... that eight hours off, you had to eat and, you know, bath and everything else. And then, get ... and at the most, you'd probably get six, seven hours of sleep.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, that's not very much.

John Fahey: No, [Chuckle] not when you're doing it around the clock. And there's a lot of times ... because at meal time in the afternoon, you'd have a short watch - which would be, like 4:00 [o'clock] to six. And then somebody would relieve you. And then there'd be a six, eight [hour] watch. This way, you rotated around the clock. So, you'd have a 12:00 [o'clock] to 4:00 watch one day, in the afternoon, and maybe later on, you'd have a 12:00 to 4:00 in the, at midnight; and 4:00 to 6:00 in the morning. Because, then, at breakfast, why, you only worked - had two hour shifts. And so it rotated.

Janis Kozlowski: So, did it turn out to be a job that you liked?

John Fahey: Oh yeah, I enjoyed it, because it got me out of that hard lifting work on the deck, you know. And being in Alaska, it was a lot warmer in a radio shack than it was working out on deck.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] Yeah, I bet. [Chuckle] And where was the Radioman's office on the ship?

John Fahey: Well, we were on our particular ship, it was right next to the Captain's quarters. Ah, no, there was a space in between - where they had a lot of electrical gear in our particular ship. I think we were on the ... yeah, we had one deck above us. And I was just trying to recall

all the [Chuckle] details now. We were close to the Captain and close to the Conning part of the ship.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. And so was the ... was the job interesting in one respect; because you were privy to information coming in, right - which was probably hard to come by for most sailors?

John Fahey: No, not real.... Like I said, everything came over in code, you know.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

John Fahey: ... you'd copy stuff and you, you can't read it; it had, it'd be ...

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

John Fahey: ... it'd be in five letter groups. And sometimes you'd miss the darn stuff, and it could screw up a message. But, most of the time we got all of it. But, we didn't know what we were getting. Once in a while, we'd get a message in a plain ... what we'd call plain language. And that was something that you could read - like a letter. But, that was very unusual.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK. I misunderstood. So, somebody else deciphered the code, you didn't. So you, if it came in code, you never really knew what it said.

John Fahey: That's right. We took that message to the Communications Officer, and he had a machine to decode the message. And so, if they wanted us to know, then they would tell us. But, that was for the Communications Officer and the Captain and the rest of the officers that were needed to know that information.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. OK. And, and how were ... how was your radio equipment? Did you have pretty good equipment to use?

John Fahey: Yeah, it was pretty good. I would say it was probably state of the art at the time, and, you know -- because we needed good communications. And it was a long time ago; before they had the modern stuff, you know - internet and all that other. But yeah, I'd say, it was good for the time.