

Ciacchella, Matthew

Godward, Kamron

1st Period

Arthur Cook

United States Army

1966-1993

2016

Cook, Arthur B. Jr.

Born in 1943 in Missouri. At three months old, he traveled to Corona California with his mother and father where Cook grew up and went to school. What started as a seemingly average boy's life changed dramatically after his fateful decision to join the United States Army. The experiences he had set up for the amazing life he's had as a Vietnam war veteran. His philosophies and ways of life greatly changed and were influenced by the many near death experiences and regiment training he went through as an officer in the Infantry.

Cook grew up like any teenage boy did back then. In Corona, where he grew up, he played baseball, basketball, and ran track in high school. Not only did he love sports and loved playing them, he also enjoyed girls and hangin' out with friends. One day while still attending high school, he got hired for his first job, working at a service station in 1958. He got hired for this job when he was just fifteen years old. Back then it was more common to be working a job at that age. Cook felt that this job fit him well because it ran parallel with his love for cars. During his time there, a woman came in for an oil change and they forgot to put oil back in the car. She didn't want the car anymore since it wasn't working properly, and that's how he got his

first car, a blown flathead v8 1951 ford. They offered him the car for virtually nothing since it still needed oil, throughout the years he put work into the car and made it into a sweet hotrod. As his time in high school ended and he started his adventures in college, and it was time to decide what he wanted to do with his life. As he thought about it, he was inspired by his father to join the army, his father, an army vet himself, was wounded in WWII. This war vet felt that joining the service was a great way of life and as he raised young Cook, he instilled upon him great pride for his country. With this built into his life, he wanted to join the 105th airborne division just like his dad but he says, "I just couldn't make it across the street."

During his time in College, he wasn't very on top of his work, and like most young people, he had some laziness. After some thought, his great American pride and influence from his father, influenced him to enlist into the Army as an infantry soldier. Before serving though, he met the love of his life and got married. This was tough because as an enlisted soldier, he was enrolled in several military officer schools, training above the level of an average soldier. These schools were in the east coast because the Army wants a new soldier to be taken out of their home completely and have almost everything erased before the intense training where they "mold" the soldiers to their liking. It was very crazy to fly all the way to Texas on a big plane, when he has never flown before, or been out of the state. Little did he know he would be flying on planes many more times. His Advanced Infantry Training took place at Fort Dix, New Jersey. As a platoon leader, in charge of about 40 men, he had deal with a lot of hard subjects such as racism. His 1st day on the job as a commander for the truck company, two black guys he was in charge of were arguing and using racial slurs and such. He asked them fiercely if it was okay someone who was white said those things. They replied no, so he went on to ask why it was okay

that they said those things to each other. Cook said, "I'm prejudice as hell, but black and white isn't my prejudism, its of those who work and don't work, and we came here to work, we don't have to be here, but you're here, if you're going to work, then stay and let's work, otherwise get out of here!" His next job involved burials at the Arlington National Cemetery. After graduating from officer schools and completing boot camp it came time for his active duty in the Vietnam war. During active duty he became a highly decorated officer earning many service medals and badges. One of them being a Silver star. He was a First Lieutenant, and on August 21, 1968 he served with Company C on a combat operation in the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation. Company C came under an intense hostile attack. During the initial contact with the enemy, three armored personnel carriers were hit by RPG rounds causing them to burst into flames. Even though he was in the line of fire, he ran to the damaged vehicles and made sure all wounded were evacuated. Soon after the Commanding Officer was wounded, Cook immediately assumed command. He worked hard and quick remembering everything he was trained to do. /with the number of casualties rising, he gave the order to withdraw. Even with the heavy Viet Cong fire, he made sure all the wounded were placed aboard the vehicles and evacuated to safety. His valorous actions saved many many lives through his personal bravery, aggressiveness, and devotion. The way he sees it, he's gotta put his men first, because he was determined to not let them down no matter how hard things got. He fought the way he was trained and he feels you should apply that to life. One of the hardest parts of serving wasn't even just the intense fighting. It was also the inability to see his wife and, missing the birth of his daughter.

With his new life experiences after the military, he went back to school. Though he had to act as if he had never been in Vietnam, with having people throw stuff when he first came

back, things got better. Eight years after coming back, him and his friends went to a bar to meet up, they all wore their military clothes. For the first time after serving, they felt support and love from civilians. They went to pay for their drinks but the bartender told them that their drinks were paid for by some other fellow who thanked them for their service. For 30 years he worked as a manager of his phone company. Now that he was back in college, no longer was he that C average student, he did the work as he was told to. You've got to study the way you want to succeed. Similarly to how he trained the way he fought, saving his life many times. The only time it was really hard for him was the time period he wasn't able to talk about it much since most people didn't respond pleasantly to Vietnam Vets. He was once driving on the freeway in his hot rod and he was about to drive under a bridge then, this huge fear of a machine gun nest being on the other side caused him to swerve and almost crash. Since coming home, he's a very light sleeper, but through talking about it and telling his stories to people, he can sleep a lot better and he is very happy with his life.

All in all, Cook has lived a fulfilling life. He has a lot of stories to tell and with his life experiences he has become wise and very happy. He has changed a lot through the years, starting as an average teenager, then a brave soldier, and now a proud war vet, Cook is living a wonderful life. Through all his travels, life experiences, and philosophies, Cook believes you have to do what you can to survive but when it's your time it's your time, so you need to work hard and work the way you want to succeed. This isn't the end of his story, and although he won't be fighting communists again, he is still a honorable influence, and someone to look up to.