

Mr. William (Bill) Cooper
Narrator

Interviewed by the
Baldwinsville Messenger and the Baldwinsville Public Library
1994

Beginning discussion about the photos Bill brought to the interview:

Bill Cooper (BC): We were under attack a couple of times. I have the POD in the back here, I can show you where that is, you can hang on to this, but I don't want this lost. This is our crew, and that was me there.

Interview begins:

Interviewer (I): Talking to Bill Cooper here, who is sharing some of his Korean War photos. Some Korean memories here from the USS Gilbert Islands, from the trip you were stationed on. (showing photo of crew)

I: Are you in this picture?

BC: Yes, right here in the middle. This is a POD you might be interested in. Here, it has information from the base when we were under missile attack and we didn't have one that I did not find.I misplaced. Battle station...I haven't looked it over in years. I don't recall. This is from the seal...departure....(showing and flipping through memorabilia)

I: How long were you there total in Korea?

BC: Probably over a period of time of four to five months, not directly in Korea, now we were like I said board ship, we were in the area, of course you go into Yokohama at that time, to drop off some jets so we were in the Yokohama, Kuzju and Natsucki ? area for a period of time, and then we came back across.

I: What was your mission while you were there?

BC: We were ship service personnel. We took care of ships supplies and things like that, like a supply department.

I: Sending things back and forth?

Well, yes for the ships more so, of course we had to department and service all our personnel aboard ship, we did it all on our own.

I: Were you from this area when you went over?

BC: Well yes I was born near Baldwinsville. I was born in 1931.

I: Were you drafted?

BC: No I enlisted in the Navy with a gentleman by the name of Stan Trexler. He was a Korean person also. He was aboard a DD/DE? Then I stayed with the Navy for 4 years, then I got out and I went with the Navy Resale System which is a part of the PX and DX of the army and navy. We serviced all navy personnel and marines. I stayed with them for 36 years. I was gone from here for about forty years. I came back about five years ago.

I: Did you have family back here the whole time?

BC: No, I was married to a Newfoundland girl. In fact, next month I'm going to visit my daughter and grandchildren in Newfoundland. That's it, no family here. Except my folks are here, my mom and dad, sister and her children. This has been my home my whole life. That's why I come back to freeze!

I: You probably traveled around the world for about forty years.

Oh yes, when I was in the Navy Resale System I covered every place from, I lived in Europe for a few years, was in Newfoundland for quite a few years and then I lived in all corners of the States: Seattle, Bremerton Washington, Florida, and Europe Spain for some year. Then when I came back I was in the main office a specialist out of New York. I traveled all over the world because I covered our entire department. I covered from the Philippines to Japan, carban muna?, Australia - Several places.

I: You started out during Korea?

BC: Right, that was about 1951.

I: You were about 20 years old?

BC: Yeah, I was 19 at the time

I: Had you ever been on a ship before then?

BC: No I couldn't even find it. I went into Philadelphia to find it and I looked all over for it. And I finally asked somebody where the ship was. He said "It's right there!". I look up and kept looking up and there it was. I never had seen anything like that in my life. Of course, I was a hick boy from Baldwinsville who never had seen a ship of that size. It was bigger than that building of course (pointing). I wasn't looking for something that large. I was looking for a canoe or row boat

I: How many men were on this boat?

BC: About 2,000 was the main crew. Main crew had about 3 or 4. We had a lot of planes on board.

I: Were there times when it was rough in battle at all?

This POD was under missile attack and we did have one other loss that was bad, but we had a hurricane also. It was Macavasia? Cape Hatteras? We were hitting about a 30 or 40 roll with an aircraft carrier that was a lot (foot high waves). It was rough, that was the roughest I'd see it as far as sea was concerned. Not as far as battle. That was the roughest seas I ever saw.

I: Did you adjust to life on the seas easily?

BC: Oh yes, not bad, not bad. I was only sick once but that was during the hurricane, and everyone was sick then.

I: You managed to come through it without any injuries?

BC: Oh yes, we had a close call. We had miss fire. One time we were in battle and a shell jammed in. 1st class cutter? Smate? was there at the time. I hollered "jam", he came right to us and we both scooted and got up. We were below the flight deck, what they call the cat walk and

we were on twin 40's. If another shell gone in the chamber it would have blow us all up inside the ship. I haven't got too much madness - from old age, that's all.

I: Ok Bill I'll let you get going here.

(Discussing returning photos)

Thanks.

BC: Nice to meet you.