

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Frank E. Cook

Date of Interview: February 1, 2013

National Museum of the Pacific War

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with Mr. Frank E. Cook

Interview in progress.

Mark Cunningham: This is Mark Cunningham. Today is February 1, 2013. I..I'm doing an interview with Mr. Robert L. Cook and Mr. Cook is going to be speaking for his deceased brother, Frank E. Cook, who was...killed in action in the Pacific during World War II. This interview is taking place in the...State of Texas, Houston, Texas. The address is 2905 Mid Lane. This review...or this interview is in support of the Nimitz Foundation and Research Center, archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Okay, Mr. Cook, here we go again.

Mr. Cook: Alright.

Mark Cunningham: Alright. I want to go back a little bit and focus on...uh, follow-up on...on...your...your family.

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: I read through the notes last night and I saw that...your father died at a very early age in 1932.

Mr. Cook: Right; he...he was...

Mark Cunningham: And he...he left behind five sons ranging in age from...ten to fifteen, is that right...or sixteen?

Mr. Cook: No, a range from...

Mark Cunningham: Your...your oldest brother, at the death of your father?

Mr. Cook: Oh well, no, the oldest brother was...Lawrence (sp?)...(pause)...Lawrence and then...actually Lawrence was John and then Rob ...uh, Raymond and then...uh, Frank and then me...

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: ...and then another.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, now the...the...and...it...it struck me...your mother was left with five sons to put through Rice University.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: Now how did she do that?

Mr. Cook: Well, it got to...remember something really interesting. Rice...Rice University was free.

Mark Cunningham: Now, you mentioned that yesterday and I did...I had no idea...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...what...

Mr. Cook: See, William Lawrence, no, the...the man had created...(unintelligible) the William Lawrence Cook, not William Lawrence Cook, but...created the...the...Raymond...uh, created...Richard...

Mark Cunningham: Rice?

Mr. Cook: Rice...the school...Rice, and he stated that he wanted a...and...he wanted a...uh, university in Houston for boys.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, it was all male at the time then, right?

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And...it was free. He was trying to...to get the boys...educated, and it didn't cost us a penny.

Mark Cunningham: Wow! And your older brother...the oldest was Lawrence, right?

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: Is that the one that you...that...that...I...he wrote you a letter, he...he signed it "Lawnie"?

Mr. Cook: I don't recall that.

Mark Cunningham: Well, one of the letters...that was in here, uh, (looking through letters)...it was written after Frank was killed, and...Lawnie?

Mr. Cook: Uh, boy, that's weird!

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: I...I don't recall that...about...signing, but that's possible what he did.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, and where was...okay, Lawrence went in...was...he was the oldest; he'd graduated and he was out working, is that right? And he...

Mr. Cook: No...

Mark Cunningham: ...he went into the Navy?

Mr. Cook: Yeah. No, what he did...he'd gotten into the...uh, in...he got into the Navy well before the war.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And he was a...uh, Navy...intellectual, not intellectual, but...

Mark Cunningham: Intelligence?

Mr. Cook: ...Intelligence, and he wanted to...uh, he...he was trained as a lawyer.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And so, he wanted...uh, he...wanted to be...uh, (pounding sound)...well, we've said it once.

Mark Cunningham: Intelligent Officer?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, he was an Intelligence Officer.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. Okay, now how about the next brother; which one was he?

Mr. Cook: John.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, John.

Mr. Cook: He was practicing...uh, naval...head of legal practice, and...

Mark Cunningham: Okay, and he was also Navy?

Mr. Cook: Well now, he was definitely he was Navy when the war came, uh, but he wasn't...he wasn't like...Lawrence. I mean, Lawrence was in the...uh, in...Intelligence of the Navy, uh, before...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: ...working.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, but what'd John do?

Mr. Cook: John...(pause)...John, Frank and myself and Raymond lived at Mother's house.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And Raymond was highly intellectual; I mean, he had a real brain and...and he said, "I want to learn; I know it's (unintelligible)...I want to learn what...what...war is all about." And so he got into...uh, what...what is the Army...?

Mark Cunningham: Okay, so he was the Army guy?

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: Raymond was the Army guy?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, and so he was the...first that volunteered to get in...(unintelligible words) aside. Raymond wanted to be in the...what...what is the...

Mark Cunningham: Infantry?

Mr. Cook: No, the...

Mark Cunningham: Tanks?

Mr. Cook: No, they're...what's the name of the...the organization that's everywhere...that...

Mark Cunningham: I don't know, but let's...let's move on.

Mr. Cook: Anyway, he...he volunteered and got out of practicing, uh, law, and got into the...I'm going to say (pounding sound). Anyway, he got into the place...guard...guard.

Mark Cunningham: National Guard?

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, alright.

Mr. Cook: He got into the National Guard, and he went out and they had to practice marching...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: ...so on and so forth.

Mark Cunningham: So, he...he really got into the...he got...did he...did he see action?

Mr. Cook: Well, there was no action because he got in before...before...there was any war.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. But he...he was in during the war, wasn't he?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, now what he said was, "I want to...I want to know what war is all about," and so he got in before the war started. And he got into the National Guard and he got into where the...marched...to practice.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And he was...uh, very smart. And...(throat clearing) he ended up...a Colonel and he was instructing people and so on and so forth, but that was after the war started. He...he was just a very smart man. And...he got in first. I got in second (scratching sounds). Then...I may have told you this. The Navy...I was in the Nav...in the...I was in the...at Rice and...the Navy sent...our Captain of the Navy from New York, uh, New Orleans...over and he put a...notice up on...onboard saying, "If you have a (unintelligible)...if you are a...taking engineering, and if you're a...if your grades are good, uh, we will make you a...a Naval Officer...if...if...

Other Person: If your grades are good enough?

Mark Cunningham: If you pass?

Mr. Cook: Uh, yeah, and...

Mark Cunningham: With all the requirements?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, if...if you're a...(unintelligible) grades are good enough, well you will be a Naval Officer.

Mark Cunningham: Alright. Okay, now this list of things you gave me here...this is all the places that you served, is that correct?

Mr. Cook: I don't know. Uh, my gentleman friend here did that.

Mark Cunningham: This is all the places that he served?

Other Person: Yes sir.

Mark Cunningham: And that's...

Mr. Cook: Read them.

Mark Cunningham: Alright. Mare Island...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...from...you were there...for almost a year.

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: And then...Albany?

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: San Francisco?

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: USS Man...Mantuck [s/b USS Montauk ?]?

Mr. Cook: I never heard of that.

Other Person: I think he was...you would inspect and be onboard some...some ships that were...just being built for a few months until they were ready to go.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, and so...then you...yeah, here's some USS Wake Island.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: So, basically, you were...were on these ships working on them?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, oh checking.

Mark Cunningham: And...checking them, and you were using your mechanical engineering background. That's the reason you were doing this then?

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, and were these ships that had been damaged and...or they were just...

Mr. Cook: They were being built.

Mark Cunningham: They were being built, okay. Now another interesting thing. I looked up and...along Mare Island...that was a big submarine...submarine area, wasn't it?

Mr. Cook: (Chuckles), yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Did you work on any submarines?

Mr. Cook: No, they were...that place was a big place that had a submarine in that area and (unintelligible) and I was along the...I wish I could talk...the...god damn it! There was the...the...(pause) the (unintelligible)...gosh all mighty!

Mark Cunningham: Okay, that's...that's okay. Let's...let's go on. But, I mean, you were all over the place.

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Mark Cunningham: From 1943...August...uh, April 15th, 1943...wow! Training Command, Eleventh Naval District, US Herald of Moring, Pearl Harbor, USS Cebu, and...you did not get out of the service till...June...uh, June 13, 1946.

Mr. Cook: Uh...

Mark Cunningham: Three...three years. Three years. Uh, okay, that's kind of what...I...this will go in your file.

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Mark Cunningham: Okay, we got that down, good! Now, let's talk about...let's talk about Frank.

Mr. Cook: Okay.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, so the five brothers are Lawrence, Raymond, John, Frank and...and Bob.

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. Alright, I read a lot about Frank in your...in your notes.

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: And he was...kind of...a...did I...did I pick up that he was kind of rebellious or...?

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...he's not...not the studying type? He had other things...

Mr. Cook: No, he was not the studying type.

Mark Cunningham: Had other things on his mind?

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: I'm related to him.

Mr. Cook: Yeah (laughter).

Mark Cunningham: (Laughter)

Mr. Cook: No, he...he...he and I were very close together; we lived in the...same room for...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: ...our entire life. And...he was born a year older than I, and we were the same big, big room...all our lives. And...he...had Mother's eyes, and...he would...he would love to go out with friends, and he just...

Mark Cunningham: A social guy.

Mr. Cook: ...yeah. He...he was a social guy.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And he...he hated to study.

Mark Cunningham: (Chuckle)

Mr. Cook: And...and I was the study type.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And so...I...I would...stay at home and do my work, and he'd go out with friends and go...go somewhere.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And so, that was the way we were...attitudinal...the...way we were looking.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, did he go into the service before or after you?

Mr. Cook: No, he went in after.

Mark Cunningham: After?

Mr. Cook: Yeah. And I...I went in...because I wanted to...relate...to the note that the...Navy had put on there...that I could be come an Officer.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And so, I...I was...I...I signed up for that. There were six of us at Rice that had signed up for that.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And I was one of them.

Mark Cunningham: Right. And...so now, when...when...I think when...what I read in here...when Frank went in, his...one of his first assignments...he went to Panama.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: And it sounded like he felt bad about being in a big...it must have been a...party place or...

Mr. Cook: At...at Panama?

Mark Cunningham: Uh huh.

Mr. Cook: No, he was...

Mark Cunningham: He wasn't satisfied with what he was doing, right?

Mr. Cook: Well...in two ways. Uh, he was on a...a patrol boat guarding...uh, that end of the canal.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And he loved his work; I mean, he...he called it a, you know, a (unintelligible) it was a...wonderful place. He'd go around on his boat, everything was wonderful. But...he questioned whether he was...uh, doing his job...in the...in the war...because he was screwing around in a patrol boat.

Mark Cunningham: Alright.

Mr. Cook: And so, uh, he...that...that got to him, and so, uh, the...what finally happened...the...you'd have to read...

Mark Cunningham: Well, I did. They...he...he...when they...when they asked for volunteers for the...I guess one of...what I read was one of the officers got sick, had to leave that...and they needed an officer for PT boat and he volunteered for it.

Mr. Cook: That's exactly what happened. He...he was stationed...at...uh...on this patrol boat, and what came...a...now where was I...(pause)...

Mark Cunningham: You think...trying to think of the ship that came in?

Mr. Cook: No, I'm trying to think of when he...when...no, he...(papers rustling)...when did he...that's...god damn it, I can't remember. Uh...does it say?

Mark Cunningham: Well, it says here, "Early in 1943, the Second Section of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron 10...early in 1943 they were passing through the Panama in route to...Noumea in the southwest Pacific."

Mr. Cook: Now I got it; I got it.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: He was...just like I said he...he was in the Navy; he was on patrol; he was...guarding the...the...patrol in, I mean, the...the...the...they were guarding the...well...

Mark Cunningham: The Panama Canal.

Mr. Cook: ...yeah, yeah.

Mark Cunningham: One end of the Panama Canal.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: Okay, and...a...a...a freight...a freighter...uh, was carrying...a load of
pat...of...

Mark Cunningham: PT boats?

Mr. Cook: ...yeah, coming through the canal...

Mark Cunningham: They assessed...

Mr. Cook: ...take it out to the...to the south Pacific...to the (unintelligible words)...in
the war.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: Okay, (unintelligible words).

Mark Cunningham: And that was the...that was the SS Stan Beck (sp?) Manila.

Mr. Cook: That's right! That's exactly what happened.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And he...that...came through, and...uh, one of the...officers got sick
and...they put up a...a...sign, at that time, asking for volunteers.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And...and then that's interesting psychology for Frank. He...volunteered;
he...he just started doing things in the war.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And...and...(unintelligible words) in this little boat; that was not it. He felt he'd...that he was making a mistake. But over here...now here was a guy that, I mean, here was an outfit that needed an officer, so he volunteered.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. And...low and behold...

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Mark Cunningham: ...the SS Stan Beck Manila got torpedoed.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: Way out in the Pacific.

Mark Cunningham: And they had six...PT boats on the deck, and that crew...the thing that struck me on that one...on that deal...that story when I read that, the Captain was dead drunk.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: And was worthless.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: And...that young Lieutenant took over, right?

Mr. Cook: I...I'm not aware of who took...

Mark Cunningham: Okay, that was in one of your notes.

Mr. Cook: Okay.

Mark Cunningham: But anyway, they...that thing sunk, but they saved four of those boats.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. And Frank fell and broke his toe, is that right?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, he broke his big toe.

Mark Cunningham: Right. So, he had to get...medical attention when they got...into...wherever they were going.

Mr. Cook: That's right (laughter).

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And he was put on a...uh, a how...why can't I talk? Uh, he was put on a...a...Navy (pounding sound)...

Mark Cunningham: Hospital ship?

Mr. Cook: Yeah!

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: They...put on a Navy hospital ship...until his toe got fixed. And...and then...as soon as his toe got fixed, he went out to an island...with the...

Mark Cunningham: [USS] Rendova?

Mr. Cook: Yeah. And...it was the name of the...he joined the...the...he...he joined the...(expletive).

Mark Cunningham: PT boat squadron?

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah.

Mr. Cook: It was a...

Mark Cunningham: Okay, let me get this other piece of paper here. You got this pretty good...pretty well documented here. You...you wrote all this stuff, right?

Other Person: No, it's...

Mark Cunningham: Was that you (unintelligible)?

Other Person: No sir, that was...came in from the past. (Unintelligible words) organizing it as much as we could.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Other Person: But that...all these essays were written by Mr. Cook...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Other Person: ...years...years ago.

Mark Cunningham: Right, okay. Let's see, where were we? Okay...

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Mark Cunningham: ...we...we got...he's in the hospital or he's on the...he's on the medical ship?

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, they...they patched his toe up.

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, and then at some point in time, they ended...they ended up on...on Rendova.

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. And...uh, (pause)...okay, that's where the PT boat squadrons were sent including...Squadron Nine which was the...Kennedy's group, right; that's what this says.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. And Frank got assigned to PT-170, right?

Mr. Cook: I think so.

Mark Cunningham: Okay. (Pause), and the crew on that ship that was manned by a...(pause)...it was manned by a guy named William Battle (sp?)...that you talked to; you wrote...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...you communicated with him.

Mr. Cook: He was...he was a real...nice guy; he was a...a...he was a...uh, he was a Naval officer and...and I...I just never...I called the Navy until I tried...till I could get some proper information. And I...I got his name and his location and I was able to talk to him.

Mark Cunningham: Okay, I want to get...I want to get to that in a minute, but I want to...I want to...uh, go on and...and get Frank's story on here.

Mr. Cook: Alright, hold it just a second.

Mark Cunningham: Alright, we will.

Mr. Cook: Hey, Tino!

Other Person: I got to take a leak.

Mark Cunningham: Okay (chuckle), let me cut this...let me put you on pause here.

Mr. Cook: Yeah. (recording temporarily stopped). Oh god, where is the...?

Mark Cunningham: Okay, this says...let me refresh...let me help you here. This...now his...his situation occurred a couple of...according to your notes here, it...it occurred a couple of days after the Kennedy...after Kennedy's boat got hit.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Mark Cunningham: And Frank was...on August the 3rd, 1943.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And...and...he...he was...serving as...assistant, not assistant ...he...

Mark Cunningham: Section leader?

Mr. Cook: ...uh, officer on a PT boat and there was a group of...of boats that was out on patrol and...he was...standing on the deck, uh, as...acting as Executive Officer, and...they went...they went out on patrol near...uh, where they knew of...Jack...Jack...where they knew...I can't talk any longer.

Mark Cunningham: Knew that...where there were barges.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, where there were barges.

Mark Cunningham: The Japanese barges that were moving...across the straits.

Mr. Cook: Yep. Now what happened was...they came along...and there was a...a...island and there were barges along here and then...the PT boats came along and shot the hell out of them. Uh, and then the damned idiots of...in charge of the...the...all of the PT boats...he...he went back there and he says, "Let's take another...by...another pass at them." He turned around and he come to the back. The trouble is...that one of the...Japs pulled a...a barge out here and this guy went right in between them, and...and...

Mark Cunningham: So, they were in a big crossfire.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, and that's what got Frank.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And that's what got the guy that...caused the trouble. I mean...

Mark Cunningham: Lieu...Lieutenant Cookman (sp?) was killed instantly and Frank was mortally wounded by a twenty-five caliber slug in the stomach.

Mr. Cook: *Exactly!*

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: And...the...Lieutenant...what'd you say? The guy that was...

Mark Cunningham: Lieutenant Cookman.

Mr. Cook: ...yeah, Cookman; his whole head was blown off.

Mark Cunningham: Right and that's...

Mr. Cook: And...so he wasn't around. And...(pounding sound)...

Mark Cunningham: They limped back in, right?

Mr. Cook: Frank was...had a slug in his stomach and (pounding sound)...

Mark Cunningham: And he must have been...that...that...they said...this says that...it was a twenty-five caliber. That's a small caliber, so somebody must have been shooting a pistol or something.

Mr. Cook: No, they could shoot a...a twenty-five caliber rifle.

Mark Cunningham: Is there a twenty-five caliber rifle?

Mr. Cook: I would think so.

Mark Cunningham: I...I've never heard of one, but anyway...

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Mark Cunningham: ...that's a small caliber.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, it was.

Mark Cunningham: And...he thought he was going to be okay there for a while, right?

Mr. Cook: Well, I don't know whether that's true or not.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: Uh, he was laid out on the deck; taken into...home base and I think he was transferred to a...a hospital on...on one of the islands, and the next day he died.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And why he died is that...that...that thing that...

Mark Cunningham: Peritonitis?

Mr. Cook: Uh, is that it?

Mark Cunningham: It's...yeah, the...it went in...the bullet went into his gut and that caused some...

Mr. Cook: Yep.

Mark Cunningham: ...that's...

Mr. Cook: That...they...and they didn't have anything like we have today.

Mark Cunningham: Right. This says he was put in an Army hospital where he developed peritonitis and died...

Mr. Cook: (Unintelligible)

Mark Cunningham: ...and died on August the 5th.

Mr. Cook: Yeah. Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Now...my...the other thing that struck me in all this is...your family had a hard time finding out what happened to him, is that right?

Mr. Cook: I'm not aware of that.

Mark Cunningham: After...after you were notified of his death, you...didn't get man...many of the details, is that right?

Mr. Cook: I don't know, because he...I wasn't the one, being the youngest...

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: ...that would...information would come to me.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: I mean that...there was...Raymond and there was John and there was...all of (unintelligible), and there was Mother, and they could get the...if there was any information coming, they would get the information.

Mark Cunningham: Right. But also, it looked to me like on the stuff you gave me to read...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...a lot of this stuff you found out in...1981.

Mr. Cook: Oh yeah. Now see, what happened was...(pounding sound)...after the war was over and I was working, I was wanting to know what the hell happened.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And so, I called the United States Navy in war, uh, I mean, in Washington, and...and I talked to people in the...in the Navy, and I said, "I want to find out what happened to my brother." And they were as nice as they could be and so they started giving me information.

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: And...

Mark Cunningham: That's how you put all this together.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: But did your mother...did...did she know all the details, the circumstances of his death?

Mr. Cook: If you're talking about what I got, no.

Mark Cunningham: Alright; how about your other brothers? Did they have any of it?

Mr. Cook: (Silence)

Mark Cunningham: Didn't have a clue? I...I think that's typical of that age...that period after the war, a lot of families were like that.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Took a...took a long time to...to get the information.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: And, now I want to back up a minute. Now, when did your mother pass?

(Unintelligible words).

Mr. Cook: Around June the 5th. You've really got me.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: I don't k now; I'd have...I...I could find out.

Mark Cunningham: No, just...I was curious. What...what about...what about Frank? Now, it said here he was buried in...two or three different places, and they brought him home. Is he buried here in Houston?

Mr. Cook: Yep.

Mark Cunningham: Where?

Mr. Cook: Out at...

Other Person: At the cemetery down on '45 where the old Houston Country Club used to be. Uh, what is...

Mr. Cook: Well, where is...that big famous...?

Mark Cunningham: Is it Greenwood?

Other Person: Yeah. No...

Mr. Cook: No, not Greenwood.

Other Person: ...it's not Greenwood? Uh, it's the old...right on the bayou right next to the...where the old Houston Country Club used to be on...on '45 South.

Mr. Cook: What...what's it (unintelligible words)...so famous. Uh, (unintelligible), uh, I mean...

Mark Cunningham: I'm not, well I'm not a Houston native so...

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Other Person: Well, I can pull it up for you, that's easy.

Mark Cunningham: That's...that's okay; I was just...I was just curious.

Mr. Cook: That's right.

Other Person: Yes, we've been there a few times, and he has...there...there's a huge lot for the Cooks and his brother is buried there, and we have the empty spot for him...right next to his brother.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: Uh, they...

Mark Cunningham: So, it's your family plot then?

Mr. Cook: Uh, it's ours.

Mark Cunningham: Cook family plot.

Mr. Cook: See, we...we had to get to...uh, our father a place and so that was it.

Mark Cunningham: Okay.

Mr. Cook: So...

Mark Cunningham: Well, alright. Now, let's see, uh, (pause)...oh, the other thing...that jumped out at me here...is...uh, you met one of the survivors of that...

Mr. Cook: Oh...

Mark Cunningham: ...of the...of the squadron...here in Houston.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: Alright.

Mr. Cook: That was...that was real interesting. What...

Mark Cunningham: I bet that was an interesting conversation, wasn't it?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, it was real interesting.

Mark Cunningham: Now, the guy was up...after we finish, I'll tell you a coincidence that...that I experienced, but...that is a coincidence. You walk into a place and all of a sudden you meet a guy...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...who you have a connection with (unintelligible) because he was on the boat that...your brother was serving on...

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: ...and got...got killed and can tell you the story firsthand.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, what happened was...uh, another nat...uh, another nephew, Peter, called me and said, "Bob, there's going to be a group of people that served in the Army, I mean, in...in war...on P...PT boats and they are on such and such...place," and he said, "it might be good for you to go out there," says, "you could find somebody that Frank knew." And so, I went out there...on Saturday and they were...waking up on Saturday morning and...oh, a

whole bunch of them roaming around and...in the lobby, and...I walked up to one of them and I said...what all I know, and he said, "You want to talk to so and so." And so, I went and talked to so and so; he was the...he was the Lieuten, I mean, he...was serving under...in the...in the boat. He was in the...in the...

Mark Cunningham: (Unintelligible words)...you got it...I think he was...the Machinist...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...Motor Machinist.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, and he...he was...he was in the boat serving.

Mark Cunningham: So, he could give you first-hand account on what happened.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, yeah.

Mark Cunningham: That's pretty neat, isn't it?

Mr. Cook: Yeah, it's damned neat.

Mark Cunningham: You...after all...but the...the amazing thing about it...it occurred in 1940...this thing happened in 1943 and you find out about it in 1981.

Mr. Cook: Yeah. Yeah. (Chuckles)

Mark Cunningham: Right.

Mr. Cook: That's the way it goes. But...there's another thing, I was very (unintelligible words) United States Navy. Because when I...I called them...long distance...uh, they were very polite and they had...good information and they gave it to me.

Mark Cunningham: Let me stop this for a minute. (Recording stopped momentarily). Okay, the only other thing I want to talk...I wanted to...okay...now...the other

thing I read in your notes is...and...really this file you gave me...there's a big Kennedy connection here. Kennedy was on Rendova at the same time your brother was. Now, from what I read, uh, one letter in here...who...was a guy named Paul Red Fay (sp?)...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...who was one of Kennedy's buddies...

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: ...and he wrote a letter to somebody telling them about...what a great guy your brother was.

Mr. Cook: Uh, I don't recall that.

Mark Cunningham: Yeah, it's right here. (Going through documents). Well, the point I'm getting to is...whether or not your brother knew Kennedy.

Mr. Cook: Oh, he was bound to.

Mark Cunningham: He...he almost had to because this letter...

Mr. Cook: They were living...they were living on the same...island.

Mark Cunningham: Right, and...let me find it.

Mr. Cook: They were living on the same island. (Looking through documents). God, I wish I could remember...remember the name of the island.

Mark Cunningham: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Cook: (Unintelligible).

Mark Cunningham: Uh hum.

Mr. Cook: (Unintelligible).

Mark Cunningham: Well, I can't find the letter; I know it's in here somewhere. But anyway, Paul Fay was...uh, was one of Kennedy's buddies. The other one he referred to was a guy named Barnie Ross.

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: And Barnie Ross was on the boat...on...on the 109 when Kennedy got killed (not killed but injured perhaps).

Mr. Cook: Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: And the other thing that's kind of interesting...the Skipper of that boat that you contacted...William Battle...

Mr. Cook: (Unintelligible).

Mark Cunningham: ...he...he made...he made reference to speaking with Kennedy who...witnessed the action your brother was in.

Mr. Cook: Yeah, and see...

Mark Cunningham: Kennedy was...trapped on the...Kennedy and his men were shipwrecked on the...on...on the island...

Mr. Cook: Right.

Mark Cunningham: ...and when your brother and his guys were out there...fighting this battle that night, they witnessed all this stuff.

Mr. Cook: Yep. Yeah.

Mark Cunningham: That...that's kind of neat, too.

Mr. Cook: Yeah. And...uh, the Navy gave me a...a...a name of an officer...what was his name? Uh, Bill...what was his name?

Other Person: I'm not sure, Mr. (unintelligible).

Mr. Cook: Anyway, he...uh, he was real nice 'cause he talked to me, and he was...he was...god damn it! (Pause), I can't remember exactly what...he was one of the...that...that Bill...that Kennedy said...uh, somewhere...(unintelligible)...uh, in...somewhere (throat clearing)...the old...Bill Bradley, no, Bill...I wish I...wish I could have my mem...memory back.

Mark Cunningham: Well, I tell you what, I think we've got...just about the gist of it.

Mr. Cook: (Laughter)

Mark Cunningham: Alright?

(end of interview)

FINAL copy
CD – #OH03877 – Mr. Frank E. Cook
Transcribed by: K. Matras
Houston, TX
August 5, 2019