

Jack Haynes

Interviewed May 17, 2021 by Judy Allen

Jack Nale Haynes, born 9-1-49 to Helen Ruth Nale and J.D. Haynes. JD grew up in Canadian, and Helen was from Crowder.

Navy veteran Jack Haynes enlisted in the United States Navy in June 1969 and was honorably discharged May 1971 with the rank of 3rd Class Petty Officer.

After basic training in San Diego, California, Haynes was stationed aboard the USS Midway CVA 41 aircraft carrier.

He worked on the extensive modernization of the USS Midway at the Naval Shipyard, which was recommissioned on January 31, 1970.

Haynes' work career includes being a City of McAlester Firefighter where he lost his leg after a 5-story building collapsed during a fire. When Haynes recovered, he worked at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant where he retired with 21 years' service.

Haynes enjoys being an active member of the District 11 senior citizen group. He is a Choctaw artist whose talents include wood carving, beadwork and painting.

Haynes was born in Holdenville, and grew up in McAlester. "My dad, J.D. Haynes, was a realtor. In the early days, no license was necessary, and later, when a realtor's license was required, Dad's license was number 17 in the state." J.D. had quit school to join the Navy, and ended up in the Seabees. "When I joined the service, I intended to go into the Seabees. I was stationed in the Navy."

He had one sister, Carol. They lived in town. For fun activities, Haynes liked to play pinball and liked all kind of sports, especially baseball. "I never played for school, though," he said. "Just with neighborhood kids. There was a park about three blocks from the house and we would all get together and play."

Jack said, "We went to Grandma's for Christmas and Easter. We were there almost every weekend. That is where I picked up carving as an activity. My grandparents didn't have any kind of air conditioning, so while the women were inside cooking, the men would be out under the shade tree. We'd pick up a stick and cut on it. I don't remember ever not having a pocket knife – even before I started school." This tradition of carving/whittling under the shade tree began a lifetime of art carving for Haynes.

He said, "When I was about twelve, I got a Case knife for Christmas. That was just about the best knife around. I still carry a Case in my pocket!"

He said he doesn't carve with a pocket knife for his artwork anymore. "I use a regular carving knife I made myself."

Haynes went to a garage sale a few years ago and bought a set of butcher knives from a butcher shop. He sharpened some of them, and turned them into the knives he can use for his specialty work. Some of the knives have tiny blades for small detail work.

"I use two or three knives for a single carving: a detail knife; one that has the end of knife curved to get in the hard-to-reach areas; and a straight knife. None of the knives have long blades - they are about an inch and a half long," said Haynes.

He said he carves a lot of cottonwood bark. He enjoys carving faces. Describing the process, he said, "Most of the time, I start with the nose, then carve the eye area, then a moustache, a

lip, then carve the eye details and the rest. If I am carving from cottonwood, I can finish a 6 ½ x 2 ½" piece in about two and a half hours."

Haynes doesn't always carve people. He likes to carve animals, like squirrels and fish. His expertise in art is not limited to carving. Jack's cultural talents extend to Choctaw beadwork. "I have been beading for about five years." He said he learned from other people. "We learned beading at the Choctaw Community Center. I also checked out some books at the library. They had pictures and explained how to do different stitches."

Haynes said he has learned a lot, including the importance of using the proper threads, or strings for the piece he is working on. "The lace collars are best done with a special string that won't break." He advises using a 10 lb. fishing line called FireLine when beading the collars.

Hayne's hobbies keep him busy in the creative arts. He paints – art on canvas, rocks (turning a simple rock into the image of an animal); he even took a tree he cut from the back yard and "re-imagined" the wood into artwork animals. He also does flint knapping and plays guitar.

He and his wife, Sandra, have been married 30+ years. They met while working at the Army Ammunition Depot in Savannah.

Prior to his work at the Ammunition Depot, Jack had worked as a fireman in McAlester and was in the Navy.

He had served on the USS Midway-CVA41 from 1969-1971, being discharged as a E4 3rd Class Petty Officer. "The ship was an aircraft carrier, a WWII vessel they had cut in half, pulled apart and added an angle deck."

When I reported in, there were only 30 people on the ship. Before I left, there were 3,000 people and the ship was carrying 200 airplanes."

He said, "When I arrived they were just getting it ready for us. It wasn't habitable. We lived in the barracks at Hunters Point Navy Shipyard, San Francisco."

Haynes first worked in a maintenance job and soon managed to transfer to Ship Services in the Laundry.

He was on duty one day as a "guard" with his officer when the officer was delivering money to the ship's "bank" one day. "As they were counting out the coins, he noticed they forgot to finish the nickel count. This was a \$90 mistake that Haynes had caught by paying attention and counting along while the coin count was going on. He was asked by the Divisional Officer to take a promotion to the ship's store.

"I didn't want to do that – I liked my job in laundry. I couldn't really say no to the Divisional Officer, so I took the advancement."

Soon, Haynes was requested to advance to store manager on the ship. He learned to run the register and do inventory. His first quarter inventory of running the store he was five dollars over. "I knew where four of the dollars came from – a guy had bought cigarettes and had left them on the counter. I eventually put them back on the shelf. I never figured out where that other dollar was." Haynes said the Navy stores allowed for a \$200 loss per quarter and for his store to have a \$5 overrun was something they really liked.

Hayne's excellent work at managing the store captured the attention of his superiors, and although he would have preferred to return to Ship Services in the Laundry, he was told to remain at work in the store. They told him he couldn't get out of running the store unless he reached the rank of 3rd Class Petty Officer. That became his goal - he wanted to do something that involved working with more people.

"I filled out for correspondence courses and made 3rd Class Petty Officer. I was put in charge of the laundry and was manager over six people."

When he came back to McAlester, Haynes applied for work as a firefighter. "I really loved firefighting and I was an EMT. I was on the ambulance most of the time. I was fighting a fire in a five-story building in McAlester in 1981 and the building collapsed." Among the injuries he sustained, Jack ended up losing a leg. "It destroyed all the veins in my leg, so they took it off. It was almost a year before the swelling went down."

He said he managed not to be depressed about his situation. "My dad came to see me in the hospital and couldn't believe I wasn't depressed and how I was in such a good mood. A woman from Social Security called and asked if I wanted on disability. I told her no, because as soon as I could, I wanted to go to work!"

Haynes said he went to the Army base and asked for a job. Haynes confirmed to the person who interviewed him for the job he could learn to drive a forklift. A month later, Haynes received a call offering him an opportunity to go to forklift school and take a position at the Ammunition Depot. "I got my forklift license and gave the government 21 years before retiring from there!"

Haynes had gotten an Associate's Degree in Applied Science from Eastern Oklahoma State College and also graduated from Vo-Tech in Drafting after he got out of the Navy. This was a benefit at his job at the Ammunition Depot during hiring freezes. They used Haynes in their drafting department for two stints – once for nine months and once for a year and nine months. "I found that I preferred driving the forklift, and was happy to go back to that job!" he said.

"Someone who doesn't work doesn't have any memories. If you just sit and watch TV you don't have memories. When I was a fireman, it was like having another family."

When asked if there were any important lessons he had learned in life, he responded, "I think it is import not to borrow money. I don't like to pay interest. The only thing I will go into debt for is a house or a car.

"Some people today spend their paycheck just as fast as they can get it. I have talked to the Chief about starting a program to teach people to manage money. It is important to learn to work for retirement. Everyone needs to learn how to manage money."

Haynes said he also wished the Choctaw Nation had an agent or representative to help registered Choctaw artists. "Someone like a realtor helps with property sales. We artists need an agent to help with art," he said. "We need help making the right contacts, and everything else." He said he was on the artist's registry, but that was not the same as having an agent or representative to help with his work as an artist.