

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Gillian Lewis Cooke**

Ms Cooke was born in the suburbs of Birmingham, England. She met her husband, Thomas Cooke, in England while he was stationed there. Her husband is the son of a preacher for First Baptist Church in Sugar Land, Texas. They married in England in 1954 and moved to Sugar Land in 1956.

Gillian not only had to adjust to the heat, the humidity, the bugs, and snakes, but also to the way Americans speak and their customs.

She is writing a book about the bombing of England during World War II. She shares interesting stories about getting off an airplane in New York City and being blasted by the heat, traveling to Texas in a new car with no air conditioning, fainting due to the heat in Texas, and learning to drive in a church parsonage with an open door policy. She even survived driving their old pickup truck to Rosenberg to buy a car with air conditioning and then driving back to Sugar Land in the new car at 5 mph with no drivers license and barely able to operate the vehicle.

Her husband made a career of the Air Force so they moved around in the US and Europe but always came back to Sugar Land as often as possible. Her three children graduated from Dulles High School. Gillian resides in Sugar Land and stays busy as a licensed social worker, Christian counselor, and church minister. She is also a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer.

11 Pages

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Interview Summary

People (in order mentioned in interview)

Jean Babineaux – worked at medical clinic
 Barbara Batten – friend
 Thomas Cooke – spouse
 Roberta Cooke – daughter
 Rebecca Cooke – daughter
 Russell Cooke – son
 Rev. Robert Cooke – father-in-law
 Emma (Momma) Magdelene Cooke – mother-in-law
 Gary family – neighbors
 Hightower family – church members
 Mrs. Munson – Sunday school teacher
 Dr. Slaughter – local physician
 Dr. Wheeler Sr. – local dentist
 Dr. Wheeler Jr. – local dentist
 Gladys Andrews – my support & dear friend

Places / Businesses

Abilene, Texas
 Air Force Wives Club

Events

Born and raised in Birmingham, England

Spent time in England during World War II bombings

Met her husband, Thomas Cooke, in England while he was stationed there in the Air Force.

They married in England in 1954 and moved to Sugar Land in 1956.

Getting used to the heat, the American language and custom, and the bugs was rather trying on Gillian

American Red Cross
 Birmingham, England
 Daughters of the British Empire
 Dulles High School, Sugar Land, Texas
 First Baptist Church of Sugar Land
 Galveston, Texas
 Greenland
 Kiddie Wonderland
 Labrador
 MacGregor Medical Associates
 Missouri
 New York City, New York
 Old Ocean, Texas
 Richmond, Texas
 Sears & Roebuck
 South Main Baptist Church
 Southwest Memorial Hospital
 Sugar Land, Texas
 Turkey
 Vietnam
 Western Auto

Thomas and Gillian moved around the US and Europe during his career in the US Air Force. Yet, they always managed to come back to Sugar Land.

During her husband's deployment to other countries, Gillian and her kids resided in Sugar Land and maintained a normal lifestyle.

Gillian was very independent and managed to purchase a house in Sugar Land that she still resides in today. She also purchased a new car with air conditioning in Rosenberg. She drove back home without a drivers license and little knowledge of driving a vehicle. Their three children graduated from Dulles High School.