

TAPE # CC 057
Charles Cook
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

01.00.31 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: How have you been?

01.06.04 CHARLES COOK: I (found out?) I've got arthritis in my knee. And the other day I told you that I have a virus that causes cancer and ulcers, so I have to take some meds. And I, there's three meds, medications that I have to take for it. But HIP is denying one until my doctor calls Monday. So.

JW: Who is denying it?

01.06.27 CHARLES COOK: HIP. You know, you got to get prior approval for one of the meds. (~JW~) That's all, but it's nothing to worry about, like I told you.

JW: What's the virus?

01.06.43 CHARLES COOK: Yes. High (?) something like that, H Lopix, something like that. (~JW~) I can't think of the name of it, but that's what it is. I had written it down, or the doctor had.

01.07.02 But (anyway, I don't remember what it is?). 'Cos it's the one they're denying. To look at that you would not know what it meant, so you know how doctors write? So I can't tell. I can't (?). Anyway.

JW: What's this?

01.07.20 CHARLES COOK: This is my ID so I don't have to be walking around carrying a wallet.
Makes it easier.

JW: How's your year and a half been?

01.07.30 CHARLES COOK: It's been good. I've had fun. You know? Just taking everything easy.
No change from the last time you seen me.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.07.44 CHARLES COOK: Seems like (?) with all this work y'all doing. And they haven't even put
that building up (?) level of the ground yet. Haven't done nothing. They just (?) a waste. It's
disrespectful.

JW: It's a lot of politics?

01.08.00 CHARLES COOK: It's very disrespectful. To all them guys in uniform that went in that
building. They should have been passed that. That's how I feel about it. So what you want to
ask me?

JW: What do you want to say?

01.08.27 CHARLES COOK: No, I ain't coming with nothing on my mind. I'm just trying to survive
this, this gridlock they have us in, holding down gas prices decently. That's the only thing I
want to see them do, just hold gas prices down, we'll be all right, 'cos gas prices make
everything else go up. You know, cause and effect. If it costs more to bring the merchandise
to you, they got to, of course they got to put that on the other end.

JW: What else is going on?

01.09.03 CHARLES COOK: Nothing. Nothing, since last time I spoke with you. Since I've been to (Ruskin?) I went up to another class and that was it. But other than that, I haven't been doing anything. I haven't (?) heard from FEMA. For whatever reason. The girl says she don't know why they haven't called me, so I'm just waiting to see what happens. Maybe it might be the economy.

01.09.28 You know, but I didn't sign on to work as a paid employee, I signed up to be a volunteer, so. Maybe I need to stress that to her. And then again, maybe I'll just wait 'til something happened. 'Cos it's been pretty quiet so nothing has happened, so I don't (?) there's never been a need yet for me. So. That's about it. So let's talk about something else, 'cos there ain't nothing, my life has been dull. On the real side, other than getting on that bike the other day, which was fun.

01.09.59 And today.

JW: Why has your life been dull?

01.10.03 CHARLES COOK: It's not all, when I say dull it's just that it's very routine. I play chess. All day, or play chess all day or pinochle. You know, so I've been just cool. Maybe it's because I'm nearing those senior years (LAUGHS). I can't turn these numbers around. Every number I have is too high to turn it around.

01.10.32 And you know, I used to be able to say well, when I'm 42 well, oh, well I can still say I'm 24. My numbers are 24, or 43 was 34. You know? A 6 and a 9 is kind of hard to turn around (LAUGHS). You know, so.

JW: You're 96?

01.10.49 CHARLES COOK: Yeah (LAUGHS) yeah. Don't sound too good. Well, I'll take 96, that'd be all right.

JW: What were you doing in Albany?

01.11.00 CHARLES COOK: Oh, Albany, I was there because I was going to the class and I had a layover. I took a layover in between going, rather than come all the way back home, I stayed in Albany, 'cos I knew somebody in Albany. I spent the night, we went out and had drinks. Or she had drinks. (Took her?) a friend of mine. It's nice to have friends close around. (?) I took, made a business thing into a pleasure thing at the same time.

01.11.29 And then I was gonna have some records. I told you that store has some of the best records. If you really need some records, that's the store, for old stuff 'cos you can't catch or find. And they have original wax copies. (?) I think I have a card.

JW: You didn't go to the doctor until the third year – why did you wait?

01.12.10 CHARLES COOK: Don't trouble trouble, 'til trouble troubles you. That's my motto. But I've been going a lot lately. I really been going to the doctor a lot lately. I can show you my appointment book. I've been going to the doctor (?) since the last time I went to Mount Sinai they suggested I see my doctor and let him follow up on some stuff.

01.12.35 And since then I've had a tube down my stomach. That's how they found out about this virus. (?) A tube the other way (LAUGHS). And I've been tube-d out. So they've really been checking me out. You know, they saw something that they didn't like, so. Now I found out what it was. But my doctor says this medication that he's gonna given me 9 out of 10 times he can get rid of the virus.

01.13.02 You know? And (?) you know, you come to go anyway, so it's no big thing.

JW: Why did you go in the third year?

01.13.25 CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) I went to, somebody asked me to go sing and I said I can't sing 'cos my throat is going. So then they said, you know, you haven't (?) you been to the clinic? And I said no, I hadn't been to the clinic. They said you need to go to the clinic, maybe they can clear it up. So that's what prompted me to go. And they haven't (?) get cleared up, but it's Ok. It's not as bad as it used to be.

JW: Why do you think that is?

01.13.49 CHARLES COOK: Apple cider vinegar. And eating the right food. I take apple cider vinegar every day. And some other stuff. I've got a lot of junk that (?) got a friend of mine's a herbalist, so he's got me on a regimine.

JW: How long have you been seeing the herbalist?

01.14.10 CHARLES COOK: Now it's 2 ½ years, 3 years. You know? About 3 years now. Actually more than that. It's gonna be 4 (?) you know, where I'm actually participating, following in what he's telling me to take.

JW: What do you mean?

01.14.27 CHARLES COOK: Taking the stuff that he's told me to take.

JW: Who?

01.14.31 CHARLES COOK: I listening more (?) I'm listening to everybody now. I'm just doing it all and combining everything. You know? 'Cos I have a very enlarged prostate, trying to shrink that. But this herbalist has guaranteed he's gonna, he's got something that can get it down, so take this stuff. 'Cos I know somebody else had a, one larger than mine and his went down, taking the herbs. I'm supposed to pick that up this week.

JW: Why didn't you let us film you at the doctor's?

01.15.07 CHARLES COOK: Well. It's not about the doctors and stuff. Nobody wants to hear about sickness and stuff. I don't think, you know? You know, my sickness is my sickness. It's very a burden I have to carry for myself.

01.15.33 I don't even let my, my wife's a nurse. When I, we used to go to the hospital when we together. She wouldn't even, I'd tell her don't even come. She was the head at the hospital

she was at, and I wouldn't go to her hospital. I mean, I go to the hospital by myself. I do my sickness by myself.

JW: Is that the way you've always been?

01.15.54 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. Yeah, I've always been that way. May sound crazy, but that's how I do. I, I would take, when I had an extended stay in the hospital when I was married, I told my wife just bring two things. In fact, you ain't got to bring me two things. I got everything I wanted before I go, got in there. I said you don't have to (?). In fact, don't tell nobody even where I'm at 'til I get out. That's the way that went.

JW: Why is that?

01.16.26 CHARLES COOK: That's (?) I don't know. That's just the way I am. (~JW~) I don't want nobody to come and say (?) boy you look bad. And smile and say oh, you look so good, and you know they lying. (LAUGHS) Then (?) you know? I just rather say stay (?) 'til I heal up by myself (LAUGHS).

JW: Did you go to the doctor for a period of time?

01.17.00 CHARLES COOK: No, I haven't had no hospital stay since I've seen you. But I, truthfully have been going to the doctor, though. (?) I've gone to more doctors in the last month than I've been going in my whole, entire life. 'Cos I've always avoided the doctor. Always. At least one, two, this month alone.

01.17.30 Three. This month. In May, I had one. Two, three, four. That's four. April. One, two. Three. Four. Not counting the VA, I don't even write them down.

01.18.00 Five. That's in April. Six. March. I, I've been really been going, though. Seven. In March, twice.

JW: Why do you have to keep going back?

01.18.17 CHARLES COOK: The results of tests. They've been giving me a lot of tests. (~JW~) Some of them have been favorable, some haven't.

JW: Such as?

01.18.33 CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) this one that I just told you, my stomach is not favorable. But it's curable. I had a bruise in my kidneys, they had to go extend that. I told you about that. That's where they put that (?) put that camera down my penis. That wasn't too good. That was a little painful (LAUGHS).

01.19.03 Yeah, lord, don't jump for that one (LAUGHS). Try to walk the other way.

JW: What's the outcome?

01.19.15 CHARLES COOK: I'm all right, I'm all right. Most of my stuff is curable. You know? They're catching everything. So I'm ok. I'm all right. There's nothing to worry about. If it was (~JW~)

JW: I'm curious to know?

CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) I'm not giving out no information (?) you to know, but I'm ok.

JW: That's what I mean?

(SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION)

01.19.35 CHARLES COOK: I tell you, I'm kind of private that way. But I'm ok. (~JW~) Renee's been trying to find out. I keep saying I'm all right, don't worry about it. I'm all right, don't worry, I'm Ok.

JW: Right?

CHARLES COOK: I could be buried tomorrow and I'll still be saying (LAUGHS) I'm all right.

JW: This is something you haven't shared with us for 8 years?

01.20.00 CHARLES COOK: I thought I told you everything. (~JW~) Except the medical part (~JW~) this right now.

JW: The medical part seems to be critical?

01.20.09 CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) I swallowed all that dust which was (~JW~) horrendous (~JW~)

(SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION)

JW: You went to find coffins?

01.20.18 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, well, I did all that.

JW: What's going on?

01.20.21 CHARLES COOK: I'm ok now. (~JW~)

JW: What has happened?

01.20.31 CHARLES COOK: What happened is that I never had no fear about it, but most of my worries or concerns have been over, you know, nothing I needed really. Say I got to worry about it, ok? That's all I can say, not and as for my friends, there it's not for them to worry about. Like (?) he said you better (?) you tell him I'm all right. He'd be the first to know if I'm not all right.

JW: Were you ever not all right?

01.21.10 CHARLES COOK: Yes. At the beginning I wasn't really myself.

JW: How did that look?

01.21.20 CHARLES COOK: I was very, very short of breath, 'til I started taking the regiment that that guy put me on in Brooklyn. I couldn't hardly (?) I became asthmatic. (~JW~) Which (?) So that, but I'm getting over that. But my breath is still short of breath. But I contribute that to the fact that you know, the big 7-0 is next year. So. That has a lot to do with it.

JW: You had an appointment 4 years into this, you found that you were sick?

01.22.01 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, they were, they were telling me there was nothing there. There was nothing wrong, and I kept saying it was something. You know? I kept telling them I swallowed glass and no, no, no, that's impossible. You know, then the, they turned that around and say yeah, we see signs that you might have, you know? Yeah, I felt vindicated 'cos I kept telling people I was like they were almost starting to make me convinced I wasn't, I wasn't, I didn't know what I was talking about.

JW: Did you think that for awhile/

01.22.31 CHARLES COOK: No. I already, I knew. I knew like on that second day I told the (?) we, the fellow and I said we're fucked. (LAUGHS) 'Cos all that stuff we swallowed. I mean, it was a mouthful of stuff. You know? And we knew it, we were working down there by the first day what was down there. 'Cos they were coming around saying you know, this stuff is toxic and what it was. Pulverized glass, pulverized plastic, steel, everything else.

01.23.03 And we swallowed all that. So we had to ingest it, so if you ingested it, and you ate some of it. It was, eating and the canvas down there, it was blowing right in on the food.

JW: What did the doctor say to vindicate you?

01.23.33 CHARLES COOK: No, he, he went on to say that the reports and everything shows that a lot of y'all did ingest glass. And your symptoms are, we're finding with other, what everybody else is saying, about the burning in the chest and the sticking like you've got something sticking yourself. And I told him, I said I didn't need you to vindicate, but it made me feel better than knowing that I'm not crazy.

01.24.02 That's all. So now let's get back to this project.

JW: What project?

01.24.12 CHARLES COOK: This one y'all are doing. (~JW~) Y'all gonna wrap this thing up, and y'all gonna try and put it in 2030 when they finally build the building?

JW: Maybe.

01.24.29 CHARLES COOK: (LAUGHS) Because, see, I figure if they do one brick every other day, 2030, they might be on the second floor.

JW: Have you been there lately?

01.24.41 CHARLES COOK: Oh, I was, I went through there, I had to drive that way, a couple of days ago. My girlfriend, she drives an ambulance, and she left for (?) her phone or something. So I had to go down there where she was at and get her phone to her.

01.24.59 I'm still taller than what I, the structure. You know, the street level, I don't see nothing up.

JW: It's getting up?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

CHARLES COOK: Well, above what ground?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.25.28 CHARLES COOK: All I saw was from ten, I (?) Ladder 10. It was Engine 10. So it didn't look like it was up. Maybe it is. Well, hopefully that's a good thing you know. It doesn't take long. Once they put steel up it don't take long to do, though.

JW: They have steel up now?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.27.06 CHARLES COOK: They need to erect that for the firefighters, though. And police officers. All those that responded. They really need that. 'Cos I think it's disgraceful that they even arguing over it.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.27.29 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, see, they waited and messed it around, now they don't know how to go. (~JW~) But you know, that's, I believe (?) of the United States would pay for it. All, all the sites. A dollar here and a dollar there. That's not much. Just saying, put it up for a vote – do you mind \$2 coming out of your tax this year towards the memorial? (?) would be built.

01.28.01 Just a suggestion. I wouldn't mind. But. You know.

JW: Do you think about 9-11?

01.28.23 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, I, I do. And some, if I had been a young man, I would be probably in Iraq right now. 'Cos I would have joined up. (LAUGHS) I told you that the Navy sent me a recruitment letter two years back? Join the SEALS (LAUGHS). I can't get over that. I know they made a blunder (LAUGHS). I wonder how many (?) that?

01.29.00 I should have framed that. That I should have framed.

JW: What did you do in Albany?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

- 01.29.16 CHARLES COOK: Ariskinee? Well, Ariskinee was a class on bioterror, warfare. And we discussed several scenarios, one of which actually played out since I've been up there, and that's the swine flu.
- 01.29.38 Swine flu actually is not supposed to be able to exist in hot weather. My theory. No, that, that's not my theory, but my theory is, it was set deliberately during that peak time for students coming down for the spring break.
- 01.30.02 Because you see how many deaths that they had. So somebody made a large containment of it and exposed it to a particular area. Only reason it wasn't a lot of students there because they had all these kidnappers and everything going on. But yet they say it's a new outbreak, something they never seen. But in order to have a vaccine for flu, it has to be in existence already so that you can make a vaccine for it.
- 01.30.35 They already had, they said, a vaccine for it. So that contradicts itself. It can't be new if you got a vaccine. It can't exist in hot weather unless it was heavily concentrated. When it came to New York, they said don't worry about 'cos this hot weather will kill it. But yet it killed 100 and some people in Mexico.
- 01.31.03 And all those kids that went down there bringing it back. Had they all went because I think (?) what it is now. Haven't got a chance to speak with my daughter about it. But I really would like to have speak to her. That's how I feel, so I'll talk to her one day about it.

JW: Are you in touch with the Red Cross?

- 01.31.27 CHARLES COOK: I spoke to, I saw somebody was supervisor and he told me, you know, you need to come back. I haven't responded to that as of yet.

JW: Are you disappointed by them?

- 01.31.40 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. In some ways, yeah.

JW: Why?

01.31.46 CHARLES COOK: Well. I did something during Katrina where a guy was going, was being accused of something on a Naval base that he didn't do. And he was gonna go to jail.

01.32.00 I saw the incident but I went and reported it. And I told them at the time when I report it, they'll find some reason to kick me out of here. And they did. Soon as I reported it, I was gone. They didn't want me to testify. I still go the papers and stuff. And I'm somewhat disappointed with them, yeah. I got a little sour taste. It wasn't the Red Cross, it was the people (?), you know, but I just, yeah. 'Cos I'm a little, I had a little, I could have sued. Really sued, because they left me with no transportation, took my card with my credit, that my money was on and abandoned me on the highway.

01.32.44 And had to fend for myself. But I was able to fend for myself, which was Ok. Yeah. So you know, I'm (~JW~)

JW: Are you still disappointed with them?

01.33.03 CHARLES COOK: Well, not disappointed with them. I said, I like what the Red Cross does, Red Cross does good work. I just don't like what happened to me, it wasn't a good, it wasn't a good scenario. But.

JW: What about this year?

01.33.28 CHARLES COOK: No, no, no. No. No, I didn't think that. No. 'Cos I haven't applied to sign up with them.

JW: You haven't?

01.33.37 CHARLES COOK: No, no, no, no. No. I haven't applied, no. I was gonna do that, and I talked to the guy and I said get back in touch if you need me, but then it's just that I haven't

spoken with them. Since then, when the supervisor told me I should come in and apply. But I haven't done it.

JW: You're taking the courses?

01.33.58 CHARLES COOK: Not for them. I'm taking the courses for FEMA. (~JW~) That's what I'm taking them for. (~JW~) And for the fact that I'm on the New York City Health and Medical response team. I'm a volunteer with that. So. That's why I'm taking the courses. I'm actively involved with them, at this time.

JW: Could you be activated at any time?

01.34.33 CHARLES COOK: Yeah. (~JW~) Yeah. (?)

JW: The courses are necessary to get this card?

01.35.09 CHARLES COOK: No. (~JW~) No. But when I got the card I started, decided I need to make sure I get more training, so in case I come up on the situation I at least know what's going on and what to do. And I won't be oh, standing around and gawking.

JW: Why are you doing that?

01.35.32 CHARLES COOK: I figure you got to give something back. I can't go fight the fools that bombed us. So this is my way of contributing. Like I told you, if I was a young man, I'd be fighting right now. Or dead.

JW: Why would you be fighting?

01.35.50 CHARLES COOK: They, they came in here. My daddy told me something, let's see. I put it like my daddy told me, it's an old joke. He said, the English had the, proud of their flag and they fly it all over the world where they've conquered all over 'cos they've conquered more

land than anything, so they're proud of their flag. And they looked at America, what do you have, America? American felt he had to stop and thing, he didn't know yet. So the Russian said, yeah, I'm the big bear. We've conquered everything and my big bear, we just go anywhere we want and we crap over anything we want.

01.36.36 So the American said, well, we ain't got nothing but an eagle for our symbol. I pick up your shit and wipe your ass with them (LAUGHS) your flag (LAUGHS). So there you go. So they came and crapped on us, and did everything else. So you know? You know why – you would go. You know why is somebody else would go. It's just the right thing to do. That's why so (?) many young men are dying over there now, 'cos it was the right thing to do.

01.37.11 And then their families stand up for them and these people say it was stupid, that's disrespectful. Because these liberties that we have are hard-earned. I have a grandfather that never came back from Italy. You know, so. He's still buried over there. In the Army cemetery. I think it's Ibarra, I think that's the name of it.

JW: Are you angry about what happened still?

01.37.52 CHARLES COOK: Yes. And the fact that they have not asserted the effort that they should to get one man, when they could get one man. They can get him if they really wanted to get him. But they, I don't think they're really putting their effort out for it. Right amount of money will loosen a lot of tongues. It might not loosen some tongues. But they will (?) loosen one of those tongues.

JW: What's your feeling about it?

01.38.34 CHARLES COOK: They just haven't done the right thing about it, that's all. I think they wanted to prolong it. To gain control of certain things. That's all. At the expense of us.

JW: What do you mean?

01.38.57 CHARLES COOK: I feel when they, they went out of there, they went with a just cause (~JW~)

JW: Who is they?

- 01.39.04 CHARLES COOK: Bush (~JW~) and company. They went with a just cause. But instead of putting all the resources into capturing him, they didn't want to do that. Cheney made more money a little bit. He's down with Halliburton. Halliburton's supplying gas to American troops and charging them, the Americans a dollar and something more than what the gas cost. The company's just making money. Here the gas cost 13 cent, 12 cent. They're charging a dollar and something for gas. And all the supplies that they're giving them. It's about money.
- 01.39.37 And the longer it stays out there, the more money they make. That's what I feel's gonna. If you kill him, you have no reason to keep staying 'cos your reason for being in Afghanistan is to capture him. So once you capture him, there's no reason, 'cos they don't have no strife within the country for us to be (in a mix with it?). They don't really need to be in Iraq.
- 01.40.08 The army is up and going now, and the police is just up and going. We created more hell than, than when Sadam Hussein was there. They had less strife and less crime when he was (?) cutting off their heads. It's just like those hijackers that were hijacking recently.
- 01.40.33 They hijacked a boat and how they got onto the boat, they came out of China, had on custom uniforms. They got the boat and they killed all, killed the people but they, they caught them. The guy who gave them the uniforms and all that, they had a public execution. They shot all of them. You know, there hasn't been a hijacking in China water since?
- 01.40.58 That's because they're doing what they're supposed to do – killing the fools and let them know there's a price for what you do. And we're not doing that. I'm not with Bush. I mean, this new president with this, not on torture stuff. I would torture them, their mamma, I cut their baby's toes off if it meant getting information to keep our lives safe. That may sound cold and callous.
- 01.41.28 My doctor told me I was cold and callous the other day because I said that. But it's true. If you're dealing with a ruthless enemy that's, they don't have no regard for your life or your family's life, why should you have any regard for his? Ok, that's the bad side of me, and I would do that. In a heartbeat.
- 01.41.56 And I'm capable of doing that.

JW: Is there any good in 9-11?

01.42.04 CHARLES COOK: None. Too many innocent people died. There's no good in it at all.

JW: Did you change?

01.42.15 CHARLES COOK: It made me more convicted, you know, made me more focused to try and do something for others. That was the change. You know, that was the change. Other than that, I was lollygagging and doing what I wanted to do. But there's no good in any time people die needlessly.

01.42.38 When all you'd have to do is sit down and talk. Issues can be resolved. Stop people stop being so greedy about certain things.

JW: Isn't that what Obama is suggesting?

01.42.55 CHARLES COOK: He's doing that. But for him to try and prosecute the CIA or any of them people for torturing those people, he's crazy. We would have had the Brooklyn bridge bombed if he had, this guy hadn't broke two days before the incident. So that water boarding? They ain't do it enough. Water boarding, it ain't no big thing. You just got to put it in your mind I'm gonna do it, I'll take it, and now they done told the secret about how you could get it to stop it so they won't continue. All you got to do is act like you're going, you're hallucinating and they'll stop. (LAUGHS) So that treatment is gone, they can't use that. They tell too much (LAUGHS).

01.43.48 Too much information's not always good.

JW: What did you think about today's interview?

01.43.56 CHARLES COOK: Well. I really didn't think about it too much. I read my paper, kept my mind focused on the cop's funeral in Brooklyn. And stuff like that, that's all. That should

have never happened with him. That's sad. Never, never happen. That could never, ever happen to a white man running, chasing somebody and get shot in the back.

01.44.28 They tried to claim he got shot in the stomach. See, the perception is, a black man with a gun got to be a criminal. Can't be a cop. They see a white man with a gun, he got to be the good guy. That's the sad (?) that's the way it exists here - that's sad. Real sad. And they've done it too many times. It's not the first time, it's about five or six times in my lifetime I don't know exactly.

01.44.55 You never heard of an officer running with a pistol and he's white and getting shot in the back. And sad part about it, they work out of the same precinct. They don't really work out of the same precinct, 'cos he's actually (Highland?). But they assigned in the same area. Well. So that's what I was thinking about when I was coming down here.

01.45.28 I don't try to be thinking about coming down here, 'cos then I'll be thinking about what I'm gonna say.

JW: Why are you thinking about that?

01.45.36 CHARLES COOK: That's (?) would be thinking about what, what (?) I'm gonna get down there and say? So I want to come down here with an open mind (~JW~).

JW: What do you want to say now that your mind's opened?

01.45.45 CHARLES COOK: You got me opened up. Oh. Not, just life is pretty good, that's all. It's good to be A, looking up and breathe.

01.46.02 It's good to see LA whipping everybody's ass. Kobe doing his thing.

JW: They play again?

01.46.09 CHARLES COOK: They're playing today. (~JW~) Yeah, I picked LA to go all the way. (~JW~) And I picked Orlando to be in the playoffs. Those are the two teams I thought would be there are there.

JW: You thought Orlando would be there?

- 01.46.22 CHARLES COOK: Oh, yeah, yeah. I thought they would. Because of Howard. And they had handled Cleveland before. So. I didn't think that would change. But LeBron doesn't have a supporting cast. And all the people on his team are old, you know, for basketball age. Next year it'll be Boston. Would have been Boston if Garnett was there. They would have repeated.
- 01.46.58 'Cos they give a matchup that none of them can really handle. And next year, Marberry will be back in shape. He wasn't in shape yet. His legs weren't there to shoot. So he'll get back in shape, and if they keep him, they'll be all right. Don't have a very strong bench. And the Nicks were stupid. They got rid of a kid that's really good. I can't think of his name. But he, he can shoot, he can play, the Lakers gonna resign him. (?) it's a funny name.
- 01.47.30 But he's gonna be a superstar on the Kobe level. Ariza or, or some kind of something like that. He's gonna be really good.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

01.47.47 END OF TAPE# CC 057

TAPE # CC 058
Charles Cook
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

02.00.37 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What wisdom can you share?

02.02.48 CHARLES COOK: Hold close to the ones you love. And let them know you love them every day, 'cos they don't know when you might come back. Or when you might never see them again. So try to leave with a good word all the time. So I have nothing to regret.

02.03.10 Like I said, I hate you. And soon as you walk out the door, they might get hit by a car. Oh, I really didn't mean to say that. And maybe they're despondent. Because of what you said, you feel like you was at fault. So. Just try.

02.03.30 Do better for mankind, regardless of color or creed, you know? 'Cos we're all here together, better learn it. (?) That's about all, I wouldn't say. Just enjoy your life, that's it. Just enjoy life.

02.04.01 I'm waiting to see a little guy, see if he's gonna be like a guy I used to play with Dallas. I'm gonna see if he can play football. Hope I'm around to see it. And I think his name's Emmet?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.04.23 CHARLES COOK: So I understand we're gonna be finishing up in a half an hour? I've always felt embarrassed about this program. I've never felt I should be sitting in this seat. Never. It's. When I was approached, I was saying no then.

02.05.00 Because Danielle was saying (?) and I kept saying no, no, no. And then he had me said, yeah, just sign, thinking that he was, she was gonna take him also. So I said, well, now I'll sign it

and he's gonna sign like that. But it didn't happen that way. But it's humbling. That's all I can say.

- 02.05.28 But I still don't feel right that I should be sitting here, never have. 'Cos there's some real heroes who should have been sitting here. That's how I look at it. I just happen to be one of many that responded that day, that's all.
- 02.05.58 That and no more and no less. That's how I feel. (LAUGHS) so. That, I'm always embarrassed by it, that's the truth. Especially when I put that back on Good Morning America with (?) (LAUGHS).
- 02.06.29 Can't get over it. But I did have one, behind 9-11, I did get something that really made me feel proud. When I was asked to march at the head of the parade at Columbus Day with the firefighters. That was, that's better than a medal of honor. That was really something very nice. That was by accident, but it, but they asked me so it was nice.
- 02.07.02 I did pass the reviewing stand with them. I had never seen myself but some people told me, they'd seen me. But I wish they could redo this whole, that while thing back and it never ever happened. Like I said, too many good people died, for what? I still have yet to find out what they were (?).
- 02.07.34 What their agenda is and why they want to put the buildings down? I don't know. And we have men dying over there when we don't even have to be there. They got, they got a bomb that could kill everything in sight and leave the buildings standing. And you know, when you got stuff like that, why not use it? Why put (?) boots on the ground? You're killing my kids? Well, we're gonna let you know everything in this area is dead.
- 02.08.16 Quickly see how fast they change their minds about doing certain things. And I do like Israel for that reason – they do overkill. We're not doing that. We're too civilized. Yeah.
- 02.08.36 So. Yeah, I'm still again, I got a real mean streak in me at times. But that's what's gonna be my way. If I was Obama, I'd say listen. We've been playing real nice, but this is it. I'll give you fair warning – anything happens again everything in that area, you got a day to get out.
- 02.09.00 Or they ain't gonna leave it, boom. I told you. Anything else happen again, from that region, everything in that area in a hundred miles is gone. You don't want to believe me? Boom. All that'll stop. Quickly. If they don't stop it they (LAUGHS) won't be nothing left.

02.09.29 So what's the question that you want to ask me, the significant question that will wrap this thing up for 9 years and change that we've been together, almost. Almost, no, it's not 9 but you know what I'm talking about 8 and change?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What is the significant question you would ask?

02.10.03 CHARLES COOK: Do I like my interviewer? Yes, very much so. He has good people around him. One very pushy one, but good people around him, Danielle (LAUGHS)

JW: She's very good?

02.10.18 CHARLES COOK: Oh, god, is she pushy (LAUGHS).

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: (REPEATS PREVIOUS QUESTION)

02.10.39 CHARLES COOK: I don't know. I'd have to think on that. I would like to see the project. I would like to know did any of the footage when I was standing at Ground Zero next to the senators and mayor, mayor what's his name? The two mayors? Come out in this thing?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

CHARLES COOK: I'd like to have that. Even a picture of it. It don't have to be (?) the film.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: (REPEATS PREVIOUS QUESTION)

02.11.27 CHARLES COOK: I used to box a little bit (LAUGHS).

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.11.44 CHARLES COOK: I really don't know. How did it feel going down on a motorcycle on that Good Morning America? Embarrassing (LAUGHS).

02.12.01 How did it feel going down to Katrina helping people? Exhilarating. How did it feel when they kicked you out for saving somebody from going to jail? Proud that I stood up. But hurtful that they did it to me, knowing they was gonna do that, 'cos I told them they would do it. 'Cos somebody, it happened to somebody else who spoke out against something like that. So.

02.12.30 Are you happy with your life? Yes. Would you do anything over again? Of course, we say we'd do something different. But being as we don't have foresight to the past, or the present, as they say (?) no, I let it all ride. Because I've met good people and I've met bad people.

02.12.59 And out of the good and the bad, I've learned. Would I go back and spank my wife for having such big boys? I might do that, but none of them kids done grew so big, 'cos I told them when they was, looked at my son and said I must have had some help here. But the two knuckleheads look just like me, so that's the only thing that saved them (LAUGHS). But I've never spanked my kids.

02.13.32 I only hit my youngest son once, I slapped him when he was full grown. Saying the wrong word. He just got disrespectful. But to his credit, he ain't do nothing but look. And I'm glad he just looked, 'cos when I grabbed him, I had a handful. (LAUGHS) He's 6'3 and 240, two-something? Yeah.

02.13.59 But I wasn't concerned about that. (?). I would've like to have really become a cyclist on a motorcycle. Not a bicycle, cyclist, (on motorbikes?) where I can do wheelies and everything. That's the one thing in life I would have accomplished, because whenever you're finish that, whatever they finish, whenever that building's up, I and Mitch are gonna ride across country. If it's just the two of us, we're gonna do it together.

02.14.33 That's my goal. So that's why I'm asking when are they gonna put the building up. Because I want to ride across, going the same route we went, not necessarily the same route per se, but

going to Pennsylvania and D.C., and back up - and come in on 9-11, at 9-11, during the time that the buildings were going down.

02.15.07 'Cos that means we have to do a lot of night riding that day, to make it up. On time, by getting here by 4 hours from D.C., yeah. So that's, that's our goal.

02.15.28 That's my goal. (COUGHS) You've heard me speak of Mitch before. He's the ex-FBI agent. He's good people, nice guy. Some people don't like him. I love him, 'cos he's been true to his word. And you're only as good as your word. And he's solid gold with me. Like you. Oh, shut up, it wasn't meant to be no compliment, just a fact.

02.16.01 Yeah. What question would I ask myself? (LAUGHS) I'm a jokester so I can't really say what I want to say (LAUGHS). No. (LAUGHS)

JW: Who would I have met if I met you 7 years before 9-11?

02.16.44 CHARLES COOK: Seven years before? Well. Go back. If you had met me when, in the '80s or something like that? You would have met a entrepreneur.

02.17.00 Making about \$1500 a day. 'Cos I was busting my hinny. I was making good money. I had my own business, I had a van service. And I was getting calls from all over. You know, I would go down to the hotels and get called, take 15 people out, that's \$150 by, a trip, I'd make about 5 trips a day.

02.17.30 Plus other espresso charge I was doing. I was making nice money then. On the average, I was making over \$1000 a day. I would stay out 12 hours, but. And then I was working with different groups, got hooked up with. Redd Foxx, Jackson Browne, Dianna Ross. U-2. Millie Jackson once.

02.18.03 Who else?

JW: What about in 1999?

02.18.17 CHARLES COOK: Well, that person then was non-committed to anything other than the ladies. I had no focus. Other than I'm a retiree and I don't have to work and I'm gonna spend my money where I want to spend it.

02.18.35 And life is good, I got a nice person with my life. You know, my kids' out of college. So you know? That's how my life was. And that's how my life is now, really. You know, other than the fact that I'm committed to try and give back service to the community, you know?

02.18.58 When I stopped with my van I had put enough money away to give my son, my sons, like \$40,000 apiece and stuff like that, make sure they, when they got a certain age, 30, they both received that money. You know, that's, did right by them. And my daughter. I didn't give her a penny. Not a penny (LAUGHS).

02.19.28 NYU, Columbia University (LAUGHS). No, but I didn't even help really with that. You know, I really should have given her something. I got to give her some money later on. She gonna get hers. So (?) what are you gonna ask?

JW: Do you have any more questions?

02.19.56 CHARLES COOK: Do I have any more questions? You are gonna take another, I know you're (?) gonna take another film of me before it's all over, 'cos you got to see me on the bike. I know. I'll let you know when I'm on the bike. Maybe I'll get on the bike tomorrow, you could just catch me as I'm riding.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.20.34 CHARLES COOK: I have a main doctor, he's gonna explain my whole situation. And I'm gonna make an appointment. When I make the appointment, I will let you know. (~JW~) I promise. (~JW~) His name is Dr. Rohm. He is getting all of my information and putting it all together, and he can sit down and tell me that all this. But that's the clinic that they don't want you in.

JW: (RESTATE RESPONSE)

02.21.03 CHARLES COOK: Clinic that y'all can't shoot in. They didn't want them to come in the clinic. They, that's the only thing.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.21.22 CHARLES COOK: It's HIP, at 2300 Westchester Avenue. (~JW~) But that's where all of my, all these other six doctors that I'm seeing, 'cos I'm going to 6 different doctors at this present time. Because they're specialists in their fields. (~JW~) And he is, he is the (?) the catcher or the pilot, whatever you want to say, of all of the information (~JW~) that's (?) whatever.

02.21.50 He's report back and everything.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What can you say about grief?

02.22.33 CHARLES COOK: I can tell you about grief for me. You come to go. So I accept the fact of change in life, that you must sometimes go through the dirt. (~JW~) I've, I've had two people or four people in my life that I thought I was supposed to cry over because of how close they were to me. One was a girlfriend. And she had cancer and it metastasized.

02.23.03 And she had large breasts so they ended up cutting off one breast and (?) but I didn't cry over that. And I tried to cry at the funeral. But it's just not in me, 'cos I, I was happy for her. Because she needed to go, because of how bad the cancer was. 'Cos she died in her own saliva. Next person was my, was my father. And I didn't cry for him, and I was close to my father. I cried when my grandmother died like a baby.

02.23.38 That's the only person I ever cried for. and (LAUGHS) I told my wife, my wife, I'm 'cos I had, I gave her two funerals, gave her one here, and I took her body down to Maryland and buried her in Maryland, 'cos (?) I had property in Maryland. I ended up getting (?) when she died, I just let the property go. I let the church or somebody got it. I didn't want to (?) all that. I didn't even want to go down there, 'cos that's how hard it hurt me. But I was taking her body down and I was driving my Lincoln.

02.24.07 And I told my wife, I had to pull over. She said what's wrong? I said, it started raining (LAUGHS). She (?) what do you mean started? I said all in the car it's raining, I was (LAUGHS) crying so much I said, she said, just pull over to the road. She said, (?) she calls

me Butch. Butch, I told you don't go. I, I kept telling her I'm all right. I was so messed up over my grandmother.

- 02.24.28 Now, my mother died, I, it didn't bother me. My grandmother? That was my friend. Yeah, my grandmother hurt me, when she went. I'm mad with her. She was 94? But I wanted to spank her ass for her leaving me (LAUGHS). But we used to play pinochle (?) we were close, me and my grandmother. And I lived with my parents, but it was like my grandmother raised me. But.
- 02.24.56 Because I came up and my mother and my father were there. Throughout more of my maturing years, until I went in the service. So. It's not like I was foisted off to my grandmother or something like that. But we were just close. I didn't really realize why she was close with me until years later. But I had that. I had a lot of rebellion in me, not I used to fight all the time. (?) in Catholic school they couldn't do nothing with me (LAUGHS).
- 02.25.32 I was always getting in trouble fighting. And you know, and I wasn't just fighting one person, I've always fighting like two or three of them, 'cos my father made me learn to fight. So I was busting up them, those little punks, messing with me in my short pants. 'Cos they made me go to school with short pants (LAUGHS). And oh, they laugh at you with the short pants. Little red guy with the short pants. (LAUGHS) Oh, you want to tease me? All right, you'll see (LAUGHS). Wait.
- 02.26.00 And the guy (?) one guy was on, it was my grandmother, my mother and my godmother, we all came to see the show. In Catholic school. And I'm in my white short pants. And all the other boys got their long white pants on. And they teasing me. So we started out in the courtyard. And (?) but he always had help. And he teased me upon the stage, and the next day I was popping all three of them. (LAUGHS)
- 02.26.37 So when I'm walking down the street, this white outfit was all black (LAUGHS). So I heard my appointment (?) said Catherine, you better take your son. That ain't my son, that's your godson (LAUGHS). My grandmother, I don't know him (LAUGHS). So that's the way I was. Yeah. But I was close to my grandma. You know, but she saved me, 'cos my father's gonna tear my butt up, (?) he's just like you.
- 02.26.59 You were the same way you was at school, so don't be hitting on him. I'm so glad (LAUGHS). So. That was my grandmother.

JW: And 9-11?

02.27.13 CHARLES COOK: I didn't cry for anybody.

JW: Katrina?

02.27.20 CHARLES COOK: I did cry there. I didn't realize it, but I did, I remember now. I cried when I realized some of the people, and I saw things at ground zero that's worse in some respects 'cos you seen pieces, parts of people. But in Katrina, it was worse. Because people are still living, some of them. Lot, most of them. And all this stuff is gonna, I broke down when I really saw, I broke down one time. Yeah, I did. Unfortunately, I did. That, (?) normally I think I got good composure.

0228.00 But I broke down over there. It was something about it that just hit me. You know, and it was hit me at the worst time. I remember now. It hit me when you, y'all was in the truck with y'all. And it was supposed to go film the area, and it hit me. I (?) you know, 'cos I didn't realizes, and I had been in the area before. It was something about it. You know, 'cos I tried, normally what I do, I'll see something but I take my mind away from it.

02.28.31 You know, it's there, but it's not there. That's how I deal with a lot of stuff, so I can go on and do what I got to do. But. That, that down there really was devastating. 'Cos a lot of people grieved, you know, lost so much, lost everything. You, you live here and the next thing you come back and you got rubble.

02.28.59 I never seen nothing like that in my life. That was devastating, truly, truly was. I hope I never, or we ever experience that again in life. Yeah, that bothered me. So those two times, yeah, I, I grieved a little. Yeah. Yeah, I did a little crying. I'm, I must admit. So I'm a punk, ok?

JW: What about the nature of grief, where you were at the armory?

02.29.46 CHARLES COOK: (MID-STATEMENT) in the Port Authority. Yeah, that, see you making me remember, yeah. I block certain things out. Yeah, I remember that, yeah, I said no, that's

when I said I can't do it no more. Yeah. (~JW~). Yeah, those three times, yes. So I'm a big pooh-pooh. I (?) am a little chicken.

JW: Why do you think we grieve?

02.30.10 CHARLES COOK: If you don't grieve, it'll boil up in you and you'll go half crazy I would think. You have to release it. It's like some pot and you put a top on it, it's supposed to be whistling. It's got to blow off that steam sometime, you got to blow it off.

02.30.29 So you got to expel it some kind of way. That's what my theory is, that's how I think about it. So to be able to cope, you got to deal with it, accept it, grieve over it, and get it over with and then you can move on. 'Cos see? I, I had forgotten about that thing in Port Authority. That's (?) wasn't one of the memories I want to remember.

02.30.59 'Cos made me like I say, woo. Those were people who were walking around, people yeah. I didn't want to remember that. Yeah. The bad part about 9-11 I just pushed it to the back. I put it on that shelf my wife tells me about. Take the, got anything bad, you put it, go in the kitchen, put it in a box and put it on the shelf, and lock it up away. So that was locked away, so you just brought it back out. So now I'm putting it back in the shelf, along with my grandma, along with (?) and we gonna put them back up there, and I'm gonna go along smiling like everything's everything. Ok?

02.31.41 So case closed, I don't know about that no more. 'Til somebody bring it up again (LAUGHS). Did you ever try that thing that I told you about that box in the kitchen?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.31.58 CHARLES COOK: You got to imagine you're walking in the kitchen, picking up the box, put all that bad stuff away, put it in that cabinet. And locking it away. You're gonna deal with that later on. It works. I do the same thing with pain, when I have pain, we all (?) like (my leg that's bothering me now?) you know? Say well, I'll think about this tomorrow. The pain's still there, but I put my mind to another spot. It's just annoying, but you know?

JW: Is that what you did with your health?

02.32.30 CHARLES COOK: Of course.

JW: Did you mentally do that?

02.32.38 CHARLES COOK: Always, (?) I do that, I use that. That's my tool.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.33.05 CHARLES COOK: That's what my wife taught me. My wife taught me this, about 20, 30 years ago. 'Cos that's what, that's probably why I didn't go to the doctor for them 3 years. See, you've just brought out something that I didn't even realize. That's probably why I didn't go. 'Cos I sure put it away, when I was, when my chest was bothering me and I (?) I'm not gonna deal with it, lock it away and just go on. See?

02.33.29 You've enlightened me to something.

JW: What made you pull it out?

02.33.43 CHARLES COOK: No, I knew right way, day 2 I was messed up.

JW: But after you put it away why did you pull it out?

(SIMULTANEOUS CONVERSATION)

02.33.55 CHARLES COOK: Yeah, when I was gonna dance, 'cos they you know I used to sing. Said why don't you come sing at the church? And I said I can't sing, my voice is gone. They said what? You (?) why don't you go see if they can do something about it? Which I really have not have really addressed. I've gone to the clinic but never told me about is there some way they can clear my throat - yet. Ain't that crazy? Still haven't done it yet. I wish I could have one of them old records when I used to sing. You would not know or think it was me.

JW: You have a good voice.

- 02.34.28 CHARLES COOK: No, I used to have a good voice. I don't have a good voice now. I used to have a really nice. I used to have one of them voice when I can honestly, seriously, we used to come sing. We sound like 3 or 4 different other groups. Groups that you know, well-named groups. I've been on the Alma Johns Show (against?) groups like the Spinners and stuff like that, we, we'd knock them out. But when I used to come on stage, girls just throw them things take them things off, them undies? Throw them on the stage (LAUGHS). I'm serious.
- 02.34.57 Seriously. We had, we had something going. But we had a knucklehead in the group and he wanted to do wrong and just let it all go. But we had a nice, we had a nice sound, really nice sound. If we were singing in this room right now, when back in the, when I was young, we'd make the windows vibrate. Rattle. (?) like that. (?) 'cos of the sound. Our sound was such that it'd go (?) you could hear the windows (?) like that. And we (?) if we got into a certain, we was trying to break windows. We used to see if we could make one break, 'cos (?) the acoustics (?). you know? And you could hear the windows actually going (?) like that.
- 02.35.44 Yeah. That's true, too. When the we (?) was going to school, when I was going to school, the police used to come and get us and tell us please don't sing here. Please do not sing, 'cos when we'd come out of the school, we (?) we'd come down 59th Street.
- 02.36.01 And one day we came down to 59th Street and somebody said sing, sing. And we sang, the conductor would, didn't close the doors for a long time, people just packing down. And they just stood around and just listened to us sing. And so the cops said, this is dangerous, so please don't sing here. So (?) we don't want you to stop singing. But go upstairs on the next level. And every day when we'd come through, people'd be standing there waiting for us to come down. (?) we were really good.
- 02.36.28 We really were good. And we liked to sing in the subway 'cos it had a, acoustics that we liked, and we would practice like that.

JW: What happened when you have the appointments – did you take the box down?

- 02.36.43 CHARLES COOK: No. (?) with these I'm just doing what I got to do. I'm not even worried about those. I'm just doing everything I'm supposed to do now. I told my doctor, I told you (you all?) I said, next time I start, and you can see from the (?) I've been, I would keep all my appointments, Mount Sinai, I told my doctor, I said whatever you tell me to do, I will do.
- 02.37.03 And I've been doing everything he's asked me. Yes, Friday I had appointment, I made that appointment, right (that?) appointment. That's when he gave me the medicine. So the three, three prescriptions. But I got to get another one filled. 'Cos I, Danielle said can't you do Friday? I said no, I have an appointment. But it didn't last as long as I thought it was gonna last. That was really, really fast and he really made a consultation out of it, you know. He just told me, you have such, you have a virus that causes ulcers and it also causes cancer.
- 02.37.34 But that's the bad news, but the good news is I think I can get rid of it. I said ok. That's good. So we'll see.

JW: What do you think of remembering 9-11?

- 02.37.57 CHARLES COOK: Never forget. Revenge. That's what I think about. Never forgive. Not just never forget, never forgive. I ain't forgiving them for that. Forgetting is one thing, but I ain't, I can't forget that. That's unforgivable.

JW: Is it?

- 02.38.21 CHARLES COOK: Yes, it is. Scranton, too. And the Pentagon? You know? Had they attacked military outposts, I could deal with that. But this? Too many innocents, and they, luckily, the building wasn't filled the way it could have been filled. You realize how many people more would have been, maybe 5000 more people at least. No. When I heard them people coming off that roof, out them windows, and that sound, them hitting?
- 02.39.08 That that's what got me going down there was I'm listening to the radio and watching the TV. And I was watching it. They had a pro-b he was, strange, he was a pro-B looking for his first fire, that's a rookie police, (?) fireman, and they were showing it, and then I could see the plane going in like that, and my eyes went just like that, looked and I saw and I said that's no accident.

- 02.39.33 I'm saying to myself, and damn. And they turned around and they start shooting the (?). And so I got the radio on and listening, and they had this guy get on there, and he was talking about, he was on the 70 something story and he said, (?) he couldn't find a way out. And he said, all I found is this lady, he said, after awhile he kept saying, talking, said, I, I don't know what we gonna do. He said, well, don't worry about it. And he said, we, we all right. And that's the last they heard him say something, then they heard him say something, said, two people coming out hand in hand.
- 02.40.07 That's when I did a little tear then. And got my ass up and put on my shit, and went downtown. 'Cos I knew I was gonna be needed. 'Cos it, you know, at first I knew it, you know, well, the fire department take it. But at that point, I knew I was gonna be needed. Yeah.
- 02.40.34 I'd do it again. Under the same circumstances, with no hesitation. I'd never forgive them bastards, excuse my French. Anyway. Yeah, my daughter's, one of her friends died in that building. (?) Ion.
- 02.41.03 His wife is a very nice (?) I met them years ago. He died in that building. I didn't realize it 'til later on. But we had dinner last year with her. So. it didn't affect me directly, but later on I come to find out it did affect me, 'cos it affected my daughter.
- 02.41.34 And I'd had met the young lady. She lives in Brooklyn. And then a friend of mine, when I was down there working with the Red Cross, I helped him, he ended up dying. (?) from complications from down there. So and it's affected people's lives. 'Cos I helped him to get some money for, he couldn't even go back to work and he worked, had a good job with (?) and he couldn't even go back to work. He ended up getting real sick.
- 02.42.10 I didn't know why the lord has allowed me not to get real, real sick. And I feel funny about that, that I ain't really, but when, when I jumped on my health right away I just started doing things that try and change it around. But I've been blessed that way.

JW: Do you feel guilty about that?

- 02.42.27 CHARLES COOK: So what? You're just crazy, right? That's stupid, right? (~JW~) That I do feel, that I seen so many other people who's sicker than I am, and I was in longer, and I, but I, I did jump on my health faster. I was, jumped on it right away and started taking stuff.

Me, I'm just blessed, the lord blessed me really. 'Cos I should be in a box or be gone a long time ago. You know?

02.42.57 Yeah, I do feel guilty that way. It's crazy, yeah, but I do. 'Cos there's so many people, there wasn't even (that many?) that long a time that got real sick. I've just been blessed not to get real sick. I'm thankful, lord, don't, don't take it the wrong way now if you hear me (LAUGHS). Just don't get (?). Yeah. Yeah, I do, to be honest.

02.43.30 Yeah, I do feel embarrassed about that part of it. Yeah. I never really realized that, but I do.

JW: Guilt's a funny thing. It's not like any other emotion?

CHARLES COOK: Hidden factor (LAUGHS).

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

02.44.09 CHARLES COOK: It's like I attribute it to three guys, standing in the dugout. Bomb goes off, the guy in the middle don't get nothing wrong with him. The two other guys die. Why didn't I get it, that type of thing.

02.44.28 That's only way I can contribute it. You're not sorry that you did, didn't die. But you wonder, you know, so. And I look at it, and I keep thinking, well, he ain't give me all this sickness like others, so maybe I can go and do something else. So I'm giving back. That's why I keep saying I'm giving back. I never realized that, but that's part of the reason.

02.45.08 Yeah. You got to give back. Got to give back for every day you're here. And give back for those that can't give back. 'Cos I know to this day, I know that the camaraderie that I felt down there, when guys said.

02.45.31 A guy told me he said a little scared of the one building that they was thinking that might first come down when we were first there. He said if something happens, I said I'll come get you regardless if the building's coming down or not. And he said I would do the same for you. It was just knowing that you would do that for one another. And I know to this day that even though they knew they was gonna die, if they thought they could still (of service?) save somebody, them firemen would still been going in that building to save somebody.

02.45.59 I believe that (more?) in my heart. I really, truly believe it. The prudent thing would have been telling them to get out. But they would have been somebody saying, though, I could save somebody. That's the kind of character those people have down there. That's why I say it's shameful they haven't done something already. They need to be ashamed of themselves. Bloomberg, all of them. Bloomberg got enough money to, all of them. Arguing over that.

02.46.30 It's just shameful.

JW: Is that one of the reasons you were sad for Katrina?

02.46.39 CHARLES COOK: No. It was on the shelf. It was on the shelf. Katrina, I just felt messed up for Katrina, 'cos Katrina was just, I was in a spot, the guy's house two miles away (LAUGHS). What kind of stuff is that, two miles away from the foundation.

02.46.58 Swept away. I said where's your house? He said, it's about a mile and a half down that-away. (LAUGHS) That's just sad. Real sad. Very, very sad. No. I have nothing to feel guilt about that Ground Zero at all. Not that I lived or anything like that, I (?) .

02.47.28 I really don't. I just, I'm glad I'm not sick, you know, 'cos other's so sick.

JW: Is that why you don't want to talk about it?

02.47.40 CHARLES COOK: Might be so. I'm not as sick as I could have been. If I hadn't jumped on my health. 'Cos I started doing stuff right away. Right away. There was somebody down there and they told me, said start taking this stuff. And I started taking it. So I think I owe them for being as well as I am.

02.48.06 Yeah. I should have rode down my motorcycle down here now. 'Cos I'm going, after I leave here, I'm gonna go play some chess in the VA hospital. In the Bronx. Something like, nice to be riding in the open, no nothing on, around you. I'm getting better.

02.48.29 Just learning how to, got to do these wheelies. 'Cos I'm gonna do a wheelie. (LAUGHS)

JW: Anything else you'd like to say?

- 02.48.40 CHARLES COOK: Well I've met some nice people, current company included and through this project, so. There's nothing else I can say. I just hope the people, the other 9 people that are coping better than most people. Hope they're coping with it.
- 02.49.00 It'll be interesting to meet them, though. I would really like to meet them. That's what I'd like to do. But then it's not a, it's not a highlight. Because we probably share something with that, it would be nice to share. 'Cos indirectly we, we are directly connected.
- 02.49.32 If that makes sense. Not just talking about this film. You know? That, that hole (?) a lot of lives together. I learned to have a lot of respect for those guys in that blue uniform. You know? Changed that way.
- 02.49.58 They were all right and (?) they're going right back to the same old shit, though. (LAUGHS) But. I still have a respect for their job, 'cos that job is not easy. Any given moment it can be taken from them. Yeah. They're my heroes. You know, I don't use that word too willingly. Willie Mays was a hero.
- 02.50.30 Willie Mays was no hero. I would say Jackie Robinson was a hero, because he put his life on the line. Jesse Owens, when he put his life on the line, somebody putting their life on the line, those are what you call heroes. A schoolteacher who throws himself in front of a bullet for, to save a student (?) is a hero.
- 02.51.00 He's a hero 'cos he caught the fly ball. You know, he's no hero. (?) You know, when people assert themselves in positions where they come in harm's way, and I'm not talking about myself 'cos I didn't put myself in harm's way, those are heroes. Those are real heroes. And they're willing to sacrifice all, those are heroes.
- 02.51.32 You know? And they say, well, oh, Robinson went out and just played ball, but he knew when he was going out before he got there that he was gonna have death threats, all of that. And he still went. That's a man with courage and conviction, so he was my hero. I always say Robinson's my hero for, as far as anybody goes. But (STOPS)
- 02.51.53 END OF TAPE # C.C 058

TAPE # CC 059
Charles Cook
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

03.00.06 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: After Robinson?

03.00.18 CHARLES COOK: After Robinson, I (give?) my heroes are those firemen that died in that building. You know?

03.00.28 To put your life unselfishly before all this. That's a hero, to me. You know, you can't do no more than that. You know? You got my utmost respect. You know? Self-sacrifice (?).

03.00.59 I still say that it's shameful that they're not doing anything to make this thing happen for these people. To do anything less is disgraceful. They can argue and bicker over something like that. If they can't raise the money, let the people (?) New York raise it, 'cos we could do it. You know? Yeah.

03.01.48 So you glad you getting rid of me now, after all this time? Yes you are. You don't have no headache. Is he coming? Is he gonna be on time? Did you get in touch with him? Why is he giving us such a hard time to go.

03.02.04 Oh you don't want to do this? Oh. Yeah, I can hear it now. I'm really, boy I done got that headache now. Danielle said I was trying to be funny with her, but I had a lot of stuff. I had to take care of my baby, Destiny. I take her to her dance class. I started her on this thing. And I take her every Tuesday and Thursday and we're there 'til 9 o'clock at night.

03.02.28 It's an Africa drum class. (~JW~) Oh, it's nice. (~JW~) It is great, and I like going. (~JW~). I do. The drum, the music is good (~JW~) and the dancing is good. You know? And she's getting into it real good, she can dance. And then I like to look at all the eye candy, just standing there, just a (jumpin'?). I'm saying (LAUGHS). But it's nice, though. But I did have those appointments.

03.03.00 And I was supposed to be taking her someplace today. But I cancelled it since she was saying, you know, (?)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Thank you, C.C.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Why do you like helping people now?

03.07.00 CHARLES COOK: Oh, you see, I like it, though. I really do. Well. I didn't know I liked it, excuse me, until I went with the Red Cross and was doing disaster services. And a lady had gotten burnt out. And she was, her son was trying to just push her aside.

03.07.28 And I was. He just was callous to his own mother. So I asked her, did she have any other relatives? And had he had his way, she was gonna go in some hotel. I said, but don't you have a home or something like that? Yeah, but she can't come with me. So I asked the lady, I said do you have any other relatives? She say yes.

03.07.58 So I said, could you give me the number? And I called her uncle, his uncle. And I explained what was going on. I said I will be able to get her some money and stuff, but her own son don't want to have nothing to do with her. He said what? And he was there in less than five minutes. And he straightened that out. And I felt good. It made me feel even better to see the little, the look on his son's face, her son's face, that he could not just have pushed his mother aside like that. So I like the idea of helping. It made me feel good to help somebody. So that's why I like helping. It, I found out it's gratifying. It's better than money, too.

03.08.40 It's really nice to help. When you can help somebody, it's a good feeling, and I felt good when I was down at Katrina, I was able to help. Put a smile on some of those people's face. So it's rewarding. Selfishly, it is rewarding. You know?

03.08.58 I didn't realize it was rewarding, but it is. You know, to help. Just to. I, I (?) when people say giving is a good thing, (?) I do understand it. You know, you may not be giving them money, but you're giving up service or giving up time to listen or something.

JW: Do you have a sense of belonging when you're doing that?

03.09.21 CHARLES COOK: Of course. Yeah. Yeah. It's empowering in some sense that you can help somebody. It's better than not being able to help. You know, you can oh, I can't help, I don't know what to do. That's why I start taking those classes, so should a situation arise, I won't have to sit on the side and say what would happen if they released some dust, what should you do? Should you look into the dust? Should you turn around? Should you go to the side? You know?

03.10.00 The fact that I can say, listen, turn your back towards the dust, because the particles will go around you, you know? 'Cos they just go around an object. As if you're facing it, it's gonna get you, be sideways it's gonna get you. Just don't panic. So. That's why I went there, so I can get knowledge in case.

03.10.29 Knowledge is needed. You used to do that as a little boy, too. (LAUGHS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.14.00 B ROLL - CAMERA

JW: Is helping like belonging?

03.14.25 CHARLES COOK: I would think so, somewhat. It's about being part of a community, being part of a structure or something. That (?) sense of belonging, yeah. It's a, is it more, it's more a purposeful thing than anything else. Like you got a purpose. 'Cos I wasn't really doing anything with my time. But now I have purpose. You know? When I'm helping somebody I have purpose, there's a purpose there.

03.14.59 You know? You should not waste your time or your life. I would like to look back at my friend and say what can I say about C.C.? He was a womanizer. Ok. We could accept that. But he was true and honest with his friends. And I didn't lie to my wife or my girlfriends. I told them all, one life, one wife. And if you can accept that, that's the way it is.

03.15.34 You know? Speaking about my friend, that's him calling right now.

JW: What would you say to friends about being a helper?

03.15.42 CHARLES COOK: Get involved. Get involved.

JW: On your epitaph?

03.15.48 CHARLES COOK: On my epitaph? I don't know. I've done so many things. You know, I (?) looked over some of the jobs I've done. I've been a stevedore. Worked for railway (?) United Parcels. I worked for Penn Railroad, doing track department. The city, post office. I've always worked - cab driver. Had my own business.

03.16.21 He was honest. And didn't go the easy way when he could have gone the easy way. I've done my share of dirt. There for the grace of God go I, 'cos I did put a bullet in a man's head. Many years ago. Could be still a lot down for that. But the right people were with me at the right time. You know? So I'm, I'm managed to miss that. But. So God has spared me. I tried to do right by people. Try to keep my word to my friends.

03.17.00 And that's all I can say. I wasn't abusive to anybody. I ain't never struck my wife, never called her a name. (?) You know? So. I like myself. You know? I do like myself. So. That's the most important. Like I say I like myself. If I had some daughters, I'd want them to marry somebody like me.

03.17.30 I'd just have to tell them, baby, he's gonna do what he gonna do, but he'll be home. He'll take care of the bills. Don't worry about it. So (LAUGHS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

03.17.55 B ROLL – CLOSE-UPS, STILLS

03.21.00 ROOM TONE

03.22.31 PICK UP – AUDIO ONLY, END OF ROLL 2

CHARLES COOK: Because we probably share something in that. It would be nice to share. 'Cos indirectly, we are directly connected, if that makes sense. (COUGHS) I'm not just talking about this film. That, that hole pitted a lot of lives together.

- 03.23.03 I learned to have a lot of respect for those guys in that blue uniform. I changed that way. They were all right and went, they going right back to the same old shit, though (LAUGHS). But I still have A respect for their job 'cos that job is not easy. Any given moment it's can be taken from them.
- 03.23.34 They're my heroes. You know, (I used?) that word too willingly. Willie Mays was a hero. Willie Mays was no hero. I would say Jackie Robinson was a hero 'cos he put his life on the line. Jesse Owens, when he put his life on the line, somebody putting their life on the line, those are what you call heroes.
- 03.24.08 A schoolteacher who throws himself in front of a bullet for, to save a student, or a car, he's a hero. He's a hero 'cos he caught the fly ball – he ain't no hero. You follow? You know, when people assert themselves in position where they come in harm's way - I'm not talking about myself 'cos I didn't put myself in harm's way – those are heroes.
- 03.24.37 Those are real heroes. When they're willing to sacrifice all, those are heroes. You know? And they say well, Robinson went out and just played ball. But he knew when he was going out before he got there that he was gonna have death threats. All of that, and he still went.
- 3.25.01 That's a man with courage, conviction. So he was my hero. I always say Robinson was my hero for, as far as anybody goes, but after that, 9-11, them firefighters, they my heroes. So those are the only two people I would consider as heroes, up until, well he was the only one up until that time, but now them firefighters up in that building – yeah. 'Cos I've seen them in action.
- 03.25.31 'Cos it took a lot to go crawl down in them holes and stuff was still (~JW~) So. Yeah. So those are the heroes. And you a hero, come in here, coming to Harlem. Without a shotgun (LAUGHS)
- 03.26.08 END OF TAPE # CC 059