

Lonnie Cook, one of the last survivors from the USS Arizona has Passed Away

August 1, 2019

By Tim Stanley, Tulsa World

Lonnie Cook, a former Oklahoman who was one of the last survivors of the USS Arizona at Pearl Harbor, died Wednesday in California, his family said. He was 98. He will be buried in his hometown of Morris, family said.

Cook, who grew up in Morris and was a longtime resident, moved to Carmichael, California, last year to be close to family. Of the nearly 2,400 Americans killed in the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the USS Arizona was responsible for almost half, taking 1,103 men down with it. Cook was one of about 300 able to escape the sinking ship.

According to the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, which acknowledged Cook's death on its Facebook page, there are four Arizona survivors remaining. Cook was a beloved member of Tulsa's Last Man's Club, an area group of Pearl Harbor survivors and their family members. The club coordinated a special send-off last year for Cook and his wife, gathering dozens of well-wishers at the airport before their departure.

During the Pearl Harbor attack, with the battleship Arizona in flames and sinking, Cook joined in efforts to help fallen shipmates. Some he knew personally, but "they were burned so much I couldn't tell who they were," Cook, who was 19 when he enlisted, told the Tulsa World once. "All their clothes were burned off, eyelashes, hair. ... A lot of them didn't make it." Before the ship went under, Cook and other survivors were able to evacuate in boats. For the rest of the war, Cook would serve on destroyers. He was part of several historic battles, including at Midway and Iwo Jima. On a ship that shelled the latter, he witnessed the famous raising of the American flag there.

Cook never received the 12 battle stars he earned from his time in the Pacific. But his family arranged for them and they were presented to him at his send-off from Tulsa last year. Cook was preceded in death by his wife of 69 years, Marietta, in December. Survivors include a daughter, Pat Cunanan.

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