

Robert J. Cook
Cedar City Library Veterans' History Project
Interviewed by: Bryce Goodwin & Shelly Goodwin
Date: 2006
Final Edit: August 2012

Interviewer #1:

Could we have you start by stating and spelling your full name?

Veteran:

Robert James Cook, born 3/30 of... 3/7 of 1930.

Interviewer #2:

Could you state today's date?

Veteran:

May the 6, 19...No, it's 2006.

Interviewer #1:

Where do you currently live?

Veteran:

I live out here in Cedar Valley. 3181 North Bulldog Road.

Interviewer #1:

Is this the same area where you resided when you were drafted?

Veteran:

No. I was living in Delta.

Interviewer #1:

Did you enlist or were you drafted?

Veteran:

I enlisted.

Interviewer #2:

Why did you enlist?

Veteran:

I... my mother passed away when I was 16 and I was chief cook and bottle washer, I had 4 brothers younger than me and I got to where I couldn't take it anymore, so I enlisted in the service.

Interviewer #2:

What year was that?

Veteran:

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December 1947.

Interviewer #1:

In which branch of the service did you serve?

Veteran:

The Air Force.

Interviewer #1:

Did you serve full time or in a guard or reserve unit?

Veteran:

I was full time with a 1-year extension during the war.

Interviewer #2:

So how many years did you serve?

Veteran:

Four.

Interviewer #1:

Where was your headquarters or where have you been stationed?

Veteran:

Well, I took my training in San Antonio, Texas, then went to Fort Francis E. Warren, Wyoming for training and from there I went to Long Island, New York, Homestead Air Force Base and I was there for about 10 months, then I went to Alaska and I was up there for 2 years.

Interviewer #1:

And that's all the places you went?

Veteran:

Well, from there I went to Delaware... Dover, Delaware. No, Wilmington, Delaware.

Interviewer #2:

And what were you training to do?

Veteran:

I was... took care of generators.

Interviewer #2:

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So then the Air Force trained you to do that?

Veteran:
Yes. We had radar units we made.

Interviewer #1:
During what years did you serve?

Veteran:
From December '47 to '52, January of '52. No. It was actually '51.

Interviewer #1:
What was the highest rank that you achieved during your service?

Veteran:
Sergeant.

Interviewer #1:
Sergeant, what does that do?

Veteran:
That's just a rank, sergeant. Buck Sergeant.

Interviewer #2:
So did you have men under you?

Veteran:
No. I didn't really have men under me.

Interviewer #1:
Were you decorated for your services?

Veteran:
No.

Interviewer #1:
Did you serve in combat or non-combat positions?

Veteran:
Non-combat.

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Interviewer #2:

So did you go to Korea or were you working?

Veteran:

No. I was in Alaska when that started and they froze everything, no movement whatsoever, in the station there at Anchorage. And that's where all the troops that were going to Korea... they were flying over there; they would land and re-fuel in Anchorage down and in Elmendorf. When they'd fly them back, they couldn't stop from there. They had to refuel there.

Interviewer #2:

Was there a big Air Force Base there?

Veteran:

Elmendorf.

Interviewer #1:

Did you meet any famous or historical figures during service?

Veteran:

No. Not that I can recall.

Interviewer #1:

When you reflect back on your military service, what is the most vivid memory?

Veteran:

Most vivid memory... was when I was in Alaska I used to see these guys coming in our shop; I was in an electronics shop where they repaired radars and stuff. And these guys... it was in the wintertime and when they parked their Colts, the back of them was all bleached out. I never understood why and I found out about 2 weeks later they had a radar sit up on top of the mountain. We had to have a machine what they call a tucker which is similar to the snow mobiles now that we could take up on low dawn. Now, we'd tie a little power unit that I had to go start and operate. And we went up there and set up this radar and when the guys got through where they could go down, they would turn around backwards and sit down and down they would go [motioning with his hands] and that's what would stamp their coats.

Interviewer #2:

[laughs] That's funny...

Veteran:

In fact they'd be down waiting for us when we'd get down in the...

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Interviewer #2:

So how...for a boy from little old Delta, I bet that was kind of a shock to go to all those places.
Was it?

Veteran:

It was.

Interviewer #2:

But you liked it?

Veteran:

I did. I enjoyed it.

Interviewer #2:

Wow. I just can't even imagine going all those places.

Interviewer #1:

Did you have any religious or spiritual experiences during your service?

Veteran:

No.

Interviewer #1: Were you writing anyone or... what was your family life like while you were serving? Did you have any girlfriends?

Veteran:

No.

Interviewer #2:

He wouldn't tell you if he did! Your brothers were still all home with your dad?

Veteran:

Yes.

Interviewer #2:

And they were just waiting home for you to...did you write to them?

Veteran:

I did. I would write to them. My aunt. Dad was living with his sister after I left with my brothers.

Interviewer #2:

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How old do you have to be to enlist? 18?

Veteran:
I was 17, my dad signed for me.

Interviewer #2:
That would be just a year older than him [Interviewer #1].

Interviewer #1:
What were your experiences of joy... of things that you might want to tell your grandchildren about?

Veteran:
Oh, I can't think of anything that I would want them to know about.

Interviewer #2:
What about sorrow? Anything sad that happened, something that you would want to forget maybe?

Veteran:
No.

Interviewer #1:
Describe your feeling of support from family, country, congressional, and political support.

Interviewer #2:
Did you feel like you had support in the war?

Veteran:
I did.

Interviewer #1:
Do you have any regrets about your service?

Veteran:
No.

Interviewer #1:
What would you say was the single most positive experience of your service?

Veteran:

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Oh I don't know if you could say positive... I can tell you what the most tragic thought was though.

Interviewer #1:
That's fine.

Veteran:
A friend of mine.., well, he was the only boy in his family with 4 girls and he wanted to join at the same time I did. There were five of us that went in at the same time.

Interviewer #2:
From Delta?

Veteran:
Yes. And this kid wanted to go in and his father wouldn't sign for him and so he got drafted. He was the first Utahn to get killed in Korea.

Interviewer #2:
That's sad. That's quite a group to go at a time because that's a small community; I bet that's quite a group.

Veteran:
It was.

Interviewer #1:
How has your service impacted your current political, social, or religious views?

Veteran:
Oh, my religious views have always been the same.

Interviewer #1:
What about your social or political views? Has it done anything to them?

Veteran:
No.

Interviewer #1:
If you could give advice to the service men and women of today, what would it be?

Veteran:
Make the best of everything while you're there. Look for the positive and not the negative.

Interviewer #2:

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That's good life advice.

Veteran:

It is. And if it's something you join, you joined it on your own free will, nobody asked you to or made you, so make the best of it. You have no complaints because you joined.

Interviewer #2:

Pay attention.

Interviewer #1:

How do you feel about the current conflict in Iraq?

Veteran:

Well, I don't need to give a notion about that. I think it's all political and I can see why they need them over there because I have some friends over there.

Interviewer #2:

You do? It's hard now, isn't it?

Veteran:

It is.

Interviewer #2:

What do you think something that your service has taught you that you didn't learn in Delta?

Veteran:

How to get along with people.

Interviewer #2:

From all walks of life I'm sure.

Veteran:

Oh yes. I had never seen a colored person until I went in the service.

Interviewer #2:

And you had... they had some there?

Veteran:

I did. I had quite a few. I had some friends too.

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Interviewer #1:
Well, thanks for your time. Thanks for coming.

Interviewer #2:
Is there anything you want to add?

Veteran:
No.

Interviewer #1: Okay. Thank you.

Interviewer #2: That's perfect.