

TAPE # CC 19 09.10.05
Charles Cook
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PROJECT REBIRTH

01.02.29 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What about Katrina?

01.08.06 CHARLES COOK: Katrina uh, I prepared for Katrina last year. And it may sound crazy. But uh, my family and I went on vacation and my wife, my son uh, my brother-in-law and my sister (STUMBLE) in-law. Uh, and her son and daughter.

01.08.34 Now the rest of my wife's family was supposed to also go. So I can't fly so I took, had taken a train. This is uh, last year when I think the, the hurricane started with a C, I can't remember the name. Uh, (CLEARS THROAT) anyway. I get down to Florida and they're saying that no planes or anything gonna be coming down. They cancelling all planes Friday, and we're supposed to leave on Friday.

01.09.00 So my oldest son calls up and get a, his mother and him reservations to get down there. Now, my sister-in-law, they're out of Baltimore, so they're able to get down. So they get down. The rest of my wife's family are scheduled for Friday, but they managed to get out. So about, I get there early about 12 o'clock, the captains (?) people better, if they come, you know people are coming, tell them to come quickly 'cos we might move out any moment.

01.09.31 And anyway, to make a long story short, he did. Left half of my wife's family on the dock. We're supposed to leave at 3, he left it by 1, ok? So I had said, well, you know, and the damage that they had done, 'cos when I came back up on the train I saw all the damage they'd done. I said I think I'll go back to the Red Cross. And 'cos I started to answer, get deployed right then. But they said you don't have uh, certain qualifications and all that kind of stuff.

01.09.58 I said, well, I do have. Well, you got to have some Red Cross certification. I said, but I worked for the Red Cross. That's not good enough, you got to be you know, through them. So I took it upon myself, I went into what's called Disaster Services in New York. And uh, that's when like if they have a fire or something, you go out and you (?) I have the authorization to make a check out for uh, but I'm, fill check, but I don't sign it. (?) that's a (?) somebody you know, you follow. (~JW~)

JW: I didn't follow that, actually?

01.10.30 CHARLES COOK: It's a balance. You make out the check, make sure that people get it, but somebody else signs it, approves it, 'cos if I just signed and it was a, ain't been approved, I could be making money for myself, or somebody else, you follow me? So it's a balance off. But anyway, you go out and do that. You place them in hotels for two weeks if they need it. Or whatever, get clothing. So I got quite efficient, I like that (COUGHS) but in the meantime, I had to so that I knew it's gonna be another hurricane season.

01.10.57 So I went on and I made sure I got all these qualifications and pass all these classes. And you see? So that they couldn't say I'm not ready. So I was prepared for the hurricane season this year, which I did. So.

JW: How many classes?

01.11.15 CHARLES COOK: Uh, there's one, two three four, five six seven eight nine. I didn't need that many, but I just kept taking more. But. I have CPR, standard first aid, some other stuff. (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.11.33 CHARLES COOK: Anyway, so I passed all those classes. And just as the other day uh, my wife and my, my wife and my daughter have been trying to tell me don't go because they know it's gonna be very infectious down there, which we've come to find out. But the Red Cross doesn't get really involved in that too much. They'll be out of that site, so I had to

assure them that. So day before (STUMBLE) Wednesday, no, Thursday I went down to uh, the national office.

01.12.00 And to make sure they put me in the data bank to send me out right away, 'cos I thought I was gonna go out right then. And while I was down there, I was able to uh, work with some of the victims from (?) the hurricane. I worked with about five, six, about six patients. I mean, clients, I should say. And uh, one child was, she's 20. Her mother was in San Antone, her brother was in Houston, and she was in Baltimore.

01.12.28 And she was crying all throughout the time. So I, maybe I shouldn't say this, but I kept telling her, all right, good thing crying 'cos she wanted to see her mother. I said, well, I'll get you to talk to your mother. So I said, but if you say you feel like committing suicide, they'll get you your mother right away. (LAUGHS) So. They getting her to her mother, you know? And then another case was easy case they had a, one girl, she (~JW~)

JW: How did you know that?

01.12.56 CHARLES COOK: Because uh, I worked at the Red Cross during 9-11 with the families, I was signing checks and doing that stuff then. So 'cos what they was asking me to do, I said, well, I've done hat before, you know, but they said well, you don't, we don't have it on this day, you got to have you know, like I have, now I have client cross showing I can do all that. But (?) and one of the first things they, any time that's what, anybody who had mental problems now from 9-11 was taken to the head of the line, was seen immediately was done. Everything was done for them immediately.

01.13.28 Whatever the, can stop their stress, they have to do. If getting to her mother is stopping her stress, they have to do it. They have to come to that. To that head. And I shouldn't be telling this but that's what, you know? But anyway, so I did that. And then there was one child, she uh, she you know, child was growned, but I'm 40 years older, so anyway she uh, was a student in uh, Louisiana, in New Orleans herself uh, but she had Washington, DC address.

01.14.02 I mean, uh, license. So they said, we can't help you. So I said, yes, y'all can. No we can't, she has a Washington (?) I said well listen, young lady, you don't have no Washington (?) ID anymore. Just put that away. You still got your student ID? She said, yeah. Give them that student ID, give the address down there, and that's all they need. And you can get

something, because you were displaced. You know, so. You just got to go around the system.

JW: You seem to know how to do that really well now?

01.14.38 CHARLES COOK: Oh, yeah. I've seen what works for others. I watched. And listened (LAUGHS) and you know, it felt good to help. So you know, when somebody you can give somebody something there, it's a good thing. So I went down there. Uh, then (?) Washington's not uh, well, I'll probably get something when I get deployed.

01.15.00 But I just bought me a couple of shirts rather than wait to get issued some. 'Cos I don't, I want to go straight there, I'm not worried about the price of it. So I bought a couple of extra shirts, 'cos I have shirts, but I bought a couple of extras from down there. Uh, and they, and they gave me some other equipment, too, so. I'm about ready to go.

JW: What are some details about the classes you took?

CHARLES COOK: Oh, the class is not long, they're very easy.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.15.39 CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) one is for field operations. This one is just orientation. Field operations one and two, disaster (?) services. Standard first aid. Uh, CPR course. Uh, (a mass care?) just general knowledge of how to set up uh, logistics, anything within in a shelter, ok?

01.16.11 Uh, a client assistant card, that's how to be able to give them money and stuff like that, how to fix that up. Ok. Uh, shelter (?) simulation and shelter operations to (?) run a uh, shelter. So. That's easy stuff. It takes some, I was going to take the uh, FEMA course.

01.16.31 Uh, FEMA has a course where they take you in for a week. You know, you pay for it. And they teach you how to filing stuff, a lot (?) stuff. And then they have another course, more extensive, for four months. In fact, I was going to enroll in the EMT course uh, (?) EMS course. You know?

JW: (Maybe sometime?)

01.16.55 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I'm gonna do it after this goes over. I'm gonna try and enroll in the September class, the fire department has one. But I'm not gonna try to work. You know, I'm just gonna do it to have the knowledge.

JW: Have the knowledge so you can go someplace else if something comes up? What's in the bag?

01.17.20 CHARLES COOK: Oh, yeah, in the bag is (CLEARS THROAT). Uh, I got a new, a new Red Cross hat, of course. But this is just my own raingear. This is uh, jacket. That's all. That's another jacket. This is some of the stuff that you uh, I was just going over it 'cos I hadn't done it for a while. This is the new vest that they have. They don't have them up here yet. Uh, but they have them in DC.

01.18.00 Uh, and this is (?) I got one of the old vests. Yeah, I got the old. This is the old vest. But this one is much better 'cos it has pockets. Just shirts, they were given, these I bought myself. They're just 'cos mostly I have white, white shirts. Uh, that's about it. The bag is empty, other than some other junk in here.

01.18.28 But that's all, just general stuff that you'll need. But this bag is ready to go. All I need to do is go and one pair of pants and a couple pair of socks and underwear and I'm good, which I'll put in here, 'cos I'm not carrying a lot of stuff (~JW~) other than some boots, yeah. That's it. (~JW~) I know (?) I'm going here (?) a couple pair, two pair, three pair of if I can get them in here, three pair of uh, dungarees. That's it. But I'm packing.

01.19.00 I'm just packing now. I'm seeing that I can't get it all, so I got to take a little small bag. 'Cos the boots are heavy, 'cos I have these boots here. That high, you know, 'cos you know, I'm not trying to go into no water or no nothing without proper equipment. And the reason I had this, this here. This is from the motorcycle ride. And I tore up the pants, so I got to go find another pair of black, (?).

01.19.29 I tore them up because they actually were too big for me. But I'm. Anyway.

JW: You got on a plane to go to DC?

01.19.42 CHARLES COOK: I can't fly, I still can't fly. I have tinnitus, I can't fly. I took a, I took a bus. Uh, I took the uh, Greyhound down to the (?) and back. They wanted the same outfit. But uh, I'm trying to figure out how I'm gonna get to Silver springs. But like now what I'll do. I'm gonna get on the train.

01.20.01 I don't have to pay to get on the train. I can ride the train free. So I'll just take the train. I'll take Metro uh, Amtrak down.

JW: Did you pay for the bus?

CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I paid for the bus. But I don't have to pay for the train. I just show them my ID and ask them, can I dead head? Uh, either they can say I can dead head or (?) dead head is to ride, ride free terminology.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.20.24 CHARLES COOK: It won't be a problem. It'll be easy enough.

JW: What about when you arrived in DC, where did you stay and all?

01.20.37 CHARLES COOK: No, I went directly to the headquarters. I went, got on uh, mass transit there, rode free, showed them my ID to let me ride free. Got off, took the bus the rest of the way, rode free. Right back. And uh, and we all in the same union, when, Local 100, so.

01.20.59 It was all paid, uh, we all in the brotherhood. I've, I've gone to Detroit, showed my ID and rode free, so. It should be that way all over the country, at all times, for anybody working with, doing the same job.

JW: What was the Red Cross like there?

- 01.21.27 CHARLES COOK: It was very (?) they put I, I got there and I saw they needed help when I got in there, 'cos they had busloads of people coming in, they had like a 100 people come from uh, Louisiana, they were all from Louisiana, and at first I was just standing on the side because I was trying to get a fax, some stuff over. And that's the first time I ever use a fax. They had, they put me to work faxing my own stuff over (LAUGHS). And doing all that, making some copies, faxing stuff. So that was interesting, then I said well, since I'm doing this much, that's when I stepped in when they were saying.
- 01.22.00 And this girl was filling out the form and I said no, you're filling it out incorrectly. They said, oh, you know already? I said yeah. I said (?) she said, oh, yes, you do. Well, uh, I'm gonna give her assistance, you know, and I start helping here. Then I just got into it, so I started helping. Which was good (?) was a nice feeling to help. You know? If I don't even go nowhere, at least I've helped some, couple of victims already. So. But uh. Yeah, they gave me these extra ones.
- 01.22.27 But I had, they gave me this one. I already have a couple of these. I have some of these from down at Ground Zero. But those I, (?) I threw them away. I threw, I threw those away. But this one I like. (~JW~) Yeah, isn't that the? I don't like the color. I just like this. (~JW~) It has pockets. Then I, you can do more with it.

JW: You find that useful?

CHARLES COOK: Oh, yes, 'cos uh.

JW: How long were you in DC?

- 01.23.04 CHARLES COOK: I was just one day. I just went down to get assigned. Uh, (CLEARS THROAT) you know, get my (?). And then, then when I gave (?) the number, she saw that I was in the data bank with, with the (?) I'm already in the national data bank. Uh, so. But I should be 'cos they just sent me a letter so I know I'm in the data bank. But that's (because?) just to check up on my health.

JW: Anybody else you meet that was interesting down there?

01.23.42 CHARLES COOK: It was just, it was just in and out. I, I just, I really didn't speak to nobody other than the people in the uh, Red Cross situations and those, the victims. That was all. And so, and so I that, preparing for this made me ready for Katrina.

01.24.00 Sorry to say it had to be like this (?). They uh, the government's criticizing a lot Katrina about not the response, but in actual reality, they couldn't send nobody in there right away. Because how you gonna send somebody in there during the storm? You got to wait 'til the storm subsides. Because you're putting the people you're putting in at harm's risk, you know, so. But they could have been, reacted a little bit after it passed over, but.

01.24.30 And that lying fool they had up there, Mr. Brown. He don't know from diddily. (LAUGHS) He really don't know his stuff.

JW: He found that out today?

01.24.44 CHARLES COOK: Oh, yesterday. (~JW~) Yeah, they got rid of him. They're supposed 'cos he. Flat and out lied. (STUMBLE) Isn't there should be some punishment? But he, his friend knew that he wasn't qualified 'cos they're buddies. You know, he put him in the position.

01.25.00 He had the job before him. You know? And see, it really should be criminal because you, you in a position of where your job, he should be charged criminally, because people died because he was not qualified. They really died. He really should be charged. 'Cos had he known what he was doing, they could have done something better.

01.25.30 They, I hear them talking about sending the uh, airborne troops, they can't send American troops into a United States soil as, as peacekeeper. That's the law. That's what keeps them from taking over the country. So it's in the constitution that they cannot, now the National Guards can be (armed and be?) police officers. But not the uh, American troops.

JW: Didn't they send troops?

01.25.58 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. But they can't do anything. They just started sending them, but they can't do anything. They're not even supposed to sling weapons uh, (show?) weapons out. They're not supposed to be weapons seen by law. Even though they're doing it.

JW: It seems that in the chain of command, Bush is the one who put him in the position?

01.26.28 CHARLES COOK: Well, they all come from Texas. They all Texans. You know? It's the good ole boy thing. But they didn't expect nothing to come back. (LAUGHS). But they got, listen. They got what they asked for when they got Bush. They knew what they were gonna get, and it's coming, like Malcolm said, (?) crows come home to roost. All that stuff Uh, it's coming back to them. Sad to say.

01.27.01 It's just that it, this is gonna hurt the whole economy. It's gonna hurt, you know, your baby, milk gonna cost you maybe \$4 a gallon soon. That ain't no joke. You see what, milk and gas prices always follow each other. They're mirror each other. (~JW~) Look at it. They go up in levels almost the same. Ever since the '60s. Look how much they go up.

01.27.29 But right now, gas went up, beat them a little bit. They just, they jump, whatever it is in Atlanta? Six dollars and change? Six, almost seven dollars? (~JW~) Yes.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.27.40 CHARLES COOK: Now is that price gouging or what? They didn't even wait two days (LAUGHS). (~JW~) Only in America (?) Not getting political, but since uh, yeah, you probably want to know, no I don't like the word refugee for American citizens.

01.28.01 (?) over the radio they kept calling them (?) refugees. The refugees. How can I be a refugee, and I was brought here over in a boat almost 300 years ago, 200 and change? I'm nobody's refugee. Son's in Iraq, and I'm talking about the people there. There are no refugees. They're American citizens. Don't call them that, even though refugee means someone who was displaced, but mostly in, in the dictionary says the most commonly for people who have been (?) displaced out of their country. (~JW~)

01.28.37 Fox news is the worst (LAUGHS). Oh, you know? (LAUGHS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.29.44 CHARLES COOK: See, my foresight to get ready to go for this thing was this here. Yeah. I just bought myself, I just bought a car. As uh, I'm sure you know.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.30.06 CHARLES COOK: A friend of mine wanted a uh, get a car. Her credit was bad. So I'm up in the Toyota dealership, and her credit didn't go through, so. I said, since I'm here I want to check on something just to see how my credit is, 'cos my son's credit and I intertwine, because he has the same name as mine.

01.30.28 So when the guy showed up I said oh, this, my son's name came up and he said, well, even without that, just being your son's, so if it was yours it still wouldn't mean nothing. You can get a car right now, just sign your signature, you haven't even got to put (LAUGHS) money down. Why did the man say that? C.C. Why don't you co-sign for me? (?) Come on (LAUGHS) I said no. (?) said what I'll do is I'll sign the car will be in my name, the insurance will be in my name, the registration.

01.31.00 When you miss a payment, I take the call. So they gave me enough money for three months. And they're gonna give me the money (?) each month in advance, so it's always three months coming. I say, if you fall back on the three months, that three months, any part of that three months is in jeopardy, I'm taking the car. So that's our agreement. So. I'm safe. But they make good money, you know, so.

01.31.28 I told my wife. Yeah (I tell?) her, and ain't telling my girlfriend. (LAUGHS) I been discrete. (LAUGHS)

JW: What did you tell your wife?

01.31.42 CHARLES COOK: I just told her I bought a car. And it's (?) just like I told you.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: You left out the information on who you bought the car for?

01.31.52 CHARLES COOK: I told her the name and everybody. I told her everything. I told her I signed a paper over if I died, I said the car is hers. (?) so don't give her no hard work, told my brother, told my niece. Nieces. And I told one of my sons, told both of my sons. So everybody knows. Except I ain't tell my daughter 'cos I, she would give me hell (LAUGHS). I told her, (?) I tell my girlfriend.

JW: You said you bought a car for your girlfriend?

01.32.20 CHARLES COOK: Now, see, you injected something. It, it never went to other girlfriend (LAUGHS). See, you're trying to get some information.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.32.41 CHARLES COOK: I have a significant other that I live with. Ok, when, and I have been for 21 years. So that's why my wife knows that. But my wife says she's never going to divorce me. Ok. But my wife and I go on vacations (and we'll hang?) and we're getting ready to go to Texas for 3 weeks. We were, 'til this (stuff happened?) and we're still gonna go to, we're supposed to be driving, but after all the gas prices, we're not driving.

01.33.04 Even though her car is good. (?) But uh, are you trying to say, am I involved with this young lady? You know, you don't put kiss and tell (LAUGHS). Or should I, should I name a, put up some numbers of how many ladies I'm seeing, that's what John say?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What will they do when you go to Louisiana?

01.33.49 CHARLES COOK: See somebody else, I don't care (LAUGHS). I'm not hung up on stuff like that.

JW: When are you going to Louisiana?

01.34.03 CHARLES COOK: I think uh, they're supposed to contact me Wednesday. I think that's what they said, I'm, I'm gonna give her a call today or tomorrow. I'll give a call down there just to see. Because I got to get down there, 'cos Silver Springs is kind of out of the way. I'll probably go into Washington, D.C., and then take uh, public transportation. They have a map or (?) some kind of train that goes in there. (~JW~)

JW: Goes into where?

01.34.30 CHARLES COOK: Silver Springs.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.34.49 CHARLES COOK: I went to uh, in that area, not there, but in Virginia, I went to Ft. (Belmar?), Virginia, when I was in service. And you ever go to (?) Columbia, Maryland? That's like Peyton Place. That's a nice little town. I was there with Jackson Browne. (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Where do you think you'll go in Louisiana?

01.35.47 CHARLES COOK: I don't know, I might go to Louisiana, I might go to (?) I don't know where, I have no idea where they're gonna send me. I, they asked me uh, do you have a preference? I said you can send me to the worst place out, it don't matter to me. Dead bodies all that don't bother me. So it's just you can send me anywhere, the hardest part or section. So.

01.36.09 You know, that's why I'm gonna go get some shots. I'm going to the VA, and the Board of Health uh, Monday and get some typhoid shots. That's the first (thing they asked?) did I have my typhoid shot? So I know I got to get that. I'm gonna get a typhoid, diphtheria, and cholera shots. So. I would have done it today, but I had an interview.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What about the thing on the West Side highway?

01.36.56 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, uh, the wall collapsed. Uh, the wall collapsed, and there actually was two people from Ground Zero there, he and myself and another fellow. But there were more than that, but I mean, who was civilians like (?) you know, (?) uniformed people. We were the only two that were up in there at the time. And they were trying to take down some rocks, and we (was telling them?) said if you do that, all of it's gonna slide. You need to put a net or something right away.

01.37.28 And the police commissioner listened to what we were saying, and because it was cracks, and the cracks was because (?) were from the water, because that all up there is just uh, is a creek, a spring, that's running through the, and they're gonna have that trouble again. It's not over for them up there. Because that water's constantly flowing. And it's creating cracks to, and you can see the water line, the dark where the water's seeping through. And that foundation's just gonna slide and them buildings are in jeopardy.

01.37.59 They (?) so you mark my word, I might not be here but you remember I said it, they're gonna have problems with that.

JW: Did you get to help there?

01.38.09 CHARLES COOK: Well, I got there, there was really nothing really to do. When I first got there, I thought it was gonna be something. But I stood around for about a couple of hours with a few people just giving some advice to (?) that was about it, and then I left. It was, as I saw it was under control, I left.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What was the instinctual urge with Katrina, and how did you hear about it?

01.39.23 CHARLES COOK: Well, I heard about it uh, I follow the news all the time, so the Weather Channel, so I knew it was coming. And (~JW~)

JW: Have you followed hurricanes for a while?

01.39.36 CHARLES COOK: Well, last year, well, I call it the African Revenge (LAUGHS). Well, all these hurricanes come out Africa. You stole these people, they punishing you for stealing them (LAUGHS). They come out, so they (?) you want to steal the people? We're gonna send you this weather (LAUGHS). Where do you think these hurricanes originate from?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Do you follow them on the TV?

01.40.13 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, they got a couple ready, getting ready, they got a couple getting ready to make wind down there again. Yeah, they got something going on in Florida now, I think.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.40.33 CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) I'm trying not to take too much stuff. But not, you know, like 7 changes of underwear. That's about it. That's the biggest thing, and socks. And I had to get some bags. From (?) those (?) large (?) I know you're sleepy and I'm boring you (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.40.58 CHARLES COOK: (?) put for food or something. But they had, Pathmark had large ones. I got ten of those I could put my clothes in, in case I go into area that's wet and I won't get my clothes wet and I can put them on.

JW: Were they surprised at your offer?

01.41.14 CHARLES COOK: No. I don't think so. No, because the Red Cross is used to people wanting to come in to help, volunteers, you know? You know, uh, this country got a big heart. It opens up.

JW: They knew you were involved at Ground Zero?

01.41.34 CHARLES COOK: Yeah uh, when they ran me they, they said oh, ok. They said oh, I see you in (?) we, we're putting you in the data base, but I see you in the data base. So they said it's ok, no problem.

JW: What happened with you and Katrina? Were you following her on TV?

01.41.54 CHARLES COOK: You (didn't interrupt?) me. Uh, Katrina, I've watched it and uh, I was just waiting. And I kept saying that (?) that eye hits New Orleans, they're gonna really be in trouble. Not only they're saying 20 feet of water. There's parts of new Orleans would have been 40 feet of water. But uh, it, luckily it didn't hit uh. It didn't hit like that. But the, that uh, the thing that it hold uh, there's still got problems, just think of what it would have happened if they, it had of hit there directly. God is good, they saved a lot of people.

01.42.31 But they could really uh, I think, do something, if they just build those dikes up a little bit higher. Have to bring them off and, and when they do have a spillage, they need to make pipes to make them so they, the pipes go directly to the ocean, not to just the run off straight to the ocean, as opposed to, you know, going right back on land. But they're gonna have a real serious problem. That water that they're walking through right now is so contagious that uh, they had to disinfect the workers if they fall into it right immediately, they have to pull them out.

01.43.05 And they're pumping that same water right back into the river. So that river is gonna be really nasty. And when they drain all of that water, they gonna have to take and to all that top soil it's gonna have to be removed. They got major problems down there. Because it's, it's so

toxic already, with the dead bodies and the toxin and all that, all of the bacteria. That's a (?) major (?) health uh, hazard that's gonna go on for at least 6 months to a year.

01.43.36 That, that I know for sure. That's, that's, that, and it doesn't just affect here. Because you go down there, you may (?) contact cholera, not knowing you have it, come home and pass it on. You might not contact anything, but uh, a mosquito has gotten into your lunch basket,

01.44.01 You bring the mosquito he, he's in there building up a couple more mosquitoes in your lunch basket, take it home and they open up and they, they done been infested. And so they really got problems. We got problems, it's not just they're. We. You know? So. 'Cos they have uh, it's a lot of airborne ailments that's right now. Not just water-borne. It's really bad. It's really, really bad.

01.44.30 They were gonna really need to burn some of that stuff. They need to really burn and rebuild.

JW: Are you worried about the diseases at all?

01.44.40 CHARLES COOK: I'm not worried about it. I done had my time. And I know I'm gonna be on the Hell Bound Express, so (?) I'm gonna be the conductor on the Hell Bound express, though. When I go, I may kick and fight, but I still gonna be the conductor (LAUGHS). And I know how to mess with, with the devil down there. 'Cos all I got to do is start singing spirituals, he don't like that. He, he might kick me out (LAUGHS).

JW: The Red Cross might kick you out?

01.45.03 CHARLES COOK: That's uh, that's a possibility. You know? There's always Salvation Army, FEMA. Uh, I'm qualified to go to either of them.

JW: Did you have a thing about the Red Cross before?

01.45.22 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. Yeah, I don't even want to deal with that, that's personal (?) junk that they did (~JW~) because it doesn't even show up. 'Cos they know it's false. So I'm not gonna bother with them (in the New York area?), you know? (~JW~) And I was told by the regent that same thing, so I'm not bothering with the New York area. (~JW~) Because when

I went back (?) When I went my intentions was not to even deal with New York in the beginning when I came back to the Red Cross. I was just wanting to deal with the National. 'Cos I didn't want to do. But I had to get the training, so I did the training, and I got the training.

01.46.01 So my purpose was served. On to new Orleans.

JW: What is the purpose?

01.46.09 CHARLES COOK: To uh, be of need when I'm needed. You know? It's just to help that's all. You know, I'm at the age where you know, I can put it on the line.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.46.30 CHARLES COOK: October the 17th, I was 65. Getting (?) younger, too. Uh. Hopefully. And they gonna find that Fountain of Youth, I'm gonna jump right in it. (LAUGHS) Knowing what I know now? (?) I'm gonna (?) since I'm down here, I think I'm gonna go play some chess, too.

JW: Will you bring your pinochle?

01.47.01 CHARLES COOK: Yes, I can. Cards go anywhere. Uh, you got to have something (?) everybody plays pinochle all over the country. I'm gonna have some fun on my time off. (~JW~)

JW: You don't think this is time off?

01.47.18 CHARLES COOK: Well, in between the Red Cross when I am doing shifts uh, there'll be time off. That's what I mean time off. You know? I played pinochle last night, 'til about 1 o'clock.

01.47.34 I played chess all day the other day. Uh, this chess thing's getting hard. Uh, I've been playing guys who are grand masters and they whipping me, I'm not like used to being

whipped. And they beat, they put a spanking on me. (LAUGHS) But it's all good. Just making it better.

JW: Are you excited?

01.47.48.00 CHARLES COOK: About what, down there? No. After working with some of those people the other day, I want to hurry up and get there, but I'm not excited because it's too much misery. No. Excited? No, that would not be the right terminology. Anxious to get there to help. But not excited about it.

01.48.28 I saw, all I saw was some sad faces. You know, and I ain't had nobody come in there saying anything other than I lost everything, and you can see the despair in their face. Everything. That's sad. Everything. (CLEARS THROAT) you know? All you can tell them is be thankful you got your life. But I saw my brother couldn't swim.

01.48.58 All kind of stories like that. I mean, it's sad. No, I'm not, I'm not anxious about it. (~JW~)

JW: How would you compare this to 9-11?

01.49.14 CHARLES COOK: It's much different than 9-11. Uh, it's different in the fact that Mother Nature is something that you can't really fight up against.

01.49.33 The two draw you together, 9-11 it seemed like they came together faster. Because like it was somebody slapped them in the face, or (?)them in the face. But in this, the hurricanes, we've always gone through hurricanes, so they didn't react as, well, we all gone through hurricanes, we gone through hurricanes, we've gone through hurricanes, so it wasn't as intimate to people or as until they started to see faces and the people.

01.49.59 And I saw that, uh, they had a young kid, and they show him every once in awhile. He was a black boy. I think he must have been about 7 or 8 years old. But he should have been a politician. 'Cos what he said, and he looked into the camera, it was unrehearsed. You need to get down here now. My grandma is sick. She's old, she got to take her medicine. What do you want us to do? She's gonna die if she don't get her medicine.

01.50.29 And there are more people gonna die. You can't wait 'til tomorrow, you got to be here now. He sounded, (those were the words?) he was using. He sure took, he, he sure motivated me.

Like the man and the woman jumping out that building. He was my motivation. I was already motivated anyway, but he, he really motivated me.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.51.0 END OF TAPE # C.C. 19

TAPE # C.C. 20 09.10.2005
Charles Cook
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

02.01.01 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: You saw two people jumping from the towers?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.02.24 CHARLES COOK: One of the motivating factors other than the buildings coming down was when I was listening to uh, that morning, seeing the fire and then the building, (?) when one of the buildings coming down was this guy was on the radio. And they kept where are you at, and he's telling them he, what floor he was on, and he kept going back and forth trying to find something and then he said I ran into somebody and said the fire's driving back. He said, but I found this woman. And so he said, well, what are you gonna do? He said I'm gonna look, see if we can find another exit so we can get out. So he came back and his, where his voice had been hysterical, it was calm.

02.03.00 They said what are you gonna do? He said, that fire's so hot, we, we can't stay, we can't stay. Says uh, what are you gonna do? He said, just said well, just tell my family we're all right. And the next thing you know, he didn't say anything more, and they said two people just came out hand-in-hand, man and woman. He jumped from the building. That's why I said (?) he made me think about, you know, things that, that young boy's statement made me think about that, you know, like strong statements.

JW: That's tough?

02.03.34 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. Yeah. When he said my grandmother's gonna die, y'all gonna need to get here now. And he, he gonna be a politician the way he was talking. He was not, he was above his age. We don't need no help tomorrow, we need it now. People are dying, they're all old. He said, I ain't eat, we ain't eat in 3 days. We ain't eat nothing. No water, nothing. We need help now.

02.04.00 And my grandma needs her medicine. And they had (?) his grandmother right behind him. I'm sure they got something for that boy. (~JW~)

JW: So you were watching the TV and listening to the radio?

02.04.16 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I was watching TV when I was watching the young boy.
(CLEARS THROAT)

JW: You said I'm out of here?

CHARLES COOK: Oh, I was already out of there, you know, but I just (?) that just gave me more motivation to do this. So.

JW: You were talking about the African revenge?

02.04.42 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, that's my way of putting it (~JW~) I know nobody else (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: There's a lot of black families that were affected; how do you feel about that?

CHARLES COOK: Well, I know where (?) you're going.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

- 02.05.33 CHARLES COOK: There's, there's definitely uh. There's justice and just us. There's justice for white folks, and there's just us for blacks. That's why blacks have used that saying for years in our communities. Case in point.
- 02.06.01 A white kid could have a gram of cocaine and get probation. A black kid could have a nickel bag of crack and get 7 years. And that's, if you look down and take statistics of how the disparaging the crime rate is, and how the penalties for each, you'll see such a vast difference. You'll say no, that's not possible, but it's possible.
- 02.06.31 And they, 'cos I've seen the surveys, it's crazy. So yeah, that's uh, we got a lot of room. But I'm glad. I'm really glad. That it happened, like it's happening. Because all those people that think that we have been emancipated, liberated since they went down their march are seeing that that's just not true. You know? You still in a struggle.
- 02.07.00 Unfortunately. Unfortunately. And I don't, I'm uh, I'm, I don't have no business that way. I can understand that, too. Uh, I don't have no business. 'Cos I'd give my life for you in a minute, you know, so I have (?) something like that. So I don't have no business. I understand it but I don't like it. You know, my daughter lives in an area, they got the Confederate flag in New Jersey. (LAUGHS)
- 02.07.31 Oh, she's in Highland Lakes, New Jersey. And that's one of the upper parts of New Jersey. The Confederate flag. I said uh, they still want to carry that war? You know? If they want to carry the war, (?) they lynch blacks here in the Civil War right here in New York City. The Irish (?) be conscripted into the uh, war.
- 02.07.59 They didn't like the idea and they, a lot of blacks, that's how a lot of blacks got to Brooklyn, they had to swim across the East River, because they were lynching them right down 'cos the blacks owned, or lived in most of the lower of Manhattan. And they were lynching them from lampposts like crazy. So should I hate uh, Irishmen because of that? No. That was an ignorant mind at that time. That's all.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: How has the rest of your year been? Anything in particular?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.08.44 CHARLES COOK: No uh, just taking it easy. Uh, just playing cards and pinochle and let's see, what else? Playing a lot of chess now. That's all. I've just been taking it easy. I've just been relaxing doing uh, I'll tell you, I was doing that disaster service for awhile with the Red Cross and then that stopped.

02.09.04 Other than that I haven't been doing anything. I was planning on two trips, one with my wife, one with my girlfriend, we're going on a cruise. My wife, we going we're supposed to be, we are supposedly going on uh, driving but I think we changing that up, we may take the train and then drive when we get there, rent a car. (We had?) this gas prices. Trip just went up twice, just in gas alone.

02.09.32 The trip almost. I cannot believe, I filled up, I've bought gas the other day for what I (?) when I was teenager, I could almost fill up the car for. Almost \$4 for a gallon of gas in Brooklyn. You could almost, back then, it was 13, 14 cents a gallon. And look at this now. It's crazy.

JW: I remember when Cokes were 25 cents?

02.10.00 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I remember that, too. I remember when they were 12 cents. That was uh, one of those years. But uh, (LAUGHS) I remember when I could take \$2.00 and I was rich. I could go see, I could go see a movie, get in the movie for 12 or 13 cents on a Saturday, see 3 major movies.

02.10.26 Would see Buster Krabb, Flash Gordon, Tom Mixx and Some (?) else, the serials, about 7 serials, and then some cartoons, and three movies. I'd go in the movie and stay all day, and could come out and go to another one, and it was paid like 10 cent, 11 cents to go in the movie. And a nickel would buy you a lot of candy. Ten cents would buy you a lot of candy (LAUGHS). Yeah. That dollar don't work now, nothing no more. (LAUGHS)

JW: Do you think about 9-11 any?

CHARLES COOK: I don't think about it.

JW: You don't?

CHARLES COOK: I don't, I really don't. I really didn't think about it 'til uh, somebody spoke on it the other day. (STOPS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: You went down to September Space?

02.12.38 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, this week uh, the week before. They asked me to come down. Uh, they had (?) uh, what they call a First Responders' uh, meeting uh, about a month ago. With people from Oklahoma, so they asked me to come down, so I met with some of the initial people that responded to Oklahoma's uh, bombing.

02.13.00 Uh, and uh, some Red Cross people and uh, bomb squad people, you know? We had a nice little meeting. They're expecting some more stuff.

JW: They're what?

02.13.15 CHARLES COOK: They're expecting some more stuff to happen (?) in this country. So. They trying to get ready for it. That's what the meeting was about.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Why?

02.13.36 CHARLES COOK: To have a cohesive working plan in case something happens, so people you know, would be more coordinated and know what they're doing in response to, by people from different areas. That's what's gonna be around. They, they're, they're gonna be kicking that off real soon.

JW: What do you mean?

02.13.54 CHARLES COOK: Well, they're gonna be going around the country and coordinating it. Getting their ideas together, formulating how can you work better as a team, if you come from out of the state and how can you help when you come in the state to some place vice versa, and knowing where you're supposed to go when you come in, that kind of stuff. You know?

JW: It's interesting?

02.14.21 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I thought it was. That's what I was, and so when I had gone, then they asked me well, you know, we've been having these regular meetings. Uh, every Wednesday and I said (?) they said well, some of the guys' having problems with still with that and I said I ain't had no problem with it. So well, do, you need to come and talk to them if you ain't having no problems. So I can't. And one guy was really despair, everything is just bad, bad, bad for him. But uh, I can't see it uh, having bad uh, you're alive, be thankful you're alive. And then them other people, they suffered and died, that's who you should feel sorry for. Be grateful you're alive.

02.14.58 And then they said you know, and the other day they said, you know, we're trying to get you to come down here and we wanted to know if you wanted to be in the honor guard, and I said no, that's ok. I did that. I been there. I wasn't in honor guard, but at least I walked out uh, you know, with (?) that day. That's enough.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: There was the parade?

02.15.30 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I did get to march in the parade, the Columbus Day Parade.

JW: Right up front?

CHARLES COOK: Yeah. That was really special. I never got to see the footage of it, though. But my neighbors told me about it. (LAUGHS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: This time you'll be dealing with living people?

02.16.36 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. I can deal with that. Uh, 'cos I can flirt and talk my stuff. Tell them if I was a young man, you'd be, I'd be chasing you all over. You know? You ain't that old, honey? I'm not. Don't open the door (LAUGHS).

JW: Is that the real reason you're going?

CHARLES COOK: (LAUGHS) No (LAUGHS). I hope not.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.17.10 CHARLES COOK: I'm, to be honest, (?) now because of that I'm on my best behavior (LAUGHS). This girl I was helping the other day, she was some kind of pretty. She kept saying, you know I'm all by myself, and I said hey. You should call me, I'm all by myself. Good men are hard and she said you can't find good men in Louisiana.

02.17.33 I said (?) if we run into each other under different circumstances, we could talk. I said but that, that would not be the appropriate time I said 'cos you're going through emotional stuff. She said I know. She said I'm gonna see you (?). I said uh, that's just (?) I can't do that (LAUGHS). No, I can't mix it with two. I can't do that. See, I've had that, I've been in that situation before. Seeking, people seeking help and needing help.

02.18.00 My brother runs, used to run uh, a couple of drug addiction agencies. And I was counseling one time, and when you do that, most of them people they uh, who are trying to get out of that, they look for a positive image or somebody to hold on to. And I have much stuff I could have taken advantage of, but I never did, so. I had, I (?) go to a different frame when I'm doing certain things. So no, they're, all the ladies are safe. For now.

02.18.31 Now, after everything's over, maybe. I'm gonna go find that Fountain of Youth. I got my Cialis, Viagra, and the VA giving out that new click, click, click, everything's straight (LAUGHS). I'm just joking.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What else has been happening in your year?

02.19.02 CHARLES COOK: My year has been dull. I haven't done anything. I've been trying to stay low-key, stay in the house. You know? Just chilling. You know? I've been told you ain't go, we haven't been no place. You're right. Normally I'd be going several places. I have to go to court next month, October the 20th in fact. That's when I got hit with this truck and it finally coming to court. So my lawyer had kept me quiet.

02.19.30 I don't want you going 'cos you didn't know when I was gonna have to go. He was kept telling me (?) one time and another time. So that's another reason I haven't been jumping around. Other than that I would have been, I would have been in Detroit, or California. I'd have been some place.

JW: How long do you think you'll be down there?

02.19.50 CHARLES COOK: Well, they told me I'd been uh, can I stay for 3 weeks? I said yeah. And uh, I'll stay, I'll probably stay longer than that. I'll probably stay up until October 18th, 'cos I got to go to court the 20th. And then I'll go to court and then I'll go back down.

JW: Is your trip to Louisiana threatening the court appearance?

CHARLES COOK: I'm not worried about that.

JW: What about your lawyer?

02.20.15 CHARLES COOK: She don't like it. I don't care. It ain't about no money for me. I don't care. She wants me to be, you know, when you went to Ground Zero, didn't make good for the case that you was able to work uh, I know that. And that's what I'm saying is I don't care. You know? I don't. enter it.

02.20.38 First of all, I never said it was anything physically wrong with me, other than my ear. That's what's wrong with me. And I have a serious problem with that. You know? And the (?) their, the insurance doctor is having me, he says he has a very bad problem. You know? He checked my hearing and he said yeah, he definitely has some problems. You know ok, I've lost a range and a whole lot of other stuff.

02.21.03 Uh, and he said he sees damage. So I you know, she said, yeah, but you could act like you was, can't move or something. I said I'm not gonna lie. I've never been a malingerer. That's never been my thing. If, if I wanted to do that, I could be collecting money from my bullet wound in my leg, 'cos the doctor wanted to give me like a partial payment years ago. I said I don't need it 'cos I, it doesn't bother me.

02.21.28 Now I look back at it, (?) I wish I had taken it a little bit of extra money (LAUGHS).

JW: Someone shot you?

CHARLES COOK: But that was in service. (?) I wish I had taken a little extra money.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: How's your health?

02.23.51 CHARLES COOK: Uh, I passed out a couple of weeks ago, I had to go in the hospital. My, I had taken some medication and it uh, I took it, two doses instead of one. And my pressure dropped to like 80 something over 70. And I told the doctor when I was up on the ward, that's impossible. So when he looked at it, (?) he saw what they had, and went (?) on the chart when they brought me in, it was 85 over 70. I said when they arrived, the EMS arrived, that same young lady who got the car, she had checked me out. It was like, she, 'cos she kept saying, 'cos she just new to being in here, she said, don't seem like it's right (LAUGHS).

02.24.36 It's too low. She said, nobody's supposed to live like it was this low. And I said, yeah, you're trying to kill me (LAUGHS). Oh, I slipped. (LAUGHS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What happened?

02.24.58 CHARLES COOK: Uh, she said I passed out, but I was conscious and aware of everything. But I just (?) got woozy. So (~JW~) I was, I was taken to the hospital, I stayed overnight (?)

JW: What medication?

02.25.12 CHARLES COOK: Uh, (Flonex?), it's for my prostate. But I can't take it, I know that I have taken it before and it makes me so I'm normally supposed to take it at night, I normally take it at night. But I took two pills, I forgot I had taken one, and I took another one. And I (?) got up, and (?) just zonked me out.

02.25.31 It just dropped my pressure too low.

JW: How's your chest?

02.25.38 CHARLES COOK: Uh, I seem to be all right, you know, I don't know (?) I don't bother it unless it bothers me. So when it bothers me, I don't bother it. I just keep on doing and doing.

JW: What about your coughing?

CHARLES COOK: I'm doing a lot better. I've been drinking water and cider vinegar and stuff like that.

JW: What about doctors?

02.26.00 CHARLES COOK: I, definitely stay away from doctors. As much as I, they got needles. Being as how I got to go this week and get a couple of shots. Not looking forward to that. I'm trying to decide, you know, in the arm or butt, but I think I'll take it in the cheek.

JW: What about the man who passed away recently?

02.26.35 CHARLES COOK: Well, my attitude is we chose our way to go. Uh, 'cos nobody forced us the volunteer to go down in there. But if being in the situation was, as it was, they lied about the conditions by telling us, well, they were lying us telling us that the air was all right. But to a man, we knew right away it wasn't. we knew when we was there on site, it wasn't. So we, we can't blame them, 'cos we knew.

02.27.08 You knew, I knew uh, everybody else who was there knew. And if they say otherwise, they're lying. 'Cos we knew how bad the toxins were down there. So. But it was just bad, because some people weren't even there an extended length of time and got messed up. Much less people put in as much time as I did, so. It's expected. But I chose my way to go, that's all I can say.

JW: You haven't gone to the doctors?

02.27.34 CHARLES COOK: I've gone to the doctors. But I, uh, they, whatever they say whatever you're doing, keep doing it, 'cos I'm clearing up. (~JW~) Yeah, I, I drink vinegar sometimes, vinegar cider, to clean my lungs, trying to clear my lungs. I still can't, I still always feel like I got, not as bad as it used to be clearing my throat, but now it's much better. (~JW~) And I, I walk a lot, run by, bikes, I've been doing a lot of that. I've been exercising, you know, I got this little (~JW~) playground here, but you know,

02.28.04 I ride bikes and walk the stairs. I walk 8 flights of stairs. Uh, that's working out.

JW: Do the doctors recommend the vinegar?

CHARLES COOK: No.

JW: Your grandmother's?

CHARLES COOK: Well, those are some old remedies, yeah.

JW: Your grandmother?

02.28.22 CHARLES COOK: Well, she, that was one of her remedies, but she ain't here to recommend it, but I just (?) went back in the book. And it's just like we used to have, when you have a real bad cough, my grandmother used to give you a drop, my mother did, a drop of turpentine and sugar. And it will knock all the cold out. If you got a real bad cold (?) it'll bring all that phlegm and everything out. Turpentine, (?) and it works.

JW: You're not worried about your health?

02.28.55 CHARLES COOK: No, I'm not worried about that. I, I stopped uh, I, I used to worry about death when I was a young man. But I turned over in a jeep and I decided no worry about it after that, 'cos I always felt I was gonna die young. And death ain't nothing. You know, it must not be bad, nobody came back complaining.

JW: You passed 40, too?

CHARLES COOK: That's what I said (~JW~) No, I thought it was gonna die before I was 20-something.

JW: And then 40?

02.29.28 CHARLES COOK: No, no 40, I wasn't uh, no, I wasn't worried about 40. Forty, I was just starting to have fun. I was really having fun, like now.

JW: How are your sons?

CHARLES COOK: Uh, they're (STOPS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.29.57 CHARLES COOK: One of them's ok, the other one is acting like a fool. But I'm not speaking with him at this moment. He called me up, you don't want to talk to me? I said no, I don't.

JW: Why not?

CHARLES COOK: He did something I didn't like, approve of, and he knows it.

JW: Medication thing?

02.30.15 CHARLES COOK: It's, it's a medication thing. He's not taking it. And he tried to explain something to me, and I said you can't explain nothing. He did something (?) I forgive him for it, but I'm not liking it.

JW: Danielle said one went off meds?

02.30.36 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, he wouldn't take it. That's the (?) one. Yeah. That's strange how the Lord did that. Uh, (?) they told us, if one has that uh, schizophrenia the other, both of them will have it. And they both did. And they both bright, smart. Really highly intelligent. My daughter's an epidemiologist, and they're uh, they (?) the youngest, uh, the oldest one is smarter than her. (?) But every time he's in college or in school he's, he can't study, he says, the medication keeps him from studying and he can't concentrate as much. But.

JW: Is he in school now?

02.31.20 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. He's working and in school. He's getting another degree. He's got his masters, so he's working on something else. I think he's got his masters, but he's working on something else now.

JW: Is your daughter still working for the UN?

CHARLES COOK: No, she works for World Health Organization.

JW: (COACHES RESPONSE)

02.31.41 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, yeah, she's uh, I just seen her uh, my wife and I went up to see her and my oldest son. We drove up on this week, this past week. Yeah, it was this week, 'cos I went down to Atlantic City with a (?) another girlfriend of mine, Claudette. And came back, then I went up with my wife.

02.32.00 'Cos we was gonna stay in Atlantic City but I had to go with my wife.

JW: When will you stop fooling around?

02.32.08 CHARLES COOK: I'm not fooling. Let me just say this. I want you to look, when you go out in the street, and see how many women you see, and how many men. And compare the rate of women to men. And look at war. Every time there's a war, all these women are widowed and left behind. They need (?) some extra men. They got it, the women know they got to share the men, because they don't, there's too many of them, and less uh, less for us. So I'm just keeping up my job, my end.

02.32.45 It's written, I got to do my work (LAUGHS). I know you don't accept that, but it's true. We got, you got work to do. You got to have your little (LAUGHS) when you get about 3 or 4 women, then you'll know that you're doing the right thing. 'Cos there's some lonely women out there needing your help.

02.32.58 They tired of them vibrators and things. They need some human touching. (?)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: How does everyone feel about you going to Louisiana?

02.33.37 CHARLES COOK: Well, my wife knew right away what it was gonna be before I started, the water started to changing, her and my daughter. But my wife told me, if you go to Louisiana, I'm going, too. So she's qualified to go. You know, she's a registered nurse. She's worked in an operating room, she's worked in intensive care, she was supervisor in both of those jobs.

02.34.00 So then she became uh, like the uh, head nurse of the whole hospital. So she's qualified, so she's telling me, if you're going down there, I'm going with you, 'cos she knows me. If she goes, then that's all right with me. I don't have a problem with it.

JW: Do you think she will?

02.34.28 CHARLES COOK: (COUGHS) Yes. She's already inquired how, how can I get down there with you? And so yeah, just go. I say, you can go and get down there on site and they'll just take you. They won't, they don't need nurse (?) so. They're gonna need health care people, and she's retired now. You know, (?) they didn't want to go. They don't want me to go. My girlfriend, uh, she definitely don't want me to go. And (~JW~)

JW: What did you say to her?

02.34.55 CHARLES COOK: I just told her, I'm going. I said (?) make up my mind, I'm going. So she's slowly getting then to (?). Now this other girl with the car, she definitely don't want me to go. So.

JW: What about your children?

02.35.12 CHARLES COOK: Well, my son didn't say anything about it. My daughter knows I'm going, because uh, I told her the other day I was up to her house, that I was going down. 'Cos

I got my ticket on, on line and she got it for me online for me. 'Cos I didn't know how to access it.

02.35.30 So she went to the computer and did it. I still haven't turned a computer on yet. And I'm still computer illiterate. And that's ok.

JW: Is your daughter involved?

02.35.51 CHARLES COOK: I don't know, I don't know. All I know is she's supposed to be on her way back this week to Paris, and that she's going on vacation. But she's, she's bouncing all over the world with everybody's stuff, so.

02.35.59 You know? So, you know, she's doing her survey on tuberculosis and AIDS and stuff. So. (?) I don't know if she's gonna be involved with this or not. She was involved when they had that uh, thing going up into Canada, you know? I think that was some kind of disease with a fish or chicken or something, I forget what it was.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.36.33 CHARLES COOK: SARS, yeah, SARS. So I don't know. But uh, she know I'm gonna take care of (?) myself. She know how her father is. (CLEARS THROAT)

JW: Is this what you'll be doing for the next couple of years?

02.36.59 CHARLES COOK: Well, I had to pack my bag, I brought this down here 'cos uh, your set up guy wanted to see what I had gotten, so, when I went to DC. So that's why I brought the bag with me (~JW~)

JW: But in general you're preparing to do this?

02.37.16 CHARLES COOK: Well, I'm not preparing, I'm prepared. There's a difference, I think. I'm prepared. I was preparing before. Or getting set up to do this, but I'm prepared, so. Yeah, I'm ready to do this if they had, that's why I did it so in case uh, something happens in the

country that's (really needs some?) you know, I could get down there and do water purification if I had to. I took that up in the service. You know? There are things I know. And I'm not limited.

JW: It's obvious 9-11 has been an influence. What's the connection?

02.37.57 CHARLES COOK: Give back. 'Cos a lot of (?) people gave to us, this is give back. I saw, I saw a fellow, reminded of a fellow (CLEARS THROAT) when he said he, he walked in from Louisiana or some place like that. He, about on the 3rd day he got in at Ground Zero. He didn't even stay that long. I have a picture of him. Next time I see you, maybe I could look it up on (?), or I'll bring it tomorrow. He walked and took by bus, by hitchhike all that to get up here.

02.38.30 And to do some kind of something. They say he did something (?) but they ended up throwing him out because you know, he did checks and they, you know, they only, they scrutinize everybody and you know, they vetted him out. But, but he wasn't the only one. There was others, you know, how, how'd you get here? I had to get here, I hitchhiked here, I drove all the way. People, you know? So this is give back.

02.39.00 Don't makes sense, I know, but it's give back.

JW: It does make sense. It's a lot of time, and it's a big commitment. You were inspired by 9-11, but are you changing for good?

02.39.32 CHARLES COOK: I don't know. I was just going over some papers I just seen. And I really been helping all my life. I just looked at some stuff. I had a recommendation when I was a teenager for saving a cop's life. And I was looking through my records at work, and I got about 7 or 8 commendations for assisting somebody in a police action, saving two people. And I got, they're written down, falling between trains, catching people, stuff like that.

02.40.02 So I really have been doing this for most of my life. And I didn't know it 'til I started looking through those papers, 'cos my old lady was saying, you got to start getting your papers together in case you die. And so when I was doing that (LAUGHS) I was, I found that information. You know, you put stuff together.

JW: Did you put stuff together this week?

CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I was doing that. That's what, that's what made me speak on about this right now.

JW: What did you do to get prepared?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.40.35 CHARLES COOK: Oh, no, I was just putting those papers together, 'cos I uh, she wants me to make out another will, a living will, 'cos she said it's over 7 years since I made one out and that kind of stuff, my girlfriend. So my wife has my will. And but I'm gonna make out two so that she could have something to feel more comfortable with, my girlfriend.

JW: Is this connected to going to Katrina?

02.41.00 CHARLES COOK: Well, that's what she feels. I'm (?) thinking I'm (?) you know, I don't think it's time for me to bend over and kiss it goodbye. I want to be here for a few more days. (CLEARS THROAT) But I'm, I'm gonna write out something just to make her feel comfortable.

JW: What are you thinking?

02.41.26 CHARLES COOK: Nothing. (LAUGHS) She's just, she's just covering her back (LAUGHS). I (?) I told her, I'm not gonna let you know if you got any money, 'cos I, I don't want to wake up tomorrow morning (LAUGHS) after you found out if it's really a good property, you might just say, well, it's time to go (LAUGHS).

JW: You have any other things that you've thought about?

CHARLES COOK: No, I wasn't thinking about anything. I was just thinking that Danielle's the set up girl (LAUGHS). She gets you to open up (~JW~)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.42.39 END OF TAPE # CC 20

TAPE # CC 21 09.10.2005
Charles Cook / B ROLL
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

03.01.01 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

DANIELLE: When Katrina happened, it was obvious you would want to help the blacks in New Orleans?

03.02.58 CHARLES COOK: No, I didn't look at it as all, totally black when I saw that, I just looked at the devastation. I (would have gone if it was?) totally all white. (?) that, the color thing. But I have a problem with how they're treating them. I have a problem with that. But that gets my (?) gets me a little upset. They're not doing the way they're supposed. But that, but now it's understandable they're treating them the way they did because they come to find out that the guy the head of FEMA didn't know the hell he's doing.

03.03.28 Unqualified, he should never. He should be, he should be brought up on, on murder charges. I really feel he should, because he put himself in a position, in an organization, that has to respond to emergencies where lives are involved, knowing he was not qualified in no sense of the world. He lied and he, he should be brought up on, and if they don't do that, I'm, I'm gonna really feel like they did something wrong. Because somebody else, I'll give you a for instance.

03.04.01 That general who came down there and told them men to sling them arms uh, the lieutenant general, someone like him would have had something going right away. I didn't expect them to be uh, in hurricane-force winds at the onset of that uh, thing. Because you can't send rescue workers into that situation, because you put, you put them in the same peril as the people that they're going to rescue. And you, you (?) really be having to send rescuers to rescue the rescuers.

03.04.32 Ok, so there was a time period that well, it, but, but to do something, but the rest of that, he was totally out of the water. He didn't know what he was doing. And it shows. He needs to be brought up on charges.

DANIELLE: Will that happen?

03.04.49 CHARLES COOK: Hell, no. Look who he's involved with. All from Texas. All going directly to the White House. Do you think (?) I'm gonna put myself in jail, be impeached? No. N-O, no. Oh, he was trying to do good. Oh. It's just uh, no.

DANIELLE: It's the worst patronage?

03.05.17 CHARLES COOK: Listen, you, you, when you put somebody in a position where they're handling lives, make sure you got somebody that knows what they're doing. He definitely didn't know what he was doing. I think I'm more qualified uh, for that job than he is. (?). That's just sad.

03.05.36 He's supposed to have onsite, in readiness, somebody to go in right away. He's supposed to have some boats, all that kind of stuff to go in there right away. He didn't have nothing. He didn't do nothing. That gets my, you know that's right, that's why they, he brought you in here. You know, there's a double cross here.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.05.59 CHARLES COOK: I'm gonna tell you something. He's a dead man walking, Jim. He's a dead man walking. He just doesn't know. I love him, but he's (LAUGHS) get a (LAUGHS).

DANIELLE: What do you mean?

CHARLES COOK: I'm killing him (LAUGHS).

DANIELLE: You have a long and varied history of work and are very qualified to go?

03.06.48 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I can go down there and lay tie, I know how to lay a tie uh, 'cos I did that for Penn Railroad when it was Pennsylvania Railroad. Hitting the rails, I've handled jack hammers. That's, I've done quite a few (?) and a combat construction specialist when I was in service.

03.07.03 Uh, I got some background, of hand's on and stuff. And uh, it don't take an iron horse to figure out if you're gonna move some barracks, and you got ten men, and you don't everyone go up and get a truck, to get a bag. Make a line and pass the bags down, you'll get there faster. So (?) It's just a matter of organization. Doing work. And how to work.

DANIELLE: Don't you worry about hurting women?

03.08.03 CHARLES COOK: Hurting them? No. I (?) you know, I never thought about that. Like that. No. Let me just say this. If it's anything better than, greater than a woman, JC took it with him, 'cos I don't know what it is. I don't abuse them. I don't curse at them. I don't slap them around, and I treat them very respectfully at all times. And I don't call them out their names, so.

03.08.32 And I think I'm doing my part for man's uh, you know, for mankind. There's a shortage of women uh, men. And there's a plenty of women, I told you that uh, we got to help y'all.

DANIELLE: What about Manae?

CHARLES COOK: Yeah, see, there you go. What about her?

DANIELLE: Do you think she'll be hurt?

03.08.57 CHARLES COOK: I took all punishment, I'm gonna tell you I had (?) punishment (LAUGHS). I broke down and gave her a little loving. (LAUGHS).

DANIELLE: Do you love all these other women? What about love?

03.09.13 CHARLES COOK: What is love? What (?) what's your definition of love?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.09.28 CHARLES COOK: I might not even know what the conception of love is. What is love? I know about commitment. I'm committed. When I mess with anybody (or see them?) I'm committed to them at all times. And when I stop being committed, I let them know. But I very seldom have to let go.

DANIELLE: Why?

CHARLES COOK: 'Cos I'm a nice person.

DANIELLE: Manae, your wife, you're committed to them?

CHARLES COOK: For life.

DANIELLE: What does commitment mean to you?

03.10.16 CHARLES COOK: It could be friendship, or it could be a love interest. And you bond to somebody and you say I will do for you, or I will give what I have of myself to you, you know, my time, if you need a shoulder to talk with or something, that's commitment to a friend.

03.10.35 Or commitment to a loved one. We're committed, ok?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

DANIELLE: You're committed to the people in your life?

03.11.09 CHARLES COOK: I'm uh, right now, I'm taking care of my aunt. Uh, I didn't say that bout it, but my aunt is very, she's got (?) the way she doesn't remember or her daughter doesn't

want to have anything to do with her. And she's in (?) a seminar school trying to become a minister. But she don't want to have nothing to do with her mother. But I said, how can you do that?

03.11.29 She said, that's what you're here for. You're the head of the household. You're the oldest in the family now, other than her mother, so I'm taking care of her. Her brother can't really do it because he had a stroke and it affected him. So that's my job now, to make sure she has a care keeper and all that. I have to go sign some papers this week. I was supposed to do it the other day, but I may (?) her son took her up. But I'll see them Monday. So. So I got those commitments.

DANIELLE: Do you ever feel selfish and want to do something for yourself?

03.12.04 CHARLES COOK: Eat a good mango, eat a whole watermelon. Stuff like that, yeah. (LAUGHS) That's, that's my selfish, I think. I don't see it any other way.

DANIELLE: What are your hopes for this trip to the Gulf?

03.12.30 CHARLES COOK: That the people that are displaced can be replaced back in the same places that they were, or better. (CLEARS THROAT) But I think a lot of those spaces, homes will have to be torn down. But I think it's a blessing in disguise, because many people that are in the projects and stuff like that, those are, they're gonna have to be leveled. They're gonna become homeowners. And becoming homeowners, a lot of them would never had jobs, will have to have jobs because the government's gonna have to put them to work to building their own homes.

03.13.06 So it's gonna be a way of getting them off of (?) welfare system that they've been on it. And it'll help the economy grow. So in a blessing, in a way it'll be good for them. 'Cos that topsoil, like I was telling Jim, all that topsoil, when they leveled that water, they're not saying on it, but I'm telling you now. They're gonna have to take that topsoil off the top of the, the girth and get rid of it if uh, they're saying the water's so infected that uh, any rescuers going in there, if they fall into the water, they can get an evacuate them out?

03.13.39 What's that tell you what they know is in there already? Ok? So. All that's gonna do when the water seeps down and goes out, it's gonna seep into the land. So they're gonna have to go down several feet, so that means it's gonna be massive dump soil's gonna have to come in from around the country to replace that soil.

03.14.00 And that, that's contaminated soil's gonna have to be taken some place. So that means somebody's gonna have to really do some work. And that's gonna be a long-term job. Not counting what's gonna take to build up those houses. So they're gonna have to level, burn. That's what I, I would burn, seriously that'll be the fastest way of doing it, controlled burning. Burn, so you could burn up some of that (?) debris and some of that (?) stuff. And they're gonna have to start filtering that water into the lake that, because that same water that they're saying is so toxic is going into the lake.

03.14.32 The (?) whatever they, they call that lake. That have a, we have a problem. I was telling Jim. All that's airborne stuff, it's gonna come back to us. Mosquitoes coming, biting, carrying the bad cholera that they, whatever it might be. Typhoid fever, it all of that's already going on there now and they know it, but they're trying to keep it down. One of the you know?

DANIELLE: You've done a lot of thinking about this. When you started seeing what was happening, what were your thoughts?

03.15.10 CHARLES COOK: I was thinking about what I just said. That uh, it's gonna be worse than uh, luckily I don't think it's gonna be no 10,000 deaths like the mayor was saying. But there's enough. You know, there's enough. There's enough. There's just too many uh, just too many, too many people uh, without hope right now. That in itself being if they get into a refuge, is enough to make them die, just 'cos they don't feel like wanting to live, you know? The fact that you got them out is not gonna save them from dying because they, they are, well, lord, you could take me 'cos I don't have nothing to live for, you know, that kind of attitude. So it, it's, it's ongoing, you know?

03.15.59 Like I said, the little kid, her mother's in one part of Texas, her brother's in another part. And she's in Maryland. You know? That's sad, you know, uh, you know, she's in you know, (?) I was glad I was able to tell her how to get, at least she got back in touch with her mother the

other day, because when I was in DC. But it, it's just sad, I don't know. It's really bad. You know? And Jim asked me about flirting.

03.16.28 I uh, there's a flirting line and there's a business line. I don't flirt or take advantage of situations, so there won't be no flirting. Taking advantage of a situation because a woman is displace or somebody's man is displaced or something like that. I just don't do those things.

DANIELLE: You were talking to some young ladies last time we were together, and later your voice changed.

03.17.05 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I was focusing on what I'm doing.

DANIELLE: What about the shift between your daily life an then getting into it?

CHARLES COOK: My (?) commitment to helping?

DANIELLE: Compare the two people that you are?

03.17.24 CHARLES COOK: Well, there's Good Time Charlie, and there's the serious Charles. Right now we're the serious Charles. I like, even though I'm serious Charles, I like to joke. And kid about the fact that you didn't got them big legs on you over there (LAUGHS). I like, you're my friend, I can tell you (LAUGHS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

CHARLES COOK: Nobody likes a bone but a dog, and he'll go bury it. So be thankful (LAUGHS) He may come back and dig it up every once in awhile. (LAUGHS). (STOPS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.18.38 CHARLES COOK: Well, you can get to hear about it when we're together sometimes. I'm not trying to toot no horn, so we're not doing that.

DANIELLE: Who do you define yourself as?

03.19.03 CHARLES COOK: I never thought about who I define myself as. And I've never had some, that question even addressed to me. Much less to have to think about it. So you coming at something that I've never even thought about (?). But to define myself? I'm a womanizer. Dog of all dogs.

03.19.28 Like the kid, joke, chasing beautiful woman, and wish he was 20 years younger (LAUGHS). See when I get embarrassed, I start going off (LAUGHS). And you're embarrassing me. I don't know. (LAUGHS) You know? What you want to do, you're supposed to be all right. I'm Danielle, you on the list, too. Dead woman walking (LAUGHS).

DANIELLE: When you're alone and you think about why you do what you do, and your values, what does that mean to you?

03.20.22 CHARLES COOK: I want to like, when I get up in the mirror to look at myself and say I've done the best I could. And not, stepped on nobody, hurt nobody, did anything that uh, but then, see that, I have a conflict there. 'Cos you're right about the women. 'Cos I know I could leave some hurt feelings. You know, 'cos they do get involved, emotionally. But I always tell them, what's going on and how I'm doing. But even in doing that, people will tend to believe that I can win you over from whatever.

03.21.01 They don't believe the truth sometimes. But. I, well, anyway, I try to be in, as best, as good a person as I can be. If I if I was a saint, and judge myself if I'm going to hell, there's only one thing that would keep me from going. Women. Other than that, I, I don't do any harm to nobody. You know? I like myself. I like, if I was looking for a friend, I would like him to be me.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

DANIELLE: What about your birthday coming up?

03.22.15 CHARLES COOK: I never like to celebrate my, a good friend of mine just passed (?) the funeral the other day, ok? A good friend of mine just passed. I never liked celebrating my birthday. But she made me want to look forward to celebrating my birthday.

03.22.28 I started thinking about what she did to me. When I turned 50, she brought me an envelope, a birthday card, and there was \$50 in there. She said, this is for you. So I started (?) and the next year I'll be 51. That's 101. Uh, 52, that's 153, you know? You know, and that's (?) I said shoot, by the time I get this age, I should have pretty good, you know, longevity. I'm looking forward to the longevity behind her. But uh, (LAUGHS) no.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.27.30 CHARLES COOK: I didn't know I could see so much despair in the people's faces (?) That's real sad, real, real sad. If you got any kind of humanity in you, you (?) got to get up and do something. I don't care who it is. Like I said, it could be a frog I'd have to go down there and help them. It ain't about black and white. It's just bad. I don't want to talk about the bad part of it, though.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.29.12 B ROLL – CHARLES' RED CROSS BAG CONTENTS

03.33.58 END OF TAPE # C.C. 21