

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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### Abstract: **Vance Thomas Cooper**

Mr. Cooper conducted this interview on his 64th birthday. He was born in Houston in 1950 but raised in Wallis where he still resides today. He spent his career as a firefighter before becoming an Investigator and Inspector for the Fort Bend Fire Marshal in 1990. Later the department was combined under the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). After 22 years, he retired in 2012 as Fire Marshal.

Vance talks about working and remodeling the building at 307 Fort Street taking out jail cells to make room for offices and storage. Working in a fast growing county, understaffed and with few resources. Staff managed somehow by “working so long with so little that they can do anything with nothing.” That got the work done!

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## Interview Summary

### People (in order mentioned in interview)

James C. Adolphus – county judge

Linda Barnes – secretary

Ron Bolyard – OEM employee

Carla Harris – secretary

Bud O'Shieles – Pct 1 county commissioner

Denise Santana – secretary

Mel Speed – OEM Coordinator

Gary Tilton – Fire Marshal

### Places / Businesses

Austin, Texas

Blinn College

FBC Juvenile Detention Center

Houston, Texas

Spring Branch Fire Dept.

Sugar Land Fire Dept.

Texas Dept. of Corrections

Wallis, Texas

West University Place Fire Dept.

Tennessee Gas Pipeline Transmission  
(TENNECO)

### Events

Went to work in 1972 for the Spring Branch Fire Dept and completed his Associate Degree in Fire Protection Technology.

Transferred to West University Place Fire Dept. and later to Sugar Land Fire Dept. before joining Fort Bend County in 1990.

Promoted in 1994 to Deputy Fire Marshal and a few years later to Fire Marshal.

Vance shares numerous stories about the evolution of the Fire Marshal's department and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM).