

**Carl D. Cooke
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
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Interviewers**

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Colonie, New York**

Q: Could you tell us your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

CC: Yes, my full name is Carl Douglas Cooke. My date of birth is March 3, 1945. And my place of birth is Sydney, NY.

Q: Okay, what was your educational background prior to entering the service?

CC: I had a two year degree and a year additional in another college.

Q: Okay, did you enlist or were you drafted?

CC: I enlisted

Q: In what year?

CC: Um, 1969.

Q: And you served until what year?

CC: 1973.

Q: You enlisted in the Navy. Why did you pick the Navy?

CC: Because I was partially colorblind. I originally wanted to go into the Air Force but they couldn't take me. Um, I don't think I had any particular reason. I probably could've been swayed because my uncle was in the Navy. At this time, I don't remember. But, maybe that was a possibility.

Q: Where did you go for your basic training?

CC: Great Lakes, Illinois.

Q: How long was your training?

CC: About seven to eight weeks.

Q: And did you get any specialty training at all?

CC: Not any specialty, it was just disciplining and indoctrination. Um, getting you to work with each other as a team, and focusing you are military and you're expected to act and look the part.

Q: Ok, where did you go after Great Lakes?

CC: I went through storekeeper school at San Diego, California for about ten weeks.

Q: Ok, tell your story, if you want to.

CC: Storekeeping in the Navy is involved in everything from issuing repair parts, consumables, to financial records. As far as schooling goes, where would you like me to go from there?

I: Well, just tell us where you went and some things you recall.

CC: Well, after about ten a storekeeper school, I went home for a couple weeks to spend time with family. And then, I went to my first ship which was the Robert A. Owens (DD-823) in Norfolk, Virginia. And when I got there, my ship was out to sea down in I believe it was "Rosie Roads", I guess they call it "Gitmo", which was a training exercise. So I spent ten days T.A.D aboard Shenandoah, which is a destroyer tender. During that ten days, I was pretty much cleaning the [unclear] and whatever they wanted me to do. I wasn't in my rig, but it was good training and good experience. And, it was my first time in shipboard duty and then my ship came in. That was in sometime in October. I was on my ship for three months. And storekeepers became [unclear] and they needed storekeepers to go to ships going to Vietnam. So I was transferred to the USS Wallace L. Lind (DD-703), also called the Jolly Wally, and we went through the Panama Canal and that was quite a thrill! I really enjoyed that. We were ported out of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Q: Did you cross the Equator?

CC: No. We came within ten degrees of it, but didn't cross it. In the South Pacific, we did cross the International Date Line. We got a card, which I don't have. I don't know where it is. I guess because we crossed the International Date Line we got a card. I heard about people who did. But we missed by ten degrees. It was mighty hot down there in the Panama Canal zone, but we didn't cross it.

Q: Okay, so you were stationed of Vietnam?

CC: Stationed out of [Pearl Harbor] Pearl. We had two functions there. We were [unclear] support activity off the coast of Vietnam and we guarded the carriers. I can't remember which ones. We left Pearl and began our adventure towards [Vietnam] Nam. We stopped in Guam and Midway. Then we stopped at Subic Bay, Philippines to undergo changes to make us more ready for activities off the coast in Nam.

Q: What kind of changes?

CC: I can't tell you because I don't know. I couldn't tell you anyway, but I was the storekeeper. I can remember the ship. Normally, we had a crew of maybe two-hundred and when we went to Nam, we had a crew of about two-hundred and eighty. Communications crew in the center of the center, about mid-ship, top-deck. And, I guess they were top secret handling communication traffic. We met our... she was originally set keel in 1944. She pulled into Tokyo Bay at the surrender victory in Japan during World War II. So that was her first activity. She had a lot of activity in the Korean War. And when I came aboard her, she was about twenty-nine years old. And she survived through all of that.

Q: Did you see any fire missions?

CC: Yes. We were day and night support activity. During the day, we had three five inch three-eighths, we supported allied troops in Vietnam. At night, we supplied

elimination for allied troops again. I do know we let off some brass as we came into Subic Bay. We sat across from a ship hospital afloat. I think it was Hope or something like that we were across from. Fortunately, we were never shot at. Our sister ship unfortunately received some defective [ammunition] ammo. My general quarters station... I was part of the handling crew of one of the gun mounts. They got defective ammo and it blew up the gun mount and killed about ten sailors. God is good, he kept me alive.

Q: How long were you stationed off Vietnam?

CC: I'd say we were there about three months.

Q: Did you ever go to port?

CC: Yes, we went to Japan. We had time there. We stationed ship in Honk Kong for ten days. Those two ports... we had time for rest and relaxation.

Q: You were on duty until '73 then?

CC: Active. I was active until February of '73. At that time, I got [unclear], I was able to get out. I got out at that time.

Q: Now, you mentioned you were in the [Gulf War] Gulf, or Desert Storm?

CC: I was in Desert Storm. After twelve to thirteen years of broken service, I went back in the Navy.

Q: Okay, what years was that?

CC: It was in 1985 until August 2001. I got my twenty years in.

Q: Why did you decide to go back in?

CC: My job at the time wasn't enough to support my family so that was my primary reason. It was more money into the home.

Q: What was your assignment between '85 and 2001?

CC: I was a storekeeper. I was an E5 when I was active duty and they allowed me to come back in as an E5. I was able to make E6 before I was separated from reserved duty.

Q: What was your ship assignments?

CC: Well, I was a Seabee in my last tour. Except the first two months, I was [unclear] most of all my sixteen years, reserves I was a Seabee. And pretty much we ordered uniforms and publications. For five years, we spent fly away missions out of Schenectady County Airport for the Air Force. In those five years, we renovated a lot of their hangers at Otis Air Force Base for them. I was in charge of, we called them kits, tools. That was a really good duty there. With a Seabees... every other year we spent at Camp Lejeune and we got some military training there. I was a squadron leader also with them. Many of the times we went out on projects, either on weekend duty, which was once a month, or two weeks of duty. I enjoyed my [unclear], I enjoyed more just going on projects if they needed someone to jump on a roof or something like that to work on roofing or whatever. It gave me an opportunity on

whatever they were doing. If they needed someone with a strong back or a willingness to work, it gave me opportunity to work in other aspects of my [unclear]. I also felt I could take it home. If I had some work to be done at home, even if I couldn't do the work myself, if somebody came and did the work, I would be hopefully intelligent enough to know what I was getting involved in. Mechanics has always been an adventure for me. It gave me an opportunity to learn various tools not only with the store keeping, but also working with the Seabees. I was always awed. Sixteen years with the Seabees because many of these people were self-employed in their own practices and had their own businesses so, the craftsmanship and pride they had in their work. In fact, nothing against being in the field, but if I had to do it over again, I would put my twenty years as a Seabee. I really enjoyed being a Seabee.

Q: How do you think your time in the service has effected your life?

CC: I think, as Uncle Joe says, and I am trying to say this with truthfulness and honesty. I came from an all-white community, no minorities. And it was the opportunity whether it was a shipmate, or working with a Seabee on a project, getting to know other cultures and I think, hopefully, this made a better person. I think with all services not just the Navy, it was an opportunity. You know, you work as a team. If one of the chains broke and I can think of certain instances in the active Navy, that if you were unable to do your part, it could hurt you, in a time of war or a time pf piece.

Q: Have you stayed in contact with anyone you served with at all?

CC: I tried to. But unfortunately because of logistics. I was originally from the east coast in the active Navy, and went to the west coast with the reserves. I tried to stay in contact. I went out there a couple times. Again, because of a family situations and all, it's sometimes difficult. I do get a retired newsletter at the quarterly, and I've been looking. I missed one time, I had a chance to go to reunion for one ship I was on the, USS Wallace L. Lind (DD-703) but I couldn't go. I wasn't able because of a family situation. I haven't seen any reunions, so.

Q: Well, thank you very much!

CC: You're welcome!