

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewees: Ervin and Raymond Cook

Interviewer: Tom Martin

Subject: Ervin Cook, brother of David Cook, and Ervin's nephew Raymond Cook, recall David Cook who perished in the 1956 TWA United Disaster.

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Keys: 1956 TWA United Airlines Crash

TM: This is a Grand Canyon Historical Society oral history. Today is the 18th of February, 2016. We're in the house of Tom Martin and Hazel Clark, and with us today are "Erv" Ervin Cook and his nephew, Raymond Cook, Ervin Cook's wife, Janet, and Raymond Cook's wife, Christa Cook. Christa, how do you spell your last name?

CC: Last name?

TM: I'm sorry, first name.

CC: Christa—Christ with an "A." C-H-R-I-S-T-A.

TM: Thank you, and Janet?

JC: J-A-N-E-T.

TM: Okay, and Raymond?

RC: R-A-Y-M-O-N-D.

TM: And—

EC: Ervin Cook. E-R-V-I-N C-O-O-K.

TM: And Wayne Ranney is here today as well. He's the president of the Grand Canyon Historical Society. Wayne, how do you spell your last name?

WR: R-A-N-N-E-Y.

TM: Thank you, and my name is Tom Martin. Tom M-A-R-T-I-N.

TM: So Ervin, you lost your brother in the 1956 air crash between TWA and United.

EC: Right.

TM: What can you tell me about your brother?

EC: Well, when we were kids, I remember one time we were in our teens. I was probably about 12 years old. And I came home, and my mother said to me: "You know when you walk in the door, you're whistling in happy, but when your brother David walks in the door, there's a big cloud over his head, and he's gloom and doom." And the only thing—criticism—I have of my brother is he took life too seriously. That he knew exactly what he wanted to be from the time he was a little kid, a chemist, he became a chemist, and he was working for—you remember Raymond, what company?

RC: He had just finished working for [?] Chemical, and he was going on to a new position, and I'm not really sure.

EC: Yes, okay, I knew it: he did become a chemist. But, very serious guy. He was in the National Guard. And incidentally, that National Guard unit, the 129th infantry, went to [?]. And he didn't go because he'd gotten married, had two children, and he was a chemist. And those people did not go to war in [?].

TM: So how much older was Dave than you?

EC: He was born in 1918. I was born in 1921. Close to 3 years. Three years older. He did have a lot of friends. I remember when he was in his teens, there was always a bunch of teens throughout, and they were really a bunch of goofballs, but they had a good time. And he lived life at the fullest. He enjoyed being a teen. He went to college in Chicago, University of Chicago, and that's where he got his degree. And when my turn came to come to college, my dad didn't want to pay the bill, but my mother talked him into sending me off to a little college in Iowa, which is a good thing for me. Well, reason I got into that was she was so concerned about me. I get in with a bad buck. These are bad times in Chicago: Capone was in charge, there was a lot of drug stuff, just a lot of stuff going on. I worked at a drugstore, and I remember some guy getting his head shot off by one of the gangsters because they thought he was a crook, you know, some other gang. And they found out later he was just some poor guy working at a furniture store and had nothing to do with them. But anyway it was a tough bunch, and she wanted me out of it. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me. But we love David dearly, and he lived life at the fullest when he was a teen, and the folks gave him full support.

TM: How do you mean he lived life to the fullest?

EC: Well, he had a girlfriend up in Michigan. And we had a cottage up there, kind of got it by accident, and he'd only got a thousand dollars when the Depression came, he couldn't pay it back, we got the cottage [?] mortgage on it. So we started going up there because of polio, actually. Polio was a big thing in Chicago then. And there was a kid named Schmidt that lived in a [?]. That's the way he lived. And he was in the papers a lot. So it kept us out of that—the possibility of catching polio. And it turned out to be a good thing. And Dave used to come up, when he was younger, at first, and he had a girlfriend up there. And that was before he met his wife. But he had a summer romance. He knew how to live.

TM: Can you tell me a little bit about Dave meeting Raymond's mother?

EC: Well, she was, I think he met her at a dance at the [?] ballroom in the South end of Chicago. That's where I think they met. He used to go over there. I remember one time he was working at a drugstore, I was too, but he got a \$20 bill, a counterfeit bill, and he didn't know it. And so he tried to spend it at the [?] ballroom, they caught it, and he was stuck. He was out his 20 bucks. But anyway, I think that's pretty much where he met her. He loved to go dancing. He was a dancer. And I am too, so it must be something related in the family. As was her father. So, I know very little about [?]. She was a telephone operator. And there was a time after they got married she became a supervisor. And everybody thought she was such a good businesswoman, and they found out after David died that she really wasn't. You know, but we just thought, the family thought she was because she did so well career-wise—she did an excellent job. She was a lovely lady. After he died, she was to come to visit us in Missouri, when I had kids. My folks brought her. We always enjoyed her visits—lovely lady.

WR: Erv, this is Wayne asking—

EC: Yeah Wayne!

WR: Just wondering if you can relate the story, if you don't mind, when you got the news that your brother David was involved in this tragic plane crash.

EC: Well, I saw it in the paper on Saturday—it was on a Saturday. Didn't think anything of it. I knew he was out in California, but what I didn't know is that he finished his visit—he had an open ended ticket—so he had to get a seat, you know, get on a plane. Well, Thursday was full, Friday was full, he was going back to Detroit, Saturday was open. That's how he got on that flight.

WR: But you weren't [?] mentally aware that—

EC: I didn't know at all until Sunday evening, my mother called me. And she said that "Dave's been in an airplane accident." And I never connected the two. I said, "What hospital is he in? I need to send him some flowers." And she said, "He's gone." I said, "What do you mean he's gone?" She said, "He's not here anymore." [Crying.] I can't.

WR: I'm sorry.

EC: I'm sorry. I've never had this happen before.

WR: Yeah. That's alright.

EC: For all these years... I never cried at the funeral. I thought that I could accept that. But, anyway, because I'm not afraid of death myself. I'm ready for it. In the war, I was a pilot, and um—

TM: Hey Erv, can I, say something for a second?

EC: Yeah, you can ask me a question.

TM: Because we're kind of getting a little ahead here.

EC: Okay.

TM: I wanted to back up a minute. You mentioned Dave running to the National Guard.

EC: Yeah, he was a French Horn player. Excellent, number 1. They had several French Horn—he became number 1—and actually, I remember he studied for hours, played for hours, practicing. He was much better disciplined than I was that way.

TM: Did his going into the guard inspire you to go into the Air Force?

EC: No, no. When I was about 15, I saw a picture of Randolph Field in pilot training. And I told my father then, I said, "Someday, that's what I'm going to do."

TM: Is that right?

EC: Not thinking that there'd be a war and I'd be doing it. But that's kind of what I wanted to do.

TM: Did you talk to Dave about that at all?

EC: No, no, I don't think so.

TM: Were you guys close that way?

EC: No, we really weren't. Dave, when he was 18, he was 18 going on 45. He was always way ahead of himself. You know, you're wise, very smart guy. I was just an average Joe. And so, no we didn't. We got along well, but we didn't relate too well. I can remember one time when I was a kid, young kid and he was a young kid, I was about 5 years old, and I threw a tantrum to him at home—the folks were gone—and he said, "Cut that out, now!" And so anyway, he just beat the crap out of me. I decided that that didn't pay, and that was the last [?] tantrum I ever had. So, he was a good brother.

TM: Did you have any other brothers and sisters?

EC: Yeah, I had a younger brother that was born in '33, 1933.

TM: So he's 12 years younger.

EC: I might have mentioned, he turned out to be a half-brother. I found out before my mother died.

TM: He was 12 years younger than you then.

EC: Yeah.

TM: Okay, okay. And, did you play a musical instrument as well?

EC: I started playing the trombone in grade school and did for a year or two. And they changed directors, and the new director was listening and he came over, and the trombones were playing along with the clarinets, playing by ear, he said, "You're fired. We can't use you. If you're not reading the music, we don't want you." So that was the end of my trombone career.

TM: And so were you still living at home when Dave left home for college?

EC: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. And after he got out of college, where did he go from there?

EC: Well, he went to work. I don't know—I know he worked for months [?] for quite a few years. That might have been the first job, but he was with them. And that's how he got to Detroit. Started in Chicago and went to Detroit. They have, I think they have a big place in Detroit.

TM: Okay.

EC: But he was working for a different company when he died. I remember that. He'd left Montana.

TM: When you—

EC: I would like to say this about—he called home before, when he was talking to everybody, he got the flight. He said, "I've got a real big, good surprise for you. And I'll tell you when I get home." He'd think he had found another job in California.

TM: Okay.

EC: [?] [00:12:15]

TM: I just want to make sure I've got the timeline straight then. Did you complete college before you went into the service?

EC: No, I didn't. I got in two years. First, I—December 7th, I went home for Christmas. I had a year and a half. I thought I'd sign up to the Army [?]. They didn't take it in without 2 years college. And I said, "Well, but I almost got it all." And he said, "No, you gotta have two years." So he said, "Come back when you get your two years in." And the Navy guy was sitting there, he said, "We'll take you." And I said, "I don't like the idea of the base moving when I'm moving. That doesn't sound good to me. Thank you anyway." So I waited. By the time I got around, I was working, I went to hitchhiked down to Portland, Oregon, working at a pea factory that summer, after my two years. I got my draft notice there. And, by the time I had gotten it though, they had opened it up to anybody with high school. They eliminated that feature, but I signed up in that summer of '42, 1942. Signed up, and I didn't get called until the end of January. Because they were so filled up: the classes were all filled up, [?] all these guys are signed up. So I went into the service in January 29th, 1943. And I graduated from, got my wings at Seymour, Indiana, Freeman Field, November 3rd, 1943. And my folks came down from Chicago—lived in Chicago—went to the reunion—I mean, went to the the graduation.

TM: Nice, okay. And at this point then, Dave had finished college—

EC: He had lived in an apartment—Southside Chicago, Southside Chicago was nice, in those days, pretty tough now—but he lived in an apartment, had two kids, and had a nice life.

TM: Okay, and then you served overseas.

EC: Yeah, after I graduated, they ask you what you want to get into. I said 820's. I decided 820's would be a great—I found out later it wasn't the best place to be—they shipped right to a combat crew center, B26's. I wrote my mother, and I said, "Mom, they've made a terrible mistake. I'm sure that I'll get it straightened out." I didn't know then the Army put you where they wanted you. They didn't care what I wanted. I loved the B26. It was a good airplane.

TM: Where was the training center?

EC: Barksdale Field, Louisiana. It's actually a [?]. Loved it there. Oh and then my wife—I had been married. I got married in Fall of '42—I was working on an airfield in St. Joe, Missouri, putting in, working all night 12 hours a night, putting in this airfield which I landed to later years, landed at.

TM: Nice. So then after the service, you continued on in your aviation career?

EC: No, I didn't. No, later on, I joined, not the Air National Guard, just the National Guard to get the money. I needed some extra money. I always had an extra [?]. And while in there, thinking about they're looking for a pilot to fly a general route, Missouri. And I thought, you know that'd be—my career wasn't settled yet—and I thought that'd be, I just I'll finish it out with the service. So that Saturday that he had the crash, I was at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, taking a physical to get this job. They were interested in having me. And so after I learned that he had been killed in an airplane and had already been through the war, I thought I just better bow out and I'm going to stick with what I'm doing and see how that goes because really you're more danger with a small plan than you are a bigger plan. Incidentally, when I came home, I went to TWA, I got out early because they saw the war was ending, they wanted to shut out that payroll, I got out July 1st, '45, went to TWA, and they said, "Oh, we'd love to have you. What did you do in the service?" I said, "I flew B26's." They said, "We don't want you." Well, they were off base because you had emergencies, and you really were going to be better at what they were looking for was people with a lot of hours: air transport. Well, you're just sitting there bored to death anyways. But I ended up with a [?—I loved it.

TM: Were you climbing poles?

EC: No, no. I was in marketing.

TM: Okay.

EC: Dealing with people. I found out that engineers don't like people problems—I did—so we got along fine. Thank you.

TM: Thank you. No, thank you because I wanted to kind of paint this picture of these two brothers growing up. Yes, you had another brother, but basically 12 years younger, so you weren't necessarily as close you were today, as an older brother only three years older. Both of you went to college, but you truncated your college.

EC: I finished later on.

TM: Did you?

EC: When I was 50 years older, I went back and got the degree. I got in a job that required a degree. So I went back and got it.

TM: Nice, nice.

EC: Didn't learn much, but I got it.

TM: So in the late '40's early 50's, how much did you and Dave stay in touch?

EC: Well right after the war, we met at a resort, [?] Resort up in Northern Illinois and had a time together, the two couples. It was wonderful. We really enjoyed it, yeah. I remember we got pictures of us—I still got them.

TM: Nice.

EC: It was really a wonderful time, and we were able to visit and of course everything, there was no problems now. Everybody was doing well.

TM: Had Raymond been born by then?

EC: No—

TM: Okay—

EC: No, he was a glint in my brother's eyes.

TM: Nice, nice. So did you stay close with Dave over the next 10 years?

EC: We used to write. And then, I had, our first child died—had a brain tumor—and after that my wife was depressed and so on... We went to visit them in Royal Oak, Michigan, and we had a really nice visit. It was really great. And this was '53 or 4—it was shortly before the crash. So it was wonderful. We realized how important it was, and we got to know each other better. I was telling Raymond: one day we went shopping with her, and she came back—I remember it was \$51 or \$52 of groceries, which is a lot of groceries then—and she laid them out on the counter, and she brought her husband in, my brother, and she said, "Now I want to show you what I spent for this is fifty-one-or-two dollars. You're always complaining about the budget. And this is it. This is where it's going. So, I thought that was pretty good. She knew she had a witness: couldn't be much discussion. Anyway, we had an excellent time. I'm always happy for that time.

TM: How long did you stay with them then?

EC: My wives, I've had two die on me, I had this lovely lady these last three years—God bless her, she's been a joy—and we always stayed in a motel, always, we did then. I just, you know, anyway...

TM: Did that visit—

EC: We are going to go visit Raymond at his house though. First time in history! We'll see how it goes—I'll let you know.

TM: Thank you. No I was thinking '53, '54: you'd suffered the loss of a child. Your wife was suffering clearly. How long did you spend with Dave and his wife?

EC: I think we were there about four days.

TM: Okay. Okay.

EC: Yeah.

TM: Nice.

EC: About four days. We'd driven all around Lake Michigan. And then ended up in Royal Oak. It was about 4 days—and then later, and we saw Raymond, after he died, I went to Cleveland to a lighting conference, and I flew over to Detroit and visited Raymond, and Raymond was married at that time—Dorothy, yeah—had a nice visit. Stayed down there, two, three days, something like that.

TM: Okay now I want to get much closer to Wayne's question. In Spring of '56, it sounds like Dave was working for a chemical company, but he wasn't quite, he wasn't going to stay with that company.

EC: Yeah, that's the feeling we had. He was looking. He'd had his resume up.

TM: How did you know that? Well first of all, what were you doing then in the Spring of '56, and how did you get a sense that Dave was looking to change careers or change his [?]?

EC: I think I got it from her. I probably got it when we visited him. I'm pretty sure. He must have been indicating that he wasn't happy. One thing I know—I know he got some patents and stuff—he developed some insulation for electrical wiring, he'd got patents for it. I remember he explained to me, I said, "When you started—," he said, "No, no. You don't start. You build on what somebody else has done. I built on [he named somebody, other people] and you complete the project." You know what I mean? I thought that that was good. But anyway, that's what I know about him.

TM: And then, you received a call from your mother saying that David was lost.

EC: You know it's the first time I've ever cried—

TM: No worries. No worries. You know, I've seen enough tears from rain, and this is a very hard journey. What happened then? How did things progress from that? Because I know there was a service at the South Rim eventually? What else do you remember of those times?

EC: About the trip... I remember, at the trip, that Roy told me that he and Dave had made a pact: that if anybody, either one of them, died early, the other family would look after the wife, the widow and their kids.

TM: Remind me again who Roy [Cramer?] was?

EC: Roy was the brother-in-law of Dorothy's sister, who is the wife of Dave. Dorothy was the wife of Dave. And her name was Mary, wasn't it. Roy and Mary—

[?]: Cramer.

EC: Can I tell them more?

[?]: Yeah.

EC: Okay. Later on, after some years, well first thing, one point some years after he had died, they got a lot of money from him. For one thing, his company had a bunch of insurance policy, I remember that. He got that and the company got [?]. And then they got it all from the airlines. Everybody thought that she was such a good businesswoman because she'd done so well with the phone company. She called my dad one day and wanted \$5,000, she said, to bail her out. He said, "I'll be glad to give it to you *if* you let me come up to Detroit [he lived near Chicago, retired by that time] you let me come up there and help you. Find out what the problem is. Get you going again." She said, "No, I won't do that." He said, "Well, in that case, I'll give you \$500, and you can just have it. But you're only going to get more money because otherwise you'll be back for another 5." So anyway, that was left that way. Well after she came to visit us one time with my parents. Some years had gone by. And she gets a call from Mary. And we said, "What's she calling now? Why would she? Is it an emergency or something?" thinking somebody is sick. And she said, "No, she needed money." "Needs money? Why's she calling you?" "Well, she's been getting money from them all these years." Looking after, was Dorothy looking after them!

TM: Okay...

EC: Apparently, they had gotten large sums of money over the years. And then I found out from Raymond, that her brother was doing some of that too. So she was supporting a whole bunch. And of course, the money ran out, you know naturally—

TM: Absolutely. Absolutely.

EC: And I don't know what you know of Raymond, but there was some speculation that she might have committed suicide by [?] that bridge. She went 3'oclock in the morning at 70 mph and [?] sounded suspiciously like it. She was out of money, she was [?] back to the wall, and could have been—

TM: And for clarification here, my misunderstanding was that Dorothy had approached Roy for some funds, but it was actually Martha—I'm sorry—Mary, who was approaching Dave's wife—your mother Raymond—for funding.

EC: Right, it was just the reverse.

TM: Thank you, just for clarification.

EC: Yeah, no, it was the reverse. It was the other way, yeah.

TM: So they assumed that with the financial award from the—

EC: That she plenty of money.

TM: Which you made very clear in the interview that she didn't.

EC: And if she'd left [?] I'm sure they could have changed it all.

RC: Can I clarify the money thing?

EC: Yeah, okay.

RC: Raymond Cook. There were two elements to it: one is, as Erv has discussed, Mary and Roy did approach my mom for money. They wanted to build and buy a supermarket in Des Plaines, Illinois. And so she did loan them—I think it was about \$35,000—to invest in a supermarket. Well, what happened was they got the supermarket built, opened, and right within a week or two after it opened, they closed the street to construction. It was closed for a year. So they went belly-up and lost the money. And that was one element. The other element that I really have just learned in recent years, because I'm a disabled veteran, she had a brother Bill Powers, who approached her for money, and Bill was in the Battle of the Bulge in Europe.

EC: He was in World War 2. I remember that.

RC: And World War 2 and was injured, and he gave her some song and dance story that he needed money to hire an attorney to sue the VA while what I've learned as a disabled veteran is you don't need the money to sue the VA. You can have the DAV, which is the Department of Veterans' Affairs, represent you; you can have the American Legion represent you; there are a number of groups; VFW can represent you. You don't need any money to sue the VA, so it was a total bogus story to get money from his sister, which he did successfully. And that was I think it was about \$25,000 that he got from her. And the sad part was she died an alcoholic and broke. And that really did not have to occur, but she was naïve to the world I guess.

EC: Yeah, she just really was. Everybody thought she wasn't. You know I've only cried twice in my life at funerals, and I've buried a lot of people, looked after a lot of people. One was my son and then today.

WR: This is Wayne again. You don't have to feel bad about that because when Grand Canyon National Part decided to own this tragedy, which they just did about 10 or 12 years ago, a lot of family members had closure—like you're having right now—and there is nothing to be ashamed of. There has been a lot of family members who had this whole tragic thing that happened to their families, kind of swept under the rug because of the times that people lived in. And there was a lot of heartache and heartbreak, and we've even come to learn with some of the families there was a lot of alcoholism and depression—

EC: [?]

WR:—with this crash. People have been so thankful that the National Park Service and the Historical Society and everybody—folks like Tom and myself—have been involved have allowed to people to feel these feelings, and you don't need to feel bad about it at all. We're happy that you're feeling it and you're letting it out because that's probably what needed to happen back then.

EC: Thank you.

WR: Very much.

EC: I've had two wives die [?] before this lovely lady came into my life. Never shed a tear because they were sick beforehand, so you do your grieving ahead of time. You know.

WR: Yeah.

EC: But with accidents, you don't have a chance to grieve ahead of time. That's the problem.

TM: And I think Wayne's touched upon a real good point that no-one's really had permission to revisit this until in the last decade until very recently, and so these issues are still raw with people, and this is what I'm learning with these oral interviews. It's still very much a lot of caring people that are still grieving.

EC: Didn't know it!

TM: Didn't know it.

[?]: That's interesting.

TM: So there was a service at the South Rim that you went to.

EC: Yeah, I remember.

TM: What—

EC: I don't remember much details. Did you tell them about the lady that acted up?

RC: I think I did.

TM: Do you remember what do you remember about that—

EC: Very little. They just had a nice service. After you mention it to me, Raymond, I did remember there was, it was kind of embarrassing, this woman kind of went nuts and threw her cellphone at graves and stuff.

RC: You could tell them the airlines flew our families—

EC: Oh I didn't tell it. I flew to Kansas City to Denver. A ticket that the office had sent me. United—

RC: Yeah, United.

EC: Yeah, United, you're right. The waitress, after I got my seat—the stewardess, I mean, sorry—she came to me, and she said, "Why have you got this ticket? It's different than the others. It's interesting, what's behind it." And then, I told her about it, and she said "Oh okay." So we get to Denver and then everybody of the relatives were going on one plane to—

RC: Winslow.

EC: —Winslow. I've forgotten. Thanks. And they announced and told [?] and went up and saw them. They had a radarman. The radar was just coming in and there were putting it on the airplane, but there was very few of them. But they got a hold of one. They could not have any chance of losing that plane.

TM: Thank you.

EC: Yeah. So they had three men in the cockpit which was unusual—this is propeller days—and the third man was the radarman. I thought that was of interest that they made darn sure that that plane got there.

WR: So this was an event that was a number of years after the crash? Do you remember when it was?

RC: August of '56. This was—

WR: August of '56. Okay.

RC: This is when they put the headstone up and there was a memorial service.

EC: Oh, yeah, yeah, this is right, yeah, after we went to the funeral. Yeah, I remember '56 but I didn't remember what month.

RC: The reason I remember it was August was because they had a birthday cake for my brother, and his birthday was August 3rd. And so I remember celebrating his birthday on our flight to Denver, so that's why I know it was in August.

EC: We have a picture of our family in front of Bright Angel Lodge that day. And remember, you're 12 years old, I was 35 years old, and my mother and father were there—they're gone.

RC: Dorothy.

EC: Dorothy's gone. Who else is—

RC: My brother David.

[?]: Lori.

EC: Your brother David's good. How many are left? I'm left, and you're left. Who else? I think that—

RC: That's it.

EC: I think that's it.

RC: That's it.

TM: I'd love to see a copy of that photograph, if we could see that.

RC: I think I've given it to the archives.

[?]: Okay thank you.

RC: They've got it. They've got that picture.

EC: So I mean, they're younger people, I mean, they weren't older than us. It was all ages. Interesting they're all gone.

TW: That plane was from Denver to Winslow, and you went—

RC: Bus.

TW: —by bus up to the rim.

EC: Yeah. Yeah.

TW: On old Route 66, historic Route 66.

EC: Yeah that's true.

TW: Okay, okay.

EC: I've always lived on towns most of my life close to 66. Starting with [?] yeah.

TW: So how did the loss of your elder brother impact you moving forward?

EC: Oh after, I decided not to take the pilot's job. That was it. You know, from then on, at that time I had just gotten into—I used to work in the plant, making electricity. Did not like it. But I was learning: learning, learning, learning. And so I had a good background. So I went into the marketing department. Loved it. Found a home. So in '56, by then I'd had, I knew what I was wanting to do. And that was it. In fact, I was the last one in our company to go from the bottom to a department head. And after I got to be a department head, some years later, there ended up—we used to sell [?] to the [?] from the extract [?] after we got through making electricity, and there was a bunch of [?] in St. Joe. Nobody knew anything about it. And so they came to me, and they said, "You used to work down there. You got it." You know? I got stuff by just because there was nobody left.

TW: But you had the history.

EC: But I had the background. That's the problem nowadays. They hire them right out of college. They don't really know the business. And they'll tell you, "We don't need to know the business. We know the finance and so on." They do. That's my feeling.

TW: As an elder brother, was Dave, I guess, did he inspire you? Did he help pull the best out of you or...

EC: Not particularly. I loved that he was the first. Because the folks were focused on him, they made sure he had a wonderful education, but he'd put up with a lot of crap too. And I was second, and by the time I come along, they're bored, you know, with this raising kid bit, and I got away with murder, and I loved it. I loved being #2 in the family.

RC: Can I ask a question? What impact do you think my dad's death had on [?]? Their parents.

EC: I think the biggest thing... It really hurt, yeah. It hurt them. He was their pride and joy. And now he's gone. Which is fine with me. Let him be. He had to put up with all the stuff that went with it. I think what really hurt him was the fact that he couldn't help Dorothy. I really think that got to Dad. He wanted to help, and he could've helped. And she wouldn't let him in.

RC: Yeah.

EC: You know it's hard to admit that you're wrong.

RC: Yeah, yeah. Do you think it affected [?] did at all? His mom? Or anyone else?

EC: No, I really don't. I think she accepted it pretty good. My folks accepted death well.

RC: Okay.

EC: And I always thought I did. I buried 7 people, and it didn't bother me. But boy this has today.

TM: What about Dorothy's parents? [00:40:00]

EC: You know I don't know much about that end of the family. You have to get it from—I don't know.

RC: Yeah, her parents, Dorothy's parents, were divorced. I'm trying to think how many—she had I think 3 brothers and a sister? I think that's right. Her mother was the president of the Women's Railway Association in Chicago, and she worked for Santa Fe Railroad. I know that. And she was a very stand-alone-ish type of woman, very strong, so I don't know that she was impacted all that much because I don't know—so focused on her career?—and my mother really was not a family woman. She was a career woman—

EC: Yeah no she was a career woman.

RC: And she didn't want to have kids, so I don't know that it impacted my mother's mother at all. It impacted I think her brothers and sisters—they took advantage of her—and that was unfortunate, but they had a strange, "We need to take care of each other" relationship—at least my mother had that position. Obviously, her brothers and sisters didn't, and I hate to say it, but in a sense, she was a sucker. But, that happens in life, and you know, life goes on.

TM: Erv, what else do you remember about Dave that you'd like us to remember about him?

EC: I'm thinking. I'm thinking. [Chuckles]. I thought this was a funny story: I think it'll be alright. He had this girlfriend, and I remember them being in the canoe—we had a canoe on the lake—and he was paddling along, and he told me that after they got out of [?], she was leaning over looking at the water, looking at herself in the water, and she had a bathing suit on, and a breast fell out. [chuckles all around] And so she just put it back, and that was the end of that, but I thought that was a good story. [laughs]

TM: Oh that's cute.

EC: She had an odd name. I wish I could remember. Like Velma, something like that.

RC: Was that, he was engaged to a gal before he [?] my mother? You think that might have been her?

EC: I [?] even think that might have been her. Because Reed thought it was going to go places.

RC: Yeah.

EC: Turned out to be a summer romance, really. She was a farm-girl. I mean, they were poles apart in their background, and I just kind of questioned whether they were [?] work. So—

RC: Yeah...

WR: Erv, did you have any special feelings today when you were at Desert View and saw that special—

EC: You know, didn't... This is what brought it out. No, I didn't have any emotions.

WR: Yeah.

EC: Except I really loved seeing everything, you know.

WR: Yeah.

EC: And particularly where the tower was.

WR: Right, the display.

EC: Yeah, yeah, I hadn't seen that before. That was new to me.

WR: Yeah.

EC: And, I've been out here several times. In fact, after we stayed at the Grand Canyon last night, I realized that I'd stayed there before, that same group.

[?]: Maswik.

WR: Maswik Lodge, yeah.

EC: So anyway, that's my story.

TM: I'm going to ask you one more time—

EC: Okay.

TM: Keep telling me Dave's stories. That was a good one about the canoe.

[chuckles]

EC: Yeah, well, unfortunately, he never had one strip in front of him, so I can't report that.

[?]: Not that he'd told you anyway. [chuckles]

EC: Yeah, [chuckles]. I was trying to think—

TM: Did you—

EC: Oh he used to, I'll tell you, when he was a young guy, he was in his teens—I think he was about 18, so that would have meant I was about 15—and he told me this: he was going with a girl—I think it was Dorothy Larsen, in Chicago. Blonde girl. Good looking gal, I remember. She lived down the street. And he was going with her, and I don't think it was going anywhere. And he said, because he had other interests. I think he was going with someone else at the time, probably Doro—no wouldn't have been Dorothy yet, I don't think. But anyway, so he told me that this girl asked him if he'd ever had any sex with anybody. And he said, "No." And he says, "Well,"—I guess he wasn't quite 18. That's where the 18 comes in. Let's say he was 17—so he says, "if you get to 18 and you haven't had any, let me know. I'll take care of you." [chuckles from everyone]

TM: He must have been a handsome man.

EC: He was good looking. Yeah, he said, even after he got married, women would—yeah. He wasn't a typical [pause], Cook. He didn't look typical. In fact, he was so untypical, because the Cooks never had problems with women chasing after them—we weren't good looking enough, you know—but he was. And, oh gosh, and I can't think of what I was going to tell you. Oh—years later, just in recent years, I'd say about ten years ago, I found a Cook that was my grandfather's brother. He was 100 years old. And he lived down near Branson, Missouri. I found him—can't think of his first name, of course his last name was Cook. I remember his wife's name: Ocean. That's an odd name, Ocean Cook.—but I walked in to see him, first time I'd ever seen him, there was David.

TM: Wow.

EC: And even my wife used to think that "David was not your father's son. He doesn't look like him." But there was David, and then I knew that he was a Cook. But there was—he was getting it off another branch.

TM: Yeah, nice.

EC: Yeah, same family though.

TM: Did you write to each other when you were in the service?

EC: Oh yeah. I wrote to him. Yeah, I let him, kept him up.

[?]: Did you ever do any activities together when you were—

EC: Not really.

[?]: —in high school or grade school at all?

EC: No.

[?]: No?

EC: His bunch was way ahead of me. Yeah, too differencing.

[?]: ...in age. Yeah.

EC: And with my younger brother, it was worse yet. Because it was 12 years, so we never was [?] until after we got older.

TM: Is he still alive?

RC: No—

EC: He died, no, he died of cancer. He was the one who was the half-brother. That's where the cancer comes from. Because Cooks have not had cancer. It's not been in our family.

TM: Okay, okay.

[?]: You know Erv you mentioned the last time you visited with your brother up at the cabin in Michigan, that you all took pictures? And you quite easily said, "I still have those pictures."

EC: I think I got them, yeah.

[?]: I think, you know, a picture of you with your brother would be a nice little addition to this whole history.

EC: Oh okay. I'll see if we can find them. I know where they are. I have a whole box of pictures that I gave my younger daughter to keep, and so every once and a while, I go through them, and I'll dig through them, and I send them to you.

[?]: You know, that may be the last picture that you had with your brother, and—

EC: Oh I see what you mean. Oh I know we got the one when we went on that vacation to Schwartz.

[?]: Do you?

EC: Yeah I got one where—I don't know whose hitting who—but I think David's got a big paddle from a canoe, and he's spanking Dorothy.

RC: I think we have that picture. When we leave here, we're going back home, and they're going to stay with us the next couple days. And one of the things that we're going to do is go through some old photos, so we might be able to—

EC: I think you may have—I would have thought we would have sent them to you.

RC: Yeah I think, I think we've got some. And it was Saddle Lake, was the name of the lake.

EC: No, that wasn't Saddle Lake.

RC: Or, no that—

EC: No this is at Schwartz resort. It's up north. If I look—

[?]: We have one of the fellas diving into a lake. We'll have to dig them out and see.

EC: There could be some from saddle.

RC: Yeah.

EC: With him, but these were at a different lake.

WR: You can identify them.

[?]: Yeah.

TM: I'd be great. Thank you. Yeah.

EC: You're a good communicator.

JC: I have a question. This is Janet. Did Dave ever talk about the new baby? Did he ever discuss the new baby?

EC: Not much. You mean when they were born? I was away at college, and—

JC: No, no.

CC: When Rob was born.

JC: When Rob was born.

EC: Oh, oh, I see: when Rob was born. We had no inkling that he was a half-brother at the time.

JC: But was he excited about the baby, or did it indicate anything?

EC: I think we just tolerated it. We didn't think Mom ought to be having a kid at her age, you know. [laughter] Really, [?] think: after the child came, we loved him. You know, it was great. But for me, when that kid showed up, I no longer got any attention. I went back to being the shotgun runner or something—the second [?] again, you know. And I remember going away to college, and I came back—I went in September—came back for Christmas, and I could tell: my room had been changed. I was no longer living there. What was my bedroom? And I realized it: I thought, "this is not home anymore, for me." I'm out of the picture because, I mean, it's like putting a drop of water in a bucket. And the water closes over. I was gone, and the whole thing closed over when [?] without me.

TM: You'd been moved out.

EC: I'd been moved out. I did the same thing with my daughter when she came home. [everyone chuckles] We had just moved, and she said, "Where's my bedroom." I said, "well, you don't have a bedroom in this house." You know, this new house.

RC: I know when I was young, at the time of the accident, we were overrun by the press.

EC: Oh I bet you were.

RC: Did that impact you at all? Did, were you ever—?

EC: Not a bit.

RC: No, not at all?

EC: I had a friend who worked on the news press at home, and I mentioned it to him, but nobody payed any attention to it.

RC: No?

EC: Which is just as well.

RC: Yeah. Right, right. I was just curious.

EC: I was telling him: I was in D-Day, and we did a mission. And anyway, I was on a ship one time, coming from Europe, and there was a guy—historian—and he talking about World War 2. Then, he had one on D-Day. And well, we had gotten acquainted ahead of time—I had introduced myself—and he knew I was there, so during the thing, he said, "this guy... we got a guy here from D-Day. Is there anyone," now there were probably 1500 British on the [?], "was anybody else here on D-Day either ground of in the air?" Not one, there wasn't one. Well, then, when his thing was over, here came everybody. Of course, she just assumed that Janet had been with me then, and I didn't like her. Well, I thought if a guy was going to live like this where people won't let you alone—they want to hear the story, they want this—it was fine. But I didn't want to continue. You know, I could see—that had passed, wouldn't it? The illusion: you give up your freedom. Yeah... He never did tell me that, thanks for telling me. I didn't... at home, where I was, nobody seemed to care. Even though that TWA came from Kansas city, that was kind of odd I thought. They weren't interested.

TM: What should we be asking you that we haven't?

EC: Boy you've done well, I tell you. You've probed deep. And I appreciate the tears because I got rid of it. That's good. Thank you.

TM + WR: Thank you [in unison]. No, thank you.

WR: We should probably take a few pictures while you're here.

EC: Oh... we'd like to get a picture of you! What do you mean? [chuckles]

WR: Everybody wants pictures of Tom!

TM: No no no no no. No no no. I—

WR: Well we've got some pictures we can send to you 'cause we took pictures up obviously at the canyon.

EC: Yeah, all different kinds.

RC: That'd be great.

TM: You know, what would be really wonderful too, is if you guys are going to head back and look at photos in Phoenix now, as you've mentioned, keep us in mind. You can just use a regular camera to take a picture of the picture.

RC: Oh I see.

TM: Without doing a high-res scanning or whatever. And then just send us and email, low-res. That'd be wonderful—

RC: Okay, okay. Alright.

TM: —to see those.

RC: Okay.

EC: What did the guys love so much back in the 20's and 30's? What was it, a raccoon coat?

[?]: Yes, yeah.

EC: I got a picture of Dave with one.

[multiple speakers]: Oh my gosh [multiple remarks expressing stupefaction].

EC: Yeah, so anyway, next time I get to my daughter's, which will be—

[?]: May—

EC: —April. I'll dig through that. Whatever we got, we'll send you.

TM: That'd be fun. That'd be fun.

RC: Ray will like that too.

EC: Oh I never thought of that, yeah.

WR: You know Erv, you've done a great service for your brother here because he's story is going to live now. And people at Grand Canyon are very interested in this story, and through our friendship with Ray, who came to this event we had 10 years ago, we've all gotten to be friends with him and Christa.

EC: Well sure thanks a lot to you guys, I'll tell you.

WR: Well your brother is going to live large in the whole tragedy. There are a lot of people we don't talk to and aren't involved, but your brother is—

EC: Here's a good example though: I was in the war—my story's dead, pretty much, although I'm secretary of I'm group. And here's one—and then there's a bystander so to speak, and his story is going to go on forever. [chuckles] So he made his mark didn't he.

TM: Sir, I beg to differ. I believe your story is equally important, and I don't believe—

EC: I don't feel that way though.

TM: Well, the rest of us may differ, sir.

EC: Okay.

TM: Please.

EC: I was a little cog in a big wheel. That was about it.

TM: Well, it was a bunch of little cogs that made the world change for better, and we thank you for your service. Just to get that on tape here.

EC: We've talked—Raymond and I have talked about the War. He gave me a new view of it. So you can always learn a little more.

TM: Yeah.

EC: Well he was in a different part of it, so—in Vietnam. That was a bad war. If there was ever was a good War, we had a good one, you knew who the enemy was.

TM: Right, right.

EC: Yeah. We haven't known that since.

WR: Well there's going to be a little bit of a event this summer because its the 60th anniversary.

EC: Oh is that right? When's that going to be?

WR: Well, its going to be June 30th. There's a park employee Ian Huff that kind of did the lead on getting this as a National Historic landmark, recognized by the federal government, and he's been writing to us and saying there'll probably be something on June 30th, 2016.

EC: I think you're going to have to tell us because I doubt if I can—

WR: make it again?

EC: make it—I don't know. We had trouble with the air.

WR: I'll be here, but [?].

TM: Altitude's difficult.

EC + WR: Yeah, yeah.

EC: We've been going to Europe twice a year. We've got a system where we can go pretty cheap. And we've been thinking of giving that up. It's getting old [?]. We generally take a ship one way.

WR: Well you married a younger gal there, and she might—

EC: Well I married her for her looks and her money. [chuckles around]

RC: Yeah when he married her he said, "She's almost 20 years younger than me, but if she dies, she dies." [chuckles around]

WR: Well maybe she'll drive you on Route 66 out here in June? [laughter continues]

EC: The problem was we met on a ship, 23 years ago, when her husband was alive and my wife was alive. And we sat at the same table for a week and became friends. He was just getting sick—he was just coming down with his problem—my wife was towards the end of her problem, and died two years later. In the meantime, after that, we kept in touch because of that: we both had spouses that were sick. She worked, so I talked to him and encouraged him. And time went by, and so, finally, he died, but in the mean time, I got married again, she died, and now I was all free again. So three years after he died, we got to talking over the phone. It got more often, more often, and finally I went up to see her, and that was the end of that.

TM: Fun, fun.

EC: Yeah.

TM: Let's get the camera, and we'll take a picture.

[people shuffling themselves]

EC: You can cut the last part off. [chuckles] She's been the best thing that ever happened to me.

[imperceptible chatter]

[?]: I don't want to cut that off.

EC: When I found [?] right time. Except the second one didn't work. [laughter] The first and third, that's what I needed: see I love her.

JC: Aw.

[laughter]

EC: The next woman, the next woman will be a [?], so that [?] going to work.

[?]: There won't be another one.