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Tom Cook
July 20, 1994

Interview conducted by Daniel Martinez
Transcribed by Plowshares Media
Coordinated by Dr Jennifer Craig
Reviewed by Guampedia Foundation, Inc
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WAPA Collections
War in the Pacific NHP
135 Murray Boulevard, Suite 100
Hagåtña, GU 96910
wapa_interpretation@nps.gov

Interviewee: Tom Cook

Session # 1

Military Rank: Navy Seabees – 25th Seabees

Interviewer: Daniel Martinez

Hilton Hotel Guam

Date: July 20th, 1994

--00:00:00 - 00:00:20

[Audio Description] Tim Cook is a Caucasian American man wearing a ribboned straw hat with the words "Guam 21st Seabees." He has a patterned button-up shirt with his nametag and a yellow ribbon. In the background is a lamp and a beige wall.

--00:00:21 - 00:00:34

[preparatory conversation, official interview not started]

--00:00:35 - 00:01:17

Q: The following oral history interview was conducted at the Hilton Hotel in Guam on July 20th at approximately 8:20 pm. The interviewer is Daniel Martinez with the National Park Service, historian at the USS Arizona Memorial. The subject of the interview is Mr. Tom Cook, who served with the 25th Seabees during World War II and during the Guam campaign. This interview is being made by the National Park Service War in the Pacific and National Historical Park in conjunction with KGTF Channel 12 television in Guam.

--00:01:18 - 00:01:28

Cook, I understand that the National Park Service has your permission to make this recording and retain all literary and property rights derived from it. Is that your understanding?

Cook: Yes.

--00:01:28 - 00:01:40

Q: Okay. Well, good evening, nice to see you. For the record, Cook, could you state your full and

complete name and spell your last name for us.

--00:01:41 - 00:01:47

Cook: My name is Luther Thomas Cook, Jr. And the last, C-O-O-K.

--00:01:47 - 00:01:54

Q: Okay, and so during this time you just look right at me, okay?

Cook: Okay.

Q: And we'll just be talking here.

--00:01:55 - 00:02:07

Q: What unit were you connected with during the Guam campaign?

Cook: D Company, 25th Seabees, Naval Construction Battalion.

Q: I noticed you have your hat on here. Can you tell us a little bit about this hat?

--00:02:08 - 00:02:28

Cook: Yes, this hat is known as a plantation hat and we knew that there would be a lot of veterans here and with these crowds, we need to identify our own people, so our chairman decided to have this hat. And also marked with our unit and everything and now I find this real good, because in the crowds, we can find one another.

--00:02:29 - 00:02:40

Q: There's a few Marines here, you know?

Cook: Our friends.

Q: So what brought you back to Guam? Why did you come back to Guam on this 50th anniversary?

--00:02:44 - 00:02:50

Cook: My love of the Guamanian people. And then to walk over the areas that we had, you know, fought over.

--00:02:52 - 00:03:32

Q: Why do you have this love and affection for the Guamanian people?

Cook: Well, I have always had that. We landed and only about a couple days, the Guamanian people started appearing to be behind our lines. They had nothing and they suffered heavily, everything had been taken away from them. And they had the most dignity and – without food, but we took everything out of our packs and gave to these people. At that time I was at Asan and they came in and they put up a camp between the old Guam cemetery and the river.

--00:03:33 - 00:04:05

And they stayed there and we got to know these people quite often because we was in contact with them often, our doctors and things like this. And people that are hungry were next to our food dumps, they never took an item or nothing. If I was as hungry as much as them people were, I would have took a lot. They are honorable and loveable and you never can forget them.

--00:04:06 - 00:04:23

Q: And that's what brought you back for this 50th anniversary?

Cook: Yes, and also this is my first reunion with members of the 25th Seabees and I wanted to see those guys again. It's kind of like walking down memory lane.

--00:04:23 - 00:05:10

Q: I bet it has been, we will get into that a little bit in a minute. Where were you born and what was your date of birth?

Cook: I was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, 20th of July, 1924.

Q: Do you come from a long line of Virginians?

Cook: No, I'm the first family in Virginia. All my other people are Yankees from Massachusetts and West Virginia. But my father was the Marine Corps in World War I, so we remained there.

Q: How far does the military experience go back in your family?

Cook: To 1637.

Q: So you had somebody who fought in the Civil War as well?

Cook: Revolutionary War – every war. 1812. And I have records, all on those.

Q: Where did they fight in the Civil War? I'm kind of interested in that part.

Cook: Oh, in the Civil War? West Virginia and in the Union Army.

--00:05:10 - 00:05:38

Q: And what- Do you remember any regiment they were in?

Cook: 7th West Virginia Cavalry.

Q: Wow. That's interesting. Did you- Where did you grow up?

Cook: We moved from Virginia to North Carolina during the Depression.

Q: That's where that accent came from, right?

Cook: That's true. That's right, I dropped my Virginia accent and I grew up in North Carolina.

Q: What part of North Carolina?

Cook: It's a place called Murphysboro.

Q: Sure.

Cook: Real small.

--00:05:39 - 00:05:43

Q: Okay, and is that where you went to school?

Cook: Yes.

--00:05:44 - 00:05:50

Q: Where were you on December 7th, 1941? Do you remember what you were doing?

--00:05:53 - 00:06:13

Cook: No, I can't remember exactly because in the area that I was in, a country town, we didn't have no lights, no radios, nothing. Most everything traveled by word of mouth, like they used to do here in Guam.

Q: Yeah.

Cook: One thing- oh, I remember President Roosevelt's speech over the radio.

Q: Right.

Mr Cook: About Imperial Japan has done such and such. Yes.

--00:06:13 - 00:06:32

Q: Do you remember where you listened to that speech at?

Cook: At my home because we had a battery radio.

Q: Okay. Did you know what all that meant?

Cook: No.

Q: How old were-

Cook: I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was. I was 17.

--00:06:32 - 00:07:09

Q: 17. Why did you- why did you join the service?

Cook: Patriotism.

Q: When did you do that?

Cook: I did that – I couldn't join until August, my birthday was in July and my father wouldn't sign the papers until I reached that age.

Q: Why is that?

Cook: Uh, he wanted to hold on to me the last few – and I wanted to join the Marine Corps, he had been in the Marines, he said, no, I want you to go into the Navy and learn one of those outstanding trades. So I joined the Seabees.

Q: Wait a second. You joined the Navy? How did you join the Seabees?

--00:07:11 - 00:07:50

Cook: The Seabees are part of the Navy – Naval Construction Battalions. They were organized during the war because on Wake Island, there were only civilians there and they were unable to fight for themselves. And since then, I met two of those fellows that are here. They became prisoners of war over in Japan.

Q: I went back with the Wake Island defenders and the civilians, the first time they went back. It was terrific.

Cook: I've landed on Wake and you wonder if your plane can even get on it.

Q: Boy, it's a small place, you are right. So you went to enlist and you decided you wanted to be with this outfit called the Seabees – your dad was right, you did pick up a pretty good trade there.

--00:07:51 - 00:09:02

Cook: No, it wasn't all that good, because what happened was, I joined the Seabees, but my heart was on the Marines because my father had been a Marine.

Q: Okay.

Cook: You know the old story, once a Marine, always a Marine. And then – so I joined the Seabees and I took the Navy boot training at Norfolk and then we traveled across America in three separate trains. Arriving in California, the Marines took us over. Dressed us in Marine clothing and Army says, Marines, and said, do not mention you are Seabees. Because I guess it was some secret at that time. And so – and I sung the Marine hymn so much, I thought I was a Marine. But I love the Marines, because the greatest team in the Pacific was the Marines and the Seabees together.

Q: When did you first go overseas?

Cook: March 1943, we sailed on a Dutch ship named the Chaparro [sp?] and she had a short keel and she's constantly rolling, even on cool seas- calm seas. Unescorted. I was sweating all the way, you know, submarines, to Samoa.

--00:09:02 - 00:09:27

Q: Did you get seasick?

Cook: Very much so. Because I had no sea legs or nothing, I was sick all the time.

Q: What's it like to be sea sick?

Cook: Terrible. You don't want any food around you. You want to be left alone and you feel like you would rather lie down and die. But sooner or later, you know, you finally adjust.

Q: So you landed in Samoa. Now, here is a guy from North Carolina, you are in the Great Pacific, could you believe what you were seeing?

--00:09:28 - 00:10:31

Cook: Well, I had read all my life. And Margaret Mead had written about Samoa and I read the

book. Now, as we come into Samoa – have you been to Samoa?

Q: No, I haven't, but I know a lot of Samoans.

Cook: Samoa itself, and US Samoa, Tutuila, an open volcano that had blown in, the harbor is bottomless. As we pulled in there, we anchored to a buoy. And it's kinda getting late because you always pull in these harbors at dusk time. So the sub wouldn't pick you up. And the Samoans were having fun on the beach, fiestas and everything. And they wouldn't tell us where was at the people. Our officers. But I knew because I had already read about Samoa. But the guys on the ship, since they knew nothing about that part of the world, they thought they were cannibals over there. They were afraid of them. But also, made good friends among the Samoans. But I was just there a couple months. The Samoans are like Hawaiians.

--00:10:33 - 00:11:10

Q: A lot of similarities.

Cook: Right, and we lived among the villages. They put a few of us with the villages. The reason was that they didn't know where the attack would come from, if one had came. And we helped train the Samoans, you know. If the Japanese attacked, we planned it out all together. The women and everything was trained. Luckily no one came, but they did -

Q: Well, Samoans are rather substantial people.

Cook: Oh, they are, they are. And some of our guys would tease the girls, but the girls could handle themselves.

Q: Is that right?

Cook: No problem.

Q: I think you are right. After being in Samoa, they move you where?

--00:11:10 - 00:11:58

Cook: From there - we was in Samoa a couple months. Nice and warm and they took us and fitted us out for long johns, winter underwear, we couldn't figure out where we was going. I thought Alaska. And we shoved off from Samoa and went to New Zealand.

Q: On the same boat?

Cook: No. It was two months later. These boats are always moving around. I forgot, I think we moved in on the – maybe the President Hayes. 'Cause all these President lines had, you know, signed over to the military and they were nice fast ships.

Q: So where did you go with your long underwear?

Cook: To New Zealand and New Zealand in July is winter.

Q: That's right.

Cook: Knee deep snow. We finally adjusted pretty fast, and again, New Zealand people are wonderful.

--00:12:00 - 00:12: 50

But the trouble with New Zealand – I liked it and they had lots of steaks, but they also had a lot of sheep and I hated that mutton. Because it seemed like nobody in the military knew how to cook sheep. It tasted and smelled terrible. So I would wait til I could get a liberty and go downtown and have steak and the New Zealanders are very nice, you just get a haircut at a barber shop, they would invite you to their home. And years later, I wrote to the Prime Minister

of New Zealand, I think that was McKee, and thanked him for all this. I did get a nice letter back from him. And New Zealand is the – well, it looks like Switzerland, I think they call it the Switzerland of the south. It's all mountains.

Q: They said New Zealand – someone described New Zealand as where all seven continents are represented.

--00:12:50 - 00:13:58

Cook: Yes, and they are – well, they have the Maori's there which are like the Polynesians and I met those people and their customs are different from Samoa and everything. But most of the people that had settled in New Zealand were from Scotland. Good people.

Q: So when do you finally get in action?

Cook: Oh we got quite a while yet, because from New Zealand, which we constructed Naval hospitals, because from the Pacific area, many veterans were taken to those hospitals. We moved from New Zealand to Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands, and that was I think July '43. By then the ground action on the canal – Guadalcanal was over, but the bombers came every night.

Q: Japanese bombers?

Cook: Japanese bombers.

Q: Just to leave a calling card here and there?

Cook: Yeah, they were built by Mitsubishi, who is still in business, but they were good bombers.

--00:13:58 - 00:14:24

Q: Now, excuse me, Tom. What did yo- what were you trained to do? What was your specialty?

Cook: Okay, I was a BAR man, Browning Automatic Rifle.

Q: For weapons.

Cook: And I was demolition. But since I was a low ranker, about as low as you could get, they could have me do anything. So that was alright. I never really spent-

Q: So you could work on different types of construction –

--00:14:24 - 00:15:28

Cook: Under supervision, yes, cause don't forget, I was a young man, but the people above me were well trained, they had degrees in engineering.

Q: I understand on average, Seabees were much older than anybody on the other branches of services.

Cook: Yes, that is true, although I have to give it to 77 Statue of Liberty, that they were the oldest – the National Guard.

Q: So you could wield a hammer? Use a saw?

Cook: Oh yes, or dig, whatever they wanted. Because in the Seabees, there is nothing you can't do. I mean, you turn to it and you do it, you know because, uh-

Q: That's great.

Cook: We would rather work than salute. We were the most un-military unit you probably ever seen because I would go six blocks out of the way to avoid a salute. I thought late- when I joined

the Army later, I thought that was stupid of me. But we were kind and we helped everybody along the way and we could do – build – we had initiative and we could build anything we wanted. In fact, we used a lot of teak wood on the canal.

--00:15:29 - 00:16:19

Q: Well, let's- there's probably lots of history right up there, but I've gotta get us going up to Guam. What was the first military action you were in, where they were actually shooting at you?

Cook: On Bougainville. [unclear] Bougainville, the northernmost of the British Solomon Islands.

Q: Sure.

Cook: That was in November '43. And we landed there and that was our action. Unusual on this island, there was three volcanoes, active. And we never had seen anything like it and it scared the hell out of us. Sorry.

Q: You can say whatever you want here. It's okay. This isn't television.

Cook: I know, but I don't like to do those things. My unit will see this and say no that's not supposed to be that way because a lot of-

[video cuts briefly]

--00:16:22 - 00:17:02

Q: Okay, so we are back at Bougainville and what was that action like there?

Cook: We landed in a swamp. The land crabs were migrating to the beach to lay their eggs.

Q: Land crabs?

Cook: Land crabs.

Q: How big are they?

Cook: Lord, as big as that hat. And they could take a finger off and they liked to crawl in your foxhole. They can really separate you from your foxhole in a big hurry. And they are always clicking.

Q: Those are like those coconut crabs, they called them?

Cook: Coconut. They've got them here too, people like them.

Q: Can you eat them?

Cook: They do here. I wouldn't eat one.

--00:17:05 - 00:17:27

Q: So was the enemy shooting at you?

Cook: Well, they were shooting at us, yes, but and zeroes and things like that, [unintelligible] but the thing I remember most on Bougainville, I would step back to the beach to clean my BAR [unintelligible] oil and stuff and I heard this Jap machine gun going off and I thought it was a land gun, but it was only zero who was so low behind the palm trees. And he came around the edge and my BAR was all disassembled, when he got to us, he ceased firing.

--00:17:28 - 00:18:46

Cook: But he had his goggles and stuff on, he waved to me. Like this. I think – there was a Navy plane that had been shot down, I think he was following to see if he had really got that guy. And

as the plane went into the water, the PTs rescued the people. And he turned out toward sea and he passed over a small island and he waved at my friend too. I have often wondered, if that Japanese guy survived, because I think that – I don't think he ran out of ammunition. But I feel like I always had a guardian angel over me.

Q: I guess so. A BAR, that is quite a gun.

Cook: Oh yes, one thing I liked about the Browning Automatic Rifle, it would go through coconut trees and nobody could hide with you on that BAR. Especially if you use that armor piercing ammunition.

Q: And that gun is not a light one, it's 21 pounds.

Cook: And they always hang it on the smallest shoulder.

Q: You are not that small a guy.

Cook: No, I was very small then.

Q: Were you? So how did you manage all that weight?

Cook: It wasn't too bad because you had a lot of adrenaline in you so you could carry a lot of stuff.

--00:18:46 - 00:19:03

Q: You had people with you too, right? To carry ammo?

Cook: No, he was always somewhere else, because the BAR drew fire. Because if you open up on the BAR, you can fire any single shot on a machine gun. If you fired like a machine gun, the

Japanese are all on you in a minute. Could be pretty hot for a while.

--00:19:05 - 00:19:55

Cook: But most of the things I did as a Seabee was build.

Q: What kind of things did you build?

Cook: At Bougainville we built – the Marines had went forward in the swamp, they came back in a month and we had built them a two lane highway. They were shocked. We helped build an airstrip that Pappy Boyington flew from. You know Pappy Boyington? He flew from that and I never knew it till later. And Kennedy was in our area too. PT109. Again, you don't know those things at that time.

Q: [unclear] yeah, Bougainville, they were in that area. So yeah, those PT boats were pretty neat. So you were there, but you never knew that Kennedy was there, you found that out later.

--00:19:55 - 00:20:16

Cook: No, Kennedy wouldn't have meant nothing to me anyway then. What meant mostly to us then was the Roosevelt boys.

Q: They were there?

Cook: Oh, they, you know, they served – Roosevelt's kids served everywhere. Not kids, you know, Jimmy was a regular- okay, I don't want to stray off of the-

Q: That's okay. Well, let's get up to Guam.

Cook: Okay, from?

Q: From Bougainville.

--00:20:16 - 00:20:20

Cook: From Bougainville, we went to the Marshall Islands. You know, you go across the Pacific a step at a time, not on a B29, to Quadrangle, if I remember right. And from there, we marched over to Saipan, in reserve, for Saipan. And when we were at Saipan, the Japanese fleet came out and what became what is known as a Marianas turkey shoot. We scooted back to the Marianas because troop transports were the biggest target. And we hid in the lagoons this time, I think in Weetok [sp?]. Our Guam landing was delayed about a month, I think. Because of the action on Saipan.

Q: Pretty vicious.

Cook: Yeah. And so then we made a move to Guam. I arrived here on the 20th. We arrived out there on the 20th of July, which was my birthday. Today.

Q: This is the anniversary, 50 years ago today; you were landing here, on your birthday.

--00:21:20 - 00:22:18

Cook: No, I landed the 21st, tomorrow. So the 20th was my birthday and I was hoping I would survive the next day. We went down the nets, I was doing a lot of 23rd Psalm and the Catholics were doing this [sign of the cross] and we were all working on that together.

Q: Was it pretty hot still?

Cook: I can't remember, fear makes you forget all that stuff. Well, it wasn't fear – the adrenaline was running high, because we came – I don't remember exactly what way we came in. 'Cause we could see all this stuff happening in front of us as we stood on the decks of the ship, waiting to go. I think I saw the last Japanese zero shot down on Guam. It came around the bend and it

turned upside down and went into the beach and for many years it sat right down here on the beach, buried upside down. And wounded were coming back then. And guys with just slight bayonet wounds on them, were dying of shock.

--00:22:20 - 00:23:44

Cook: And the cruisers on the right and left were blasting away and each time they would fire those guns, it would lift you off your feet. That was a lot to keep you from worrying about too much except your own hide, you know? But on the other hand, we wanted this war to come to an end and on the way here, we had been briefed and briefed and briefed about the Guamanian people. That's why we had such affection for them. First, they are our people. And this would be the first to be liberated of US Territories, you know. So when – we were looking forward to this mission, plus, let's get this over with. I told you about all we had been, we were getting tired of this stuff now. Let's finish this sucker, you know? So we were ready to go. Okay, I don't know what exactly way we came in, but as we came in, my company and well, the 25th Seabees in direct support and attached to the 3rd Marine Division, we were re-designated the 19th Marines, like I told you, we had the uniforms and stuff, all like that. And my particular company, we directly supported the 3rd Regimental Marines Asan, left flank.

--00:23:46 - 00:24:39

Cook: As we came in, over the reef, by the time we got there, the tide was starting to drop. So the boats can't come in. We had to run across that reef. And the reef is about knee deep in some places and the big holes where the shells already knocked holes in them. I'm a BAR man, if I fall in any holes, I'm a gone duck. So I almost fell in one, but a big ole fella grabbed me by the belt and pulled me back. I guess – that reef, I don't know, maybe- what is it? A quarter of a mile out there or something? But I don't some high stepping, because you can hear those bullets and it will make you get with it. So we finally made it into the beach here and everything is piling up on the beach, typical as a landing goes, and it's narrow because the Division had landed in a very narrow area. Everybody is elbow to elbow.

--00:24:43 - 00:25:13

Cook: And you are trying to push the guy ahead of you, forward. I mean, there were things piling up. If he don't go, the tank is going to run him over because all of this stuff is coming in. So we dug foxholes, but the trouble was, as soon as you went down about two feet, the tide came in on you. The water rose in your foxhole, so that was no good either. So that happened about an hour and then we got busy, you know, doing our mission, which was to supply the Marines and keep them warned.

--00:25:14 - 00:26:14

Q: Supply them with what?

Cook: Everything they needed.

Q: From ammunition to flamethrowers to mortar rounds?

Cook: Yes, everything. We had to take ammunition up to 'em and sometimes help them load it in the machine guns. Most things the Marines needed at that time was water. They'd run out of water. I was carrying five gallon cans as far as I could get it and then finally we loaded- we brought in a water tank, which carried about 300 pounds- about 300 gallons. General put out an order, don't give any of those Marines- don't serve them water until a certain time because if you give them water too early, they might stop fighting too much. I thought that was cruel. But the General knows what the heck he's doing. We followed orders, not to give any water until a certain time. Well, that time comes, we give it to the Marines, and there is no problem on that. Everything was coming in, it was our job to make sure it kept moving forward.

--00:26:15 - 00:27:06

Cook: If the Marines went, we followed 'em with whatever they went. And sometimes, if the Marines slowed down, we would go through them to do our job. For instance, we were told also that - to make small roads behind the Marines, to bring their heavy stuff in. Artillery and stuff

like that. If they slowed down – when our bulldozer was coming up, if the Japanese were there and Marines hadn't got 'em, we got 'em with the bulldozer, because the bulldozer with the blade up, it can chase a lot of Japanese.

Q: So the construction machinery became weapons.

Cook: That's right. Pick handles could be used for anything. Because you had one mission, it was to do your job and let nothing stand between you and that.

Q: What was the first construction project you guys worked on? The roads? Making roads or?

--00:27:07 - 00:27:33

Cook: Let me think now. It must have been roads, because that would have been the thing mostly needed.

Q: That's mostly what they needed in the combat situation, right?

Cook: And also the bulldozers had to go ahead of the tanks so that the tanks that were slipping and sliding and couldn't get up some things, so you had to go ahead of the tank and – by the way, one of my men got quite a medal for that, you have to straighten it up so that the tank can get up there. He may have to pull the tank up.

--00:27:33 - 00:28:32

Q: I understand they also used to clear forests so they could come on through.

Cook: Yes.

Q: Clear jungle rather.

Cook: Yeah, we call that fire trails.

Q: Fire trails?

Cook: Yeah, so you would shoot across them. In fact, sometimes the Marines would be on one side and the Japanese on the other, both waiting to use the fire trail, because it's clear down through here now, you can fire and you can control that part of the ground.

Q: That's incredible. So what did you do? When did you get off the beach?

Cook: Ten days later. We didn't work at night, because the lights would have drew the fire on us, so us as Seabees were sent to defend the left flank, the 3rd Marines, looking at Asan, towards Agana. That time, I was looking at Martinez's ice plant, the smokestack.

--00:28:34 - 00:29:32

Cook: On the 10th day, the Marines had finally – and the Army- had finally got across the island, so they were starting to move forward to Mt. Rosa, Barrigada and all those places. I had been on that left flank for ten days. I said, I can't let the Marines beat me into Agana. I'm right next to Agana. And I had my uniform, BAR, so I saw 'em coming. Tanks and all that, down what is now Marine Drive. I got ahead and I'm walking into town and behind me comes this tank and this lieutenant was yelling at me, get out of the road! I said, just a minute sir, do you know who I am? And he pulled, well, I don't know and I don't care. I said, I'm the lead scout for this outfit and if you have any questions, talk to General Turnage, or should I call him? No, no, that's alright. So we continued on to town and from those cliffs there, going into town, a Japanese sniper was up there. And he fired and then he jumped up and down and doing all this stuff.

--00:29:33 - 00:30:21

Cook: Well, the Marines had been told, this town is secure, don't worry, everything is just fine. It wasn't. So as soon as that guy fired, they was in a state of shock. The column stopped. They was

on machine guns, but the Marines didn't open up. I had a thirty aught three rifle, which was a Springfield rifle, very accurate rifle. And I fired up there, I didn't hit the guy, but I got close enough to drive him under cover. I started moving forward. So then I returned to my unit, but I could never mention this, the men in [unintelligible] tore me up because he wanted a Marine to grab the glory, you see?

Q: So the first man in Agana was a Seabee.

Cook: That's right, it was me. Well, we were here too. You know, we came on this liberation, we were here two days before the Marines.

Q: We noticed that. Was that on design or purpose?

--00:30:22 - 00:31:05

Cook: Design. But the Marines are our best comrades, we may kid 'em, in fact we are the only ones that they will let kid them.

Q: Where were you when the banzai attack took place?

Cook: Left flank.

Q: That's a bad place to be.

Cook: Well, the General will ask us, you boys can take care of the left flank if the banzai? Well, the Seabees only have one answer – yes sir. Lucky they never banzaied exactly from Agana towards us, but they did banzai up there on what is now General Wilson's outfit and terrible banzai and we could hear all that screaming and yelling going on up there.

Q: Lots of gun fire.

--00:31:06 - 00:31:39

Cook: We knew they were coming. And if they had came down to that area – now, us as Seabees, we are construction people. We really wasn't trained in infantry tactics and all this stuff. We would have had a rough time. Our foxhole was shallower and – but -

Q: They did break through to get to the hospital area.

Cook: They broke through, but what they run into was some tanks here. That blew the stuff out of them. And then – but in my foxhole, my buddy, we were right next to what is now Marine Drive.

--00:31:40 - 00:32:22

Q: Is that right? What is your assessment of the Japanese soldier, since you fought them?

Cook: Excellent. But they tend to operate a lot of times individually. We could pick them off that way. They pulled the banzai, when they pulled the banzai, they knew that is the last rope. They are going for broke, you know? We helped them out on that too. Excellent concealment, obedient to orders and stayed a long time on Guam – that sergeant and I think in the Navy restricted area, perfect place to be.

Q: Oh, you mean the one that was- that hid out for all those years.

Cook: Yes.

--00:32:24 - 00:32:50

Q: Well, you know, you are a construction man, what did you think of the Japanese defensive structures? You would see them-

Cook: No good on Guam. No good.

Q: How's that?

Cook: They could learn some lessons from Iwo Jima. Because the Japanese never expected anybody to come. They had the island and they were going to keep it. They didn't prepare their defenses here correctly, because they run into natural defenses, like all these caves and stuff like that.

Q: Right.

--00:32:50 - 00:33:23

Cook: That's alright, we will give them dynamite in there. There was a good case of that, you know? No, their units wasn't all here. 38th Infantry was still short two battalions that had started from Manchuria that were sunk.

Q: Right. Lost on the way here?

Cook: Lost on the way here. 38th Special Battalion.

Q: When the island was secured, what- what did the Seabees do then?

Cook: Build.

Q: What did you build?

--00:33:24 - 00:34:35

Cook: Well, everybody talks about that bridge. The bridge was good.

Q: What bridge was that, sir?

Cook: Agana Bridge. By the way, if I may throw it in, the other day when I was standing there looking at this bridge, there were two ladies there and one walked over and said, you carried me as a kid, at this bridge. 50 years ago, I could remember it. I guess she was about six then, because at the bridge she had a hut and a palm tree – a coconut tree, and she was born, banana tree – and she was born right there behind that.

Q: How did she remember you or even recognize you?

Cook: I don't- my features haven't changed much or something. And she is the wife of the best lawyer on this island. How long have you been here?

Q: Well, I have been making trips back and forth, but I have been here for about a total of about three weeks.

Cook: Well, she defended Ricardo Bordallo, who is a friend of mine.

Q: What was the case over?

Cook: Oh, I don't know, it was something political. I do- because he- oh, let's not into that because we'll stray.

--00:34:37 - 00:35:37

Q: So, you were talking about construction. Built the bridge -

Cook: Okay, so I was working on building these fuel tanks. They got steel metal and you put it around and then I was on the inside of that tank, holding the thing, with the guy taking a bullet up on the outside. Outside is about 150 degrees, inside that tank, it was 300. Somebody says, we

need a volunteer. I says, me, I said, I will volunteer for anything to get the hell out of here. So I volunteered, I went to Sumay and I joined an outfit called Major Baker's 400 Thieves. Our job was to form a truck company and deliver all supplies on Guam. Which we did. That's just myself, an individual, detached duty. The other units went to building roads, building houses for the people and most important, building the B-29 fields, north and northwest fields at that time, which was a long project. And in these-

--00:35:37 - 00:36:30

Q: Big runways.

Cook: Oh, yeah, terrible, the B-29s drop over like an awful aircraft carrier. But during my time hauling these supplies, I think I carried about 400 tons of bombs to the B-29s including 500 to 700 fifty pound frags. And when I arrived at the-- I drove [unintelligible] and when I arrived out there, they had those slow picking machines called cherry-pickers that would pick a bomb up individually and lower it over. Too slow for me, because we had to move the war on. And the way I did it, I had them bombs crossways on a truck with no fuses in them and I backed the truck back as fast as I could and put the breaks on and those bomb would come out of there. Run it all down through there, cherry and coconut trees down and everything else, but I made a record of them load job run out there. And let's see- Oh, built springs, built water points. Which are quite famous here.

--00:36:31 - 00:37:17

Q: What about Quonset huts?

Cook: Quonset huts came later.

Q: You build any of those?

Cook: No, I didn't. They did. I'm still on the truck. Okay, so after I hauled these bombs and

going up somewhere around Barrigada here, I had a little [unintelligible] you go down the hill and the old [unintelligible] going so fast that GMC, you try to speed up so that you can get to the next hill. Well, a couple of my buddies are jarheads. The Marines came out of there, MPs. They stopped me. It was alright until they looked at the load that I had – bombs. So they wrote me up. I was about two, three miles over the speed limit. So they called me back to the unit. I wanted to go back to the unit. I had been at the other thing for six months.

--00:37:18 - 00:38:38

Cook: And the commanding officer was understanding, I liked that. He just gave me a good chewing out, issued me another truck. Which was good [unintelligible] and sent me to help build a B-29 field. We worked on these B-29 fields, which was many thousands of men. Not only us, but us as the 25th Seabees, we had so many different individual projects that were assigned out to us. Many with the Guamanian people. Because we had a rule among us and it was given to us aboard the ship. Respect would be shown to the Guamanian people. They are known as Chamorros. Once in a while they still say it now, and particularly to the women. And not to accidentally shoot anybody and don't shoot their water buffalos, the caribous, because the caribou is a working animal for them. But I really appreciated that briefing that we had and Pete Siguenza, who is here, he was among the 3rd Division, he's going to be the Grand Marshall of the parade tomorrow.

Q: Okay, I wanna stop tape.

[END OF SESSION]