

**Warren E. Cook
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on February 29, 2006
Delmar residence)
Delmar, New York**

Interviewer: This is an interview at Delmar place residence, Delmar NY. It is the 28th of February 20106. It is 1 pm. Interviewers are Wayne Clark and Michael Russert. Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

Cook: My full name is Warren Edward Cook, born in Brocton, Massachusetts, on June 21st 1926.

Interviewer: What was your educational background prior to entering service?

Cook: I enlisted in the US Naval Reserve in January of my senior year in high school after working the previous summer in the inter bottoms of Wasps, I went back to high school and was one of the few males left in my class because the rest had either been drafted or had joined. Three of us entered the V5 program in our senior year. Our first formal orders were to return to high school and graduate in the top third of our class, which was no problem because there was not that many people left anyways. I graduated on a Friday night, and I was on active duty Monday morning.

Interviewer: Could you tell us working on the Wasp. What did you doing working on the Wasp?

Cook: I was a welder.

Interviewer: Between your Junior and Senior year of high school?

Cook: Yes. The year before I worked at a tack factory which was didn't contribute to the war effort. But the Japanese had already sunk the Wasps and we were building the second Wasp which they ultimately sunk that one too. If you were over six-foot-tall, you were assigned to the inner bottoms. Inter bottoms was welding aluminum. Two foot by two foot by four foot plates in the inter bottoms, we welded all day. Twice a day they would come out to see all the midgets running around on the flight deck, they didn't have to go down in the inter bottoms. That whole summer between my junior and senior year was welding in the inter bottoms.

Interviewers: Where did you learn how to weld?

Cook: They taught me. They spent about twenty or thirty minutes teaching me.

Interviewers: Where was this? In the Navy Yard in Boston?

Cook: Quincy Massachusetts. I don't remember the name of the company but it was one of the big steel company's in Quincy. There were four or five ships being built there at that time.

Interviewers: How many hours a week did you work?

Cook: I don't recall. We lived about 20-25 miles south of there. Four or five of us carpoled. I remember even in the summer time it was still dark when I got there and I left at night it was light enough. I must have worked at least ten hours. It was nothing to work long hours back when there was a war.

Interviewers: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Cook: Yes! In bed. Sunday morning, December 7th.

Interviewers: How did you hear it?

Cook: Radio because we didn't have televisions.

Interviewers: What was your reaction?

Cook: I was probably around 15 or 16 years old. How much reaction can you expect from someone at the age? I was mad and I am still mad about it. All the things we do for those nice people and they complain because we put them in a storage cap for a couple of months. They were the ones that attacked us, we didn't attack them.

Interviewers: Why did you pick the Navy when you enlisted?

Cook: This is war time as you know, and the various services were just like the other day. It's one competing with the other. The Navy would come and stop at the high school and speak this and then the Coast Guard would come. This was the US Naval Air Force because back in the day the Navy had an Air Force and so did the army so I joined the Air Force because one of the people from the Air Force Reserve to the high school. The principal would call an assembly and you would listen to the person. His pitch made more sense to me than others. There was three of us. We had seen this persons' pitch about six months ago, but you would see a pitch about once a month. We were young, we were singers, and we were on our way to war.

Interviewers: When did you go into the Navy?

Cook: January 20th 1942

Interviewers: Where did you go for basic training? You were in the V5's correct?

Cook: Yes, but they put us in with the V12's. They put us in with guys like Johnny Caston, Jack Lemon, and a bunch of people you wouldn't know but they gravitated towards that. V12 was just officer training. We called it ROTC. We were in there for a period of time, then we went to flight school.

Interviewers: Where did you go for this program?

Cook: Harvard University. It was about 25 miles away from my home.

Interviewers: How long were you in the program?

Cook: About eight years. I was released to inactive duty after a couple of years.

Interviewers: Where did you go after Harvard?

Cook: A lot of places. Brooklyn, New York; Fort Worth, Texas; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; and Pensacola. By that time, we had hit the Japanese with the second of the two bombs. Virtually all of our instructors were “fleet men” they had been in the fleet they could’ve come out on the point but they came out of Louisville. The minute we dropped the second bomb, all of our instructors were mustered out. There was nothing for us to do so they sent us to Norfolk, Virginia and we were released to re-inactive duty. I came home, got married, had a family and seven or eight years later, I got my honorable dispatch.

Interviewers: How did you feel when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bombs?

Cook: I didn’t know anything about it and didn’t know what it was. We heard about it, we read about it, and we accepted it. We were in the service, and we accepted what was given to us. We had no feelings.

Interviewers: How did you feel when you heard about the end of the war?

Cook: I don’t recall there being an end to the war. I’m still fighting the war!

Interviewers: Did you have any feelings when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

Cook: Yes, but that was earlier, about a year or two earlier than what we just talked about. I was at Harvard University when he died in April.

Interviewers: You mentioned you developed a friendship with Jack Lemon.

Cook: I did not develop a friendship with him. I said that there were people like him and Johnny. I did have a friendship with him but not a close personal friendship. It was more of a “hi, how are you?” and for the length of time we were together we were together.

Interviewers: You said that one experience you remember was being hospitalized for the mumps.

Cook: It is hardly worth remembering. Almost every male on the planet has had the mumps at one time or the other. It was brought up the other day when I talked with the other interviewers.

Interviewers: You wrote about how you snuck out to go to a Regimental Ball.

Cook: The one thing adult males have to avoid, for procreation purposes is the mumps. And I was one of those people and we were put in “sick bay”. There was high ranked officer in charge of sick bay and we developed a friendship and I was only about 25 miles away from home and I had my fiancé at home and I tried to get home on weekends when I could. This particular weekend coming up was the Regimental Ball. It was for all of the Naval forces even around Harbor Square. My girlfriend was going to come to the Regimental Ball with me, but I was not supposed to leave the hospital. I snuck out and I took one of the trams out to Brocton, Massachusetts, and then back in with my girlfriend and we went to the Regimental Ball. It was still Naval controlled and the guard

on duty was Jack Lemon. We talked and Jack made it possible for me and my girlfriend to stay because I was still supposed to be in my bed.

Interviewers: Are there any other stories you remember while you were in the service?

Cook: I remember a lot of them but you don't want to hear any of them (laughter).

Interviewers: Tell us about one or two of them that you think might be interesting.

Cook: I don't think they would be interesting to anyone else. I was just another guy at the time. I was 16/17/18 years old, caught up in the war effort. My mother and father were both in war work. My girlfriend was in business college. Everywhere I went there was at least a couple of stories but you don't want to hear them. I got to see a good part of the country.

Interviewers: Did you ever get to go to any USO shows?

Cook: Yes, but not the ones you are thinking of. Wherever we went the people were very very courteous and very friendly. The pleasantest people in the world then were in Fort Worth, Texas. We were up on Eagle Mountain, where there was an air strip, and our sole duty at the time, besides learning about air craft, was to care for the planes being ferried in from the west coast to the east coast and vice versa. We met a lot of people, and there were not many of us. There was maybe 30/40/50 of us sailors there. We called ourselves "swab jockeys". We just about controlled Fort Worth. Everybody loved us. The first day we got the word that the navy had taken over in Audincourt, we had no barracks. They took over there and they put all the beds up and put us in metal bunks. We got there, took a shower, cleaned up, and went out on the sidewalk. Dallas was one way, Fort Worth was another way. We would go back and forth to see which way we wanted to go. There was only four of us. Finally, we saw a blue Buick. There were not a lot of cars on the road at this time because of gas rationing. Buicks took a lot of gas. This powder blue Buick pulled up. Four of us, me and the guys, got in. He found out who we were, where we were from. He really was a delightful man. He drove us right up to the Hotel Texas. The only hotel in Fort Worth, the doorman came out, as if he was going to park his car. He said "take these four men and give them a nice seat and show and give them whatever they want for dinner. Put it on my bill." We saluted him and away he went. That was my first impression of Texas. The Texas people were good to me. The converse of that is Dallas. When we went to Dallas, nobody like soldiers. Dallas is loaded with thousands and thousands and thousands of soldiers. Everywhere they went they were stumped on. People spat upon them. They couldn't get a good seat at the bar, in a restaurant. The people didn't like the soldiers. The reason for that was the reverse of us. There was only a few of us and everybody loved us. Dallas was the same thing but when we were marched out to Norfolk, Virginia, that was the worst place I had every been in my life. It was all sailors. We never treated worse by our own people than we were in Norfolk, Virginia. There was a difference in cities. Both were about the same size between Fort Worth and Norfolk. On the other hand, a soldier in Norfolk was treated royally.

Interviewers: When were you discharged?

Cook: I don't remember. I was discharged in '49. If I recall I had about 8 years of government service. They only paid me for the first couple of years.

Interviewers: After you got out did you ever take advantage of the GI Bill?

Cook: Not really. I had a couple attempts at it but no. By that time I was married.

Interviewers: Did you take advantage of the 52-20 clause? 20 dollars a week for 52 weeks. It was like an unemployment insurance.

Cook: No. I will tell you one thing I did take advantage of. I bought a house. The government guaranteed the first \$4000 of the mortgage. If I paid it all on time for the first year, they would write me a check for 4% of the mortgage. That was a gift. That was the nicest and the only thing that I can recall that the government has done for me in terms of money.

Interviewers: Did you ever join any government organizations?

Cook: Lots of them. I've lived all over the northeast. I've been in the VFW, the Legion, etc. I was never active in any of them.

Interviewers: Did you every stay in contact with anyone that was in the service with you?

Cook: No. I think about several of them not frequently but occasionally. Two guys I met with within in the first couple of years. We had things to do and we did not keep in touch. One was in Arlington, Massachusetts. The other was in Buffalo, New York.

Interviewers: Did you think your time in the service had an effect on your life?

Cook: It definitely had an impact on my life. I don't know how because I can't predict my life if I hadn't gone in the service but yes. It had a profound effect on my life.

Interviewers: Could you name an example?

Cook: I can't. I don't know what it would have been like if I hadn't been in the service. I will tell you that I would have hated to be a stay at home. Feelings were very high in those days. The Kennedy family lived not too far from me and not one of them served for even 20 minutes. There was a difference in what when on in those days. The politicians got their fair way out, they didn't have to go to the war.

Interviewers: Thank you very much for your interview!

Cook: You are welcome!