

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Carl Burl Tullos, Jr.**

Interview Date: 11/18/2014

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Bob Gaffney

Comment: Part of a series on the history of the building at 307 Fort Street, Richmond, Texas, currently the Office of Emergency Management

10 Pages



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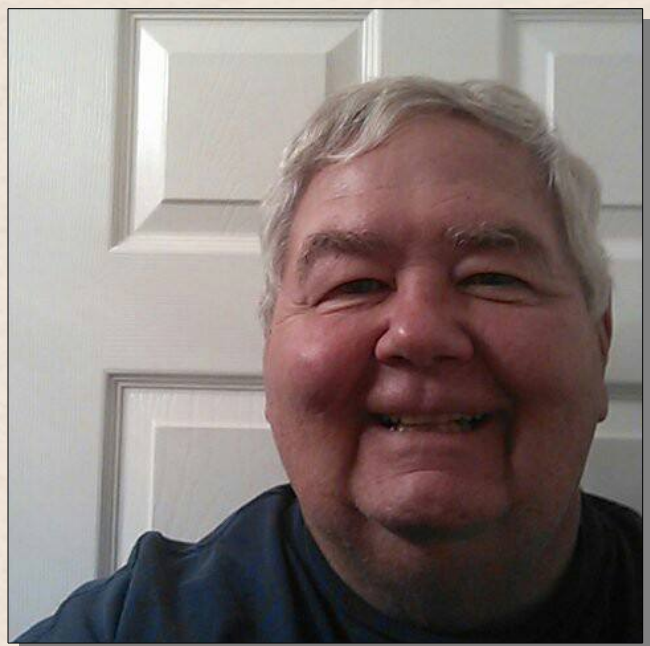
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Transcript

GOODSILL: This is Jane Goodsill. Today is November 18, 2014. I'm taping this interview with Carl Burl Tullos, Jr. from Richmond, Texas at 307 Fort Street, Richmond, Texas. I'm going to start with a little historical information about this building. I understand it was a Fort Bend County Jail in 1954. It was a Fort Bend County Juvenile Detention Center in 1981 and then in 2005 it became the Fort Bend County Office of Emergency Management. How did your career interface with this building?

TULLOS: When I first got into law enforcement in Rosenberg, I was working as a Reserve Deputy. We would bring prisoners to the jail here if we had to bring them from the county.

GOODSILL: This was the County Detention Center?

TULLOS: This was the County Detention Center. It was called a jail at that time.

GOODSILL: You were working in Rosenberg?

TULLOS: Yeah, I was working for Fort Bend County in the reserves for a while. In 1972 I went to work for the City of Rosenberg.

GOODSILL: What was your job?

TULLOS: I was a Patrol Officer. We would have to bring our prisoners up here to the jail because Rosenberg did not have a city jail.

GOODSILL: How often did it happen?

TULLOS: Sometimes nightly.

GOODSILL: What kinds of things were you bringing people in for?

TULLOS: Drunk, disorderly, murders, whatever took place.

GOODSILL: So the system when you got them here, what happened?

TULLOS: We would bring them into the Sally port...

GOODSILL: Explain to us what a Sally port is.

TULLOS: A Sally Port is a secure place where you could take your prisoners out of the car and they wouldn't be able to escape. But there had been times when they broke and run. Now they've got the new kind of Sally Ports where they've got gates that come down on both sides and there's no way to get out.

GOODSILL: That's a good explanation. So you'd bring them through this secure area?

TULLOS: We had to go through two gates. We'd bring them through one of the gates and we'd search them or the jail people would search them to make sure any contraband was taken off of them before bringing them in the main gate.

The Dispatch Office back then was where we booked everybody. They'd call the jail and they'd send somebody down to take them up. That's how I got used to this building

GOODSILL: So you were pretty familiar with this (building)?

TULLOS: At one time, years ago.

GOODSILL: How long did you stay a Rosenberg Patrol Officer?

TULLOS: 1972 was when I started until 1974, I think it was.

GOODSILL: How did you get into law enforcement in the first place?

TULLOS: I lived in Needville. I was born in Galveston but my mother's family had a farm outside of Needville. We sold the farm and moved into town. My neighbor across the yard from me was the Justice of the Peace. Floyd Bremer was his name. He was a single man. He was missing one leg because of diabetes. So my neighbors and I were always over at his house. We cleaned his house and straightened up for him. The highway patrol and the sheriff's office would always come over to his house. He always had coffee and stuff made. I got to meet a lot officers then. It kind of got in my blood. After a while my dad became a Deputy Constable for Precinct 2 in Needville.

GOODSILL: What's your dad's name?

TULLOS: Carl Tullos, Sr. My next door neighbor was the constable, Bubba Gregory. I think his initials were R. L., possibly for Roland Conrad. Everybody used Bubba. In high school I had the Constable, Justice of the Peace and my head football coach. He lived right behind me. One time he said, "What time did you get in the other night?" I'd say, "Coach, you know what time because my headlights lit up your bedroom."

GOODSILL: (laughing) All eyes are on you. So you decided to go into law enforcement?

TULLOS: I was discharged from the Navy in 1970.

GOODSILL: What did you do in the Navy?

TULLOS: I was an aircraft mechanic.

GOODSILL: How did you get into that?

TULLOS: That's just what they decided to put me in.

GOODSILL: Did you have any facility for mechanics?

TULLOS: I worked on my own cars so...

GOODSILL: Do you think that had something to do with it? Did they know that?

TULLOS: Oh, yeah. After testing by the Navy they would question you as to what you feel you might want to go into. I was a Volunteer Fireman in Needville at 16. They would see that I had some medical training when I got to the military occupational specialty (MOS) where they would ask you what you feel like you could do. I told them I worked on vehicles and stuff. My dad was a mechanic. They gave me two choices. This was in 1966 when Vietnam was going on. One choice was a medic and the other was an airplane mechanic. SO I said, "Medics are going to Vietnam so I'll take the mechanics."

GOODSILL: So you did not go to Vietnam?

TULLOS: No.

GOODSILL: Where were you stationed?

TULLOS: Pensacola, Florida, and Guam.

GOODSILL: Guam? I guess that would make sense because of equipment transport. How did you like Guam?

TULLOS: I loved Guam. I think it was better than Hawaii.

GOODSILL: Really? Tell me.

TULLOS: It wasn't as commercialized as Hawaii. My wife came over. All I did was find a place to live and they gave me money to live off base and I paid her way over. The government paid her way back.

GOODSILL: How long did you live there?

TULLOS: Two years. The house we lived in was on the beach. At high tide the water would come up beneath our house. What would happen there when you found out you could bring your wife over was that you would go looking for a place on the bulletin board. When you rented it you'd buy the stuff that people had before, because they were being transferred. Pass it on down. The same way with cars. So I brought my wife over. She went to work for the government.

GOODSILL: That sounds like a happy time. What does Guam look like? Does it have mountains and is it lush? Did you ever get off base and go hiking or swimming? The beaches were good?

TULLOS: Talafofo Falls was a nice black sand beach. My wife and I would just ride around it. She left and came back home. That was three months before I got to go home. On our times off on weekends my buddies and I would grab a case of beer or two and just drive around. We had a flat one time on a Renault. We had a spare but we didn't have a jack. The Renault has the engine in the rear



Talafofo Falls, Guam, was a favorite recreational beach for Carl and his wife when he was assigned to the U. S. Naval Station there during the Vietnam conflict.

end of the car. Pick the car up, that's what we do. Pick the car up, put it on a rock, change the tire, pick it back up, and pick up the rock.

GOODSILL: (LAUGHTER) It's good to be young.

TULLOS: We all played football. We had regular football team on the islands. We had a league between the bases. We were all in good shape. We enjoyed that.

GOODSILL: (LAUGHTER) How about food?

TULLOS: We had American food.

GOODSILL: On base but off base was there anything that was unusual?

TULLOS: Oh, yes. They had some good Chinese food. We lived right down the road from a Chinese restaurant. That's how I got onto fried rice, fried pork, stuff like that. You could go on base and get the American beef or the Australian beef. Australian beef was tougher. They raised hogs on Guam so you could buy fresh pork. It's just like everything else.

GOODSILL: No, it sounds different than anything else. It's interesting to hear about.

TULLOS: I get on Google every now and then and Google up the island. It's completely changed.

GOODSILL: Built up? Hotels?

TULLOS: When we were leaving, the Japanese were starting to use Guam as Americans used Hawaii; as a vacation spot. They were starting to build big, huge condominium houses.

GOODSILL: Back to your work, did you like repairing aircraft?

TULLOS: It was fine. I had a job with Continental Airlines when I got out of the Navy in 1970, no questions asked. But I didn't want to travel to the north side of Houston. I applied to CenterPoint, Houston Light and Power and they said, "Come to work." On my way out my dad said, "Talk to NalCo." So I went there.

GOODSILL: What did you do there?

TULLOS: I was just processing chemicals. I would mix chemicals in the plant. Make other products. Then I went into law enforcement.

GOODSILL: How did that happen?

TULLOS: I was a reserve deputy sheriff. In the reserves you could not ride by yourself. Most of the time you'd be a rider with a regular deputy. My wife's uncle was head of the reserves so that's how I got into that. I was a reserve deputy by December 1970 just months after my discharge from the military.

GOODSILL: In 1972 you went to Rosenberg?

TULLOS: Bert Gubbels hired me. He was the chief there.

GOODSILL: Rosenberg Police Chief?

TULLOS: Rosenberg. His family is from the Thompson area.

GOODSILL: Okay. He hired you and you were a patrol officer.

TULLOS: Patrol officer for two years. I took prisoners back and forth. In 1975 I went to work for Sheriff Ervin Hurta. I got out of law enforcement when Tiny Gaston was the sheriff but I stayed a reserve. I worked for Brown & Root. I was a reserve.

GOODSILL: What did you do at Brown & Root?

TULLOS: Heavy equipment operator. When I was 16 my dad worked for Brown & Root building Interstate 610 and I-10 interchange. I had nothing to do at the time during the summer. So I would go to work with him. One day the foreman said, "What do you have your son here for? What's he doing here?" So my dad said, "He ain't got anything to do at the house so I just brought him here and he can sit here all day long." He said, "Does he know how to do anything?" Dad said, "Yeah." The supervisor said, "I got a bulldozer operator job I need filled." So I went to work on a bulldozer at 16.

GOODSILL: What did you do when you got in law enforcement?

TULLOS: I was a Patrol Deputy.

GOODSILL: How was that?

TULLOS: It was out of this jail. I got back into it full time in 1983. I don't know if the new jail was built then or not. I can't remember. I think it might have been the new jail. Ervin Hurta was sheriff. In 1983 I went back in full time. I was a Patrol Deputy the whole time. I didn't want to get out of patrol. That's where my place was.

I think it was 1991, all the commissioners started having what they called Precinct Deputies. Each precinct would have a deputy as a traffic safety officer. That's when I transferred over into the precinct. I worked for Commissioner Bob Lutts. He was Precinct Four, I think, which was part of Sugar Land all the way out to Fulshear. I would help reroute traffic. I still had the Patrol Deputy job. If they ever needed assistance or anything like that, I could help the Sheriff's Office out.

GOODSILL: At that point in time, this building at 307 Fort Street was juvenile detention?

TULLOS: Yes. I had no reason to come here. I very seldom ever made any arrests.

GOODSILL: You said you were traffic, not arresting?

TULLOS: In 1996 I went over to the Road & Bridge Unit. One commissioner was set up as the Road & Bridge Commissioner. He's still there, Mark Grant.

GOODSILL: How did you like that?

TULLOS: It was good. It was a straight day job. I was ready for a straight day job after all that shift work. Stayed there until I retired in 2006. Twenty-five years.

GOODSILL: That must have been nice to retire.

TULLOS: Yes, it is.

GOODSILL: We're sitting right now in the Office of Emergency Management, in their Control Center. You said you were here during Hurricane Ike?

TULLOS: Hurricane Ike was in 2008. I was the liaison between Road & Bridge and the emergency management team. I was sitting right over there by the Road & Bridge placard. I coordinated whatever the county needed with Road & Bridge. I figured out what the people needed. I'd call the supervisor in charge of that and he would send somebody out. They had people at Road & Bridge facilities around the county on standby in case they were needed. Tree limbs falling over, accidents could have happened.

GOODSILL: Were you mainly busy during the storm or just in the aftermath of the storm?

TULLOS: In the aftermath, I wasn't here during the storm. We had the War Room they called it over there.

GOODSILL: Yeah, the Control Room.

TULLOS: We didn't have much going on during that hurricane. I guess it was about 2 o'clock in the morning when I got a phone call. My mother passed away. There was another guy here with me. I said, "You're going to have to take the Road and Bridge console. I'm going to have to go." The storm was over already.

GOODSILL: Was that a surprise that your mom died?

TULLOS: No, she'd been sick.

GOODSILL: So you went on the walk through of this building before this interview. Any changes?

TULLOS: Rooms have been added, utilized.

GOODSILL: Making the best of small space?

TULLOS: I don't know how much bigger they plan on getting with this thing.

GOODSILL: How much bigger can they get if the walls are concrete?

TULLOS: Might have to build a new building.

GOODSILL: I know it. But they do say this is a safe building because it was built as a jail.

TULLOS: I remember I was here the night Homer Sharp shot the hole in the dishwasher.

GOODSILL: Oh, tell me about that. (LAUGHING)

TULLOS: Homer Sharp was a character.

GOODSILL: What was his job?

TULLOS: He didn't work here. He lived in the Barber Shop on Morton Street. That's where his home was. He would come over here just to visit with the cops. They would sit back here at the kitchen table. Back then if somebody would bring a new gun in, Homer would say, "Let me see it." He'd mess with it without unloading it. One time it went off and shot a hole in the dishwasher.

GOODSILL: (LAUGHING) Were you here?

TULLOS: Yes. People came running with their guns drawn and hollering. He was sitting there like that and said, "What did I do?"

GOODSILL: Oops!

TULLOS: Yes. Out on patrol sometimes cars would run into a deer or something. I used to tell the people there's nothing they could do because it was just an accident. If we could get the deer into the trunk of a car we'd bring it up here to Captain McGill, who was in charge of the jail. He would get some trustees down there who'd clean it, process it, and have it for lunch and as many meals as they could because they hardly ever got any meat here.

GOODSILL: The people in the jail didn't get served meat? It wasn't in the budget to give them meat?

TULLOS: No. They mostly got vegetables and stuff like that, cornbread. They would want us to bring them bay hogs and wild pigs or deer. Things were a lot different back then. Law enforcement used to be fun. Now it's too much "Big Brother" looking over you. That's one reason I moved out of regular patrols. You can't be a regular policeman like a policemen used to be. So, I found me a job at the Road & Bridge. It's been 25 years.

GOODSILL: That's kind of cool to think that forty years ago you were in this building and they were using these jail cells.

TULLOS: Roger Boyd was a lieutenant over at the Sheriff's Office at one time. I was on patrol with him. He's a captain with Texas Alcohol Beverage Control now. I was thinking of other people that I worked with over the years. At one time there was one deputy on the west side of the river and one deputy for the east side of the river. Our back up was each other or the nearest city. Back then we only had two radio frequencies. Sometimes we'd get what we called "skip in". I could get to an Arkansas police department on our radios for the most part. But I couldn't get Rosenberg because the "skip" would knock it out. It's just atmospheric stuff on these old radios. Nothing like they've got now. They've got hundreds of radio stations.

GOODSILL: In addition, everybody's got a cell phone.

TULLOS: Yes, that's true.

GOODSILL: I want to thank you for coming in.

Interview Ends