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Interview No. 1654

Emmet E. Cook Sr.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Emmet E. Cook, Sr.

Interviewer: n/a

Project: Veterans History Project

Location: Santa Teresa, NM

Date of Interview: September 23, 2004

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1654

Transcriber / Summary: Patrick Driscoll

Emmet E. Cook, Sr. was born in Fort Worth, TX, on March 5, 1918; he became interested in aviation following Charles Lindberg's flight across the Atlantic, he lived near Meacham Air Field; he attended Texas A&M and majored in mechanical engineering; he was failing so he took a test for aviation cadet and attended Alan Hancock School of Aeronautics in Santa Maria, CA; he revealed that he was dismissed due to lack of facilities; he mentions he applied for the British Royal Air Force; he says he went back to Fort Worth to fly planes and got his commercial license; Mr. Cook recalls being notified in December 1941 to take a flight test for the RAF but a few days later ordered to Ellington Field, TX for bombardier training in the U.S. Army Air Corps; he recounts time in the 301st Bombardment Group in Spokane, WA flying B-17s; he says next training was at Alamogordo Air Base, NM (now Holloman Air Force Base), he recalls going to Cloudcroft to gamble; he mentions next stop was Hartford, CT to practice bomb runs and conduct anti-submarine patrols. Mr. Cook recounts flight to England; says first mission was in August 1942; he states that a month later a raid on Lille, France attacked by German fighter planes, lost two engines and two men were wounded on their B-17; he describes flying ten more missions over France before being ordered to North Africa in November 1942, operated in Mediterranean to cut off supplies to Axis forces in North Africa; Mr. Cook details his 32nd mission to bomb docks in Palermo, Sicily, blew up targets but was shot down and captured; details interrogation by Germans and missed opportunities to escape, he states training back then was poor compared to now for that. He recounts time in Stalag Luft III, where the "Great Escape" happened; he describes last hundred days of war as hell for prisoners and guards due to conditions; he mentions drawing pictures on letters, using art supplies to forge documents for escapees; he says he was liberated on April 29, 1945; he explains U.S. air raids on Germany continued, describes heavy losses but that allied production won the war; he describes forced march in freezing conditions before the end of the war due to the Germans escaping the Russians, civilians were also in the group; details journey back home after the war; he describes hospital care and being fed well on the ship home; Mr. Cook concludes by going over his time at

Dove Aircraft Inc. as a production pilot after the war; he tells a story about how a plane he flew in 1946 ended up in the War Eagles Air Museum, and how he got to fly it again fifty years later.

Length of interview 42 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a