

Interview with  
H. R. "LEFTY" BLOCK  
Texas Ranger, Retired

©2009, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Mr. Block's Home  
Comfort, Texas  
Wednesday—April 15, 2009

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray  
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Lefty Block, Jameye Block, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



## Introduction

Welcome to the E-Book Project of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum (TRHFM). The TRHFM, located in Waco, Texas, is the State-designated Official Historical Center of the Texas Rangers. It is operated as a service of City of Waco by authorization of the Texas Department of Public Safety and the State of Texas.

The mission of this project is to provide easy access to books, oral histories dissertations, articles, and other literary works on Texas Ranger history.

**Public Domain Works:** Many of the works in this non-commercial library are in the public domain and may be freely enjoyed—please follow the conditions set forth below.

**Copyrighted Works:** Some works, which are clearly noted, *are under copyright*. They are in this library through the courtesy and permission of the copyright holders. Please read and enjoy them, but they may ***not*** be redistributed, copied or otherwise used without the written permission of the author or copyright holder.

## Conditions & Statements

1. The Adobe Acrobat™ or other file format in which this work resides may not be redistributed ***for profit***—including commercial redistribution, sales, rentals, or fees for handling, access, download etc. These works may not be modified, changed or sued in derivative works in any manner without the express permission of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum.
2. The TRHFM staff has exercised due diligence to determine that this material is in the public domain or to secure copyright permission. If you believe this work is under copyright, and you are the copyright holder, please contact us at **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame, PO Box 2570, Waco, TX 76702-2570** with proof of ownership.
3. You may link to the main page of the library, however, please do ***not*** "hot link" directly to the files or repost them.
4. If a work is redistributed for educational or nonprofit use, the following must remain intact: (1) The author/copyright holder credits (2) the registered name **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame E-Book™**, (3) the **logo** and name **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum™**.

**H. R. “LEFTY” BLOCK  
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED**

**NANCY RAY:** My name is Nancy Ray and I am visiting with H. R. “Lefty” Block of Comfort, Texas. Today is Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Block’s career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Block, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes you do.

**NANCY RAY:** And do you understand that this video will belong to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, I do.

**NANCY RAY:** And do I have your permission to present copies of this video to various historical organizations such as museums, libraries, schools and once transcribed to place on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum’s website? And I have noted that this is for education purposes, no books. Is that correct?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** That’s correct.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Let’s start with learning about you. Would you tell us your full name, and where were you born and your parents’ names?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** First of all, I never have used my full name. My initials are H. R. so H. R. Block is very easy to remember because most people think of the income tax preparer and they associate it with that. In fact, I get a lot of phone calls about tax time (*laughter*) asking that very

question... even though they call my residence instead of the business. But anyway, my mother's name was Lucille and my father's name was Louis, LOUIS. And I was born in Orange, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** And what is your date of birth?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1935.

**NANCY RAY:** My birthday is the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Really?

**NANCY RAY:** Yes it is... George Frasier and Jim Peters also. Did you grow up in Orange?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** You went to school there?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Orangefield High School is where I graduated. That's about 15 miles from the town of Orange.

**NANCY RAY:** What about when you were in high school, did you play sports or have subjects you liked?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, I played in all sports. At that time, that school was so small we played six-man football. And we went to the regional playoffs.

**NANCY RAY:** Very good. What did you play?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, there's only a few positions in six-man so I played the right end on both offense and defense. But in six-man football, the ends carry the ball as much as the backs because the ball has to cross the line of scrimmage one time... they have to change hands one time before it can cross the line of scrimmage. So the quarterback can't take the ball and do a quarterback sneak or run with it. He has to hand it off to somebody else so therefore the ends carried the ball as much as the backs do.

**NANCY RAY:** Huh, that's a different rule, isn't it?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** What about brothers and sisters?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** I had two brothers, one of them is still alive.

**NANCY RAY:** Were you the oldest or where did you...

**LEFTY BLOCK:** I was the oldest. The youngest one lives back in Orange.

**NANCY RAY:** Well at some point you married. Tell us your wife's name.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** OK, which one?

**NANCY RAY:** This one.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** My first wife was... graduated from the same high school as I did in Orangefield. Her name was Patricia. And then we separated when I lived in Brownwood. Uh I first went to the Rangers in Midland and I went out there with Jim Ray at the same time he went to Midland. Then I transferred to Brownwood and I stayed there for ten years until I was promoted to sergeant and went to San Antonio, assigned there... and then from San Antonio to Austin.

**NANCY RAY:** What about Jameye, when did you marry Jameye?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** We married in 1977.

**NANCY RAY:** Is that JAYME?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No, JAMEYE like jam-eye but you pronounce it jay-me.

**NANCY RAY:** Alright, what about children... do you have any children?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, I have two daughters and both of them graduated from Howard Payne College in Brownwood. And my oldest daughter lives in Coleman, Texas. She is a coach, the

girls coach over there for basketball, track, and power lifting. And the youngest daughter is the administrator for the superintendent's office. They are also the tax collector as well as they handle the school business.

**NANCY RAY:** Any grandchildren?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, the oldest one in Coleman has two children, a boy and a girl. And the youngest has two boys.

**NANCY RAY:** Well after you graduated from high school, what did you do?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** I went to work in construction in the Orange area. At that time, they was building all those chemical plants and it was a construction boom going on at that time. But I had to wait until 21 years old to get into the Highway Patrol.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you have any military?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No, I did not. I was kind of in between.

**NANCY RAY:** OK so you went straight from construction to the Highway Patrol?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what made you want to become a Highway Patrolman?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, I met a Ranger when I was a small boy. He was working a cattle theft investigation and I thought to myself, that's what I want to be. And I figured the only way I was going to get there was to get in law enforcement. But I didn't want a city police job or deputy sheriff job. I wanted to go to work for the state so I went to the Highway Patrol.

**NANCY RAY:** Do you remember the date when you went to the Highway Patrol?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well let's see, I graduated in June of 1958 so I went in the month of March.

**NANCY RAY:** Well which school did you attend? Was it Camp Mabry or the current Academy?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No, it was the brand new Academy.

**NANCY RAY:** Were you in one of the first schools?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Well uh were any other people in your class who became Rangers in the future?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Bob Mitchell, Jim Peters...

**NANCY RAY:** What do you remember about the school, the Academy itself?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, the most things I remember is they told us every morning if you don't like it here, you can be replaced by a postcard. They had a waiting list because it was so hard to get in... so many people applying. And so they let you know right quick... hey, if you don't like it... what we do, you can go anytime. We won't be mad. We'll get somebody to replace you.

**NANCY RAY:** I've heard that before so evidently they meant it.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes. And of course the other thing was the boxing. I was fortunate enough to be in the heavyweight class at that time and was pretty successful.

**NANCY RAY:** Well boxing is one of the things that pops up... people say that was the hardest part to me. Was that the hardest part to you?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No, that was not the hardest. I really kind of say I enjoyed it... every bit of it. But uh of course we had the firewatch they call it where you had to get the next person up and they were on firewatch for two hours each night and it rotated around until your turn again.

**NANCY RAY:** Is that kind of like guard duty or something?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well it was sort of semi-guard duty but they called it firewatch just in case there was fire somewhere and you would see it and they could respond very quickly. Everybody walking through the parking lot where the cars were parked for the students... so somebody would see you out there. And you had to put on your khakis to go do that. And so... but that got old especially when you had a pretty tough night doing something uh from the night classes and then having to get up in two hours just after you went to bed... it's so hard to go back to sleep because we got up and was out on the gym floor at 6 o'clock in the morning doing calisthenics. But like I said, as a whole, I enjoyed it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well some of the things they taught you... like firearms and uh safety I guess. What is the thing you took away from that school that helped you the most in your career? Is there something that stands out?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, I always thought that it taught me how to deal with people. If you can deal with something, somebody... you want them to do something... try to make them think that is their idea... you can get what you want done at the same time they think they're getting what they want done and the way they want to do it. So I always used that concept to base any interrogation and uh dealing with people as a whole.

**NANCY RAY:** That would help you in everything you did.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Everything.

**NANCY RAY:** Well how many people started the class and how many finished?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, back at that time there was 76 that started and by the time we got down where they broke it up into the ones that were going to the Highway Patrol, the ones going to Drivers License and the ones that were going to License and Weight, we had 15 in the Patrol and

the rest were divided into the other groups. So from that point on, we didn't have our classes together.

**NANCY RAY:** Well where did... when you finished the Academy, where was your first duty station?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Humble, Texas, north of Houston, U.S. Highway 59. It was a two-lane road and it was something else.

**NANCY RAY:** That was in 1958... it's changed a lot hasn't it?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Oh, man!

**NANCY RAY:** Well who was your partner? Did you have a partner?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, I had a partner... the first one his name was J. D. Wilson. And I worked with him about six months and then when the first school came out after then, I got assigned a partner. And I... we worked together for a couple of years and then I transferred to Beaumont to get back over in that country. I thought that was where I wanted to go at first.

**NANCY RAY:** Lots of humidity.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Lots of humidity but of course I was raised up over there. My father had been on a farm in West Texas close to Midland... a cotton farm. And he moved my mother to Orange before I was born so that we'd be down there closer to hospitals and doctors and so forth. Back then... not very many out there.

**NANCY RAY:** Well as a Highway Patrolman, what stands out in your mind about the things you did?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well... a lot of things they don't do now (*laughter*). First of all, we were located at Humble. That's the... that's the north part of Harris County, right on the line. And so

at that time, uh they only had a small jail there below the fire station... and we had to do all the jailing and the county would come pick them up in the morning about 10 o'clock. If we had somebody, we had to handle them ourselves and put them in jail. And just across the river was the Montgomery County. And we had to go 40 miles to the jail so we'd be 2 miles from Humble and 40 miles from the jail in Conroe when you crossed that bridge. So... but we went almost to the city limits of Cleveland but that was in Liberty County. So everything we did on the east part of Montgomery County, we had to do it all. They didn't have but three or four deputies and they were working most of them over there around Conroe. So we spent most of our time, day and night... no deputies. You'd just come home and something come up over there, back you went. And we'd make the round trip if we had to go to the jail in Conroe before we came back. Many Saturday nights we worked all night and didn't get home 'til dusk. There were several beer joints on that highway along there so we had a good bit of DWIs back then.

**NANCY RAY:** What about fatalities from those...

**LEFTY BLOCK:** (*chuckle*) We had a lot of them. Of course most of them, if your partner was on vacation or something, you had to take care of that by yourself. And especially on multiple fatalities which happened quite frequently on that two-lane road... so many no-passing zones and crooked and anyway, it was quite a job. Most of the time, it was seven days a week. You very rarely got a full day off. You'd be out mowing the yard... they called, you had to go. That was it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well when you first became a Highway Patrolman, what did your partner teach you that you thought was important?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** He taught me the... the trait of observation. He didn't say very much. In fact the first week, he didn't say ten words to me. He said you gotta look and see what's going on. So the second week, we had a fatal accident on the farm road. Thank goodness it was not on 59. But I was in the lead and the closer we got to the accident scene, I kept saying he's gonna tell me something we need to do. And so finally, I guess about a mile before we got there, I said what do we do first? He said "get out of the car." (*laughter*) And so I said I'm not gonna ask him anything else. Let him tell me if he wants to tell me but I'm gonna keep my eyes open. And that taught me a whole lot. Keep your mouth shut and keep your eyes open.

**NANCY RAY:** That's good advice.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Very good.

**NANCY RAY:** Well when you left... you left there and went to Beaumont, right?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** And what happened at Beaumont?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well I really did... out close to Orangefield... I built a house out there. I was called the Midnight Rider. I was a one-man unit that went to work at 10 o'clock at night and was supposed to get off at 8 o'clock the next morning. And I had five counties. I made all the accident calls and everything after midnight. And some... some of them were 80 miles from where I had to start with to where the accident scene was or so forth. But fortunately, that was the time when they were building Interstate Highway 10. And they, while I was there, they opened the ten-mile stretch just on the west side of the Sabine River because they had just finished the new bridge across the river. So I spent a lot of time on that stretch because there were a lot of nightclubs in Louisiana, just across the line. And people from Houston, Beaumont,

Port Arthur, east Texas... all come down there and went across the river. And them nightclubs stayed open all night long, every night of the week. And there was a lot of activity going on over there. Of course when they come back or when they was going, they hit that ten-mile stretch of brand new Interstate 10, they thought it was a racetrack (*laughter*). So I had my full night of work just with them besides having to leave and go down to Sabine Pass or over to uh China or up to uh Silsbee or some... all the way nearly to Jasper on the other side where there was some accident somewhere. Because fortunately I was lucky enough to get involved in several criminal apprehensions... car thieves and murders and luckily I was able to handle some of them.

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell us about something. That's not the normal responsibility of a Highway Patrolman.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No... and the sheriff there in Orange, he kind of thought I ought to be involved in everything too because I guess I was just so lucky everything I touched turned out good. But anyway, for instance, I had a night DPS dispatcher in Beaumont. And so many nights as far as that whole district, he and I were the only ones to talk to each other. He could talk to the other county sheriff departments and as forth but as far as the patrol, we were it. And he was an ex-Highway Patrolman. He resigned and went to work for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. And he was injured and when he came back to work for the DPS of course he couldn't come back in the patrol but he wanted to work as a dispatcher. So he knew what was going on from previous experience and so forth. And he became a very good friend of mine. And back in those days, it was teletype. We didn't have anything like all these computers and stuff nowadays as far as communication. And every night, they put out a summary of stolen cars that had come out on the teletype over the whole US. And there was of the jobs of the dispatcher on

the midnight shift to make index cards and put all the license plate numbers on the cards that came out on that teletype. So as soon as the teletype came out, he'd kind of go through them and pick out the ones that he thought I might encounter on Interstate 10 or Highway 90 going east to west and he'd call them out to me. And sometimes if I wasn't real busy, which most of the time I was, I'd write a few of them down. But anyway, I had a good... back then I had a very good memory and so I remembered a lot of them. So one night about 2 o'clock in the morning, I... I had learned to drive on the inside lane and read the front license plate number of cars going the opposite direction in a split second. And I looked at the license plates as they'd come by toward me. Well at that time in the morning, it's pretty light traffic. About six miles this side of Orange, I was riding along on the inside lane and I met this car with Florida plates on it. And he had just told me about a stolen car report from Florida just 30 minutes before that and this same license plate. So I went through the median to turn around to go after the car and the minute I got across, he come immediately and went back towards Louisiana and took off. So of course I took off after him. And I got about a mile this side of the bridge and I started calling the Orange Sheriff's Department to call over to Louisiana... they have a weigh station over in Louisiana where they stop all the trucks. And I had made good friends with a trooper over there and he had told those people to help me out. And I could get them, which happened briefly, to block the road over there with a big truck so nobody could get by... because there's swamp on both sides before they got there. And I told them to call and tell them I've got one running, coming towards the weigh station which was about two miles in Louisiana and he's running from me. But about a hundred yards from the bridge on the Texas side, he pulled over to the shoulder and stopped. And something told me this guy's coming out of there fast. So by the time he got stopped, I kind of

stepped out of the car and hit my emergency brake. I stepped out and I had a double-barrel sawed off shotgun that I carried underneath my legs in front of the seat. And I pulled it out at the same time and as I got out of the car, I just let my car bump the back of his car but it was almost stopped... it was just enough to startle him for a second. And by the time he got the door opened, I was standing there with a shotgun... right on him. He had a big German Shepherd dog in the back and that dog started coming after me. I told him you better make that dog stay in there or he's gonna be dead. And he talked to the dog and he quieted down. I told him just back on out of there. And he had a pistol stuck in his belt and I got the pistol and I had him lay down on the pavement there on the shoulder. And I unbuckled his belt and pulled his britches down... they were about right here (*he made a motion*. Sif he took off running, he couldn't run fast because his britches were down too far for him to run. And I called the sheriff's department and told them to get the pound there in Orange to come out there and get that dog. I wasn't going to fool with that dog. And at the same time when I went back up there to look in the car where the dog was, he had a rifle and you could see that he tried to pull that rifle between the seats and it got hung when he was trying to get out that first time. And so I went back over there and said you're in a stolen car. Yep. Is that your dog? Nope. Is that your rifle? Nope. OK... he said that's all I have to say. So anyway, I got a city policeman to come out there and drive the car back in after the pound come and got the dog... we had to wait about an hour for the pound man to get up and come out there. And about that time I got this city policeman to come out there and drive the car back and I had him, the guy, in the right front seat. And I had the handcuffs on him in the front. Back then we put them in the front most of the time because those cars were only two-cars, they were not four doors. And I had him sitting up there in the front seat and we started in toward the

jail and I told him we're going to the Orange County jail. And we got about halfway and he said you got a cigarette? I said no, I don't smoke. He said you give me a cigarette and I'll put your name in "Life Magazine," picture too. I said is that right (*laughter*)? And... I thought he's fixing to give me trouble because he wants a cigarette and I thought he may be on dope too. Back then you know we didn't have too many dopers. But anyway, I just didn't like his actions. He was too erratic. So I thought... I had a drunk earlier that night and he'd left some cigarettes in the back when... in my trash bag. When I got out I saw them and I just threw them back in the trash bag I had hung on the side of the window. So I said OK, I'll just give you one. So I stopped and got one of those cigarettes and gave it to him and he lit it up. Took one drag off and said where do you want to start? I said anywhere you want to. I just wanted to keep him talking so I could get on to the jail with him. Well he started talking. He wound up telling me about six murders, eight different stolen cars, where he stole that dog from a residence he burglarized and made friends with the dog and took him with him. This particular guy, he had killed... he was in the car... he had seven different wallets and driver's license and the particular one, car he was driving, he had killed that guy and buried him in a golf course over in Florida. He did everything from shooting them, beating them to death with a hammer... he even buried one in a construction job where they used to have them old kind of cement mixers that the truck backed up and dumped the gravel and the sand and the big bucket that hung down and they put the cement in it and raised up with a cable... mixed it up and poured it on site... before they had these concrete trucks. And he went out there and they had some sand and gravel in the bucket, ready to pour the next morning, he poured the cement out of the sack and put that guy in the hole and mixed a batch of concrete and put it on top of him. But anyway, sure enough, the next morning... by the time I got

home I was getting calls from everybody and their brother in Florida. And the uh... the state's attorney from Tampa brought an airplane load of law enforcement people from down in Florida to come pick him up. And by then, he had already told me so much I was a witness because I didn't know anything when he was talking about it. I couldn't give him any ideas. In Florida, oral statement was good as far as testimony. So anyway in about a year, I went to Florida to testify in the trial. And when we got in the courtroom, he decided to plead guilty. They give him a life sentence in Florida.

**NANCY RAY:** And all because of a cigarette that you gave him.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** All... and sure enough, I got on the front page of papers and "Life Magazine" did come. And some of these detective magazines, they come and wrote a story on that stuff.

**NANCY RAY:** How interesting. Well I guess that may be the most exciting thing as a Highway Patrolman...

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well...

**NANCY RAY:** Or were there more?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** When I got shot!

**NANCY RAY:** You got shot... well tell us about that.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, that was before I went to Beaumont. We had uh a rule that when it got close to dark, you pulled over to the side of the road and you checked all your lights on your car because you don't want to stop somebody else and tell them they've got a headlight out or a taillight and you had one too. So the first thing you did at dusk, you pull over to the side of the road, get out, check all your lights. So like I said, that old highway then was a two-lane road. And just on the north side of the bridge in Montgomery County, they had a little paved shoulder

for about a hundred yards past the end of the bridge. So that was always a good place to stop because the rest of it didn't have any shoulder. You pulled off the road and it was wet, you'd get off in the mud or it was dry you didn't know what you might run over in the grass. So I pulled over and stopped to check my lights. And as I got out... left the motor running, lights flashing on... and as I walked around to go around to the front of the car to check the lights and just as I rounded the front of the car, I felt something hit me in the arm. Well, at first I thought no trucks passed so nothing flew off a truck. So I hit the ground and then the second time I heard the shot so I stayed there... down on the ground. But I couldn't figure out which direction it was coming from. But as I laid there, I thought I've gotta get out of here... I'm gonna get shot laying on the ground. So I crawled under the car. Cars were higher back then and you could get under them. I was laying on my back... looking all directions... thinking he's gonna run up and shoot me under the car... I didn't know what to do. But I was getting hot with that motor running and I thought I've got to do something. And nothing happened so I decided OK... I was walking around the front facing that direction... my arm was bleeding and so I got out from under the car on the left side. I took off running back toward the bridge. Of course it was dark enough by then I could get out away from the lights... cars just going by on the highway. And I got down to the end of the bridge where I could go off down the dump and I just kept on going. And I made a circle out there. Of course there were trees out there along the edge of the fence and I got out there and got in the dark and I got to looking... and watching... I couldn't see anybody. So about that time, I figured I was coming straight from around the front of the car... he shot and hit me right there... he's right out there (*he made a motion*). So I made a big circle and come back and here was the guy behind a tree with a shotgun. And I walked right up to the back of him and he

looked (*he made some motions*)... and I put that pistol right behind his ear and I said don't even think about it. Just drop that shotgun and he did. He said how did you know where I was? I said I didn't know... I had to find you. He said will you take me back? And I said where? He said where I come from. I said where did you come from? I escaped from prison. I didn't even know anybody escaped (*laughter*). But anyway, he escaped from prison in Huntsville and he had a boy's shotgun and he was... when I stopped... I didn't know he was out there. I had no idea anybody was out there.

**NANCY RAY:** You were just checking your lights.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Just checking the lights. That's what... of course when I was over there in Beaumont, many times I stopped cars coming back from Louisiana roads and I'd hear *clunk clunk* on the other side when I was talking to the driver... running around throwing out pistols, knives, what have you. But when I picked it up and said who does this belong to? Not mine! (*laughter*). So I had a collection of old guns and stuff that I picked up that they never claimed.

**NANCY RAY:** Well were you afraid for your life? Did you ever think about it or what?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No. I... I thought I was invincible. Uh... one time I went to work one night just after they opened that interstate on that 10-mile stretch. It was about 10:15. I went across the frontage road from Orangefield to Interstate 10 because it had been raining a whole lot and I didn't want to take a chance of stopping anybody and getting off the road and getting them stuck or me stuck. So I went to the interstate because it's got a shoulder, a paved shoulder. And I was going across Highway 62 and when I got to the intersection where the overpass was... over 62 on 10, I looked over on the access where it's the entry ramp and there was a car with the back wheels out in the mud and the front wheels up on the pavement. So I said somebody got off and

got stuck. So I pulled up to them and turned my flashers on and I stayed on the pavement because there wasn't no traffic at that time. And I got out and there was a woman sitting under the steering wheel and she opened the door about that time. I said looks like you got trouble. She said I sure do and I need some help. I said OK. I said you're sitting down to the frame because all that was new dirt out there on the side of the entry ramp from that construction. I said I can't... I carried a chain... I pulled a lot of people out. But I said I can't pull that out sitting on the frame with my car. I'm gonna have to get you a wrecker. She said OK. And about the time I started back toward my car, this car came down under the overpass and came up to where my car was and stopped. And I motioned go ahead on around... it didn't move. So I walked back there and I recognized this nurse that worked at the Orange Memorial Hospital because I'd seen her in there a lot of times when the accident victims were there. She worked in the emergency room. I said what's the matter? She said somebody just ran into my car. I said what kind of car did it look like? She said no, somebody. I said what do you mean somebody? And about that time I heard a little noise. I turned my head back and there was this guy jumping on my back. And I just bent on over and he went over me. And when he went down to the pavement there, I said this guy's trying to hurt me. So I said best thing I can do is try to get him first. And so we... we started fighting right there. And I figured he kept trying to put some kind of hold on me and I kept hitting him uh in the face and he'd shake his head and come right back and try to put another hold on me. Finally, I got him down and we were out in the mud by then... in the ditch. And I finally said OK, I've had enough of this. I pulled my pistol... I said the next thing that's gonna happen is gonna be me pulling this trigger because I'm not gonna fight you anymore. I don't have any reason to. You don't have any reason to fight me either. And by that time I had a

broken bone in my finger where I hit him and broke a bone. But anyway... so I got him down and said now what am I gonna do? So I tried to put the handcuffs on him and he come alive again. So we rolled around there in the mud and finally I got the other handcuff on him. This woman in the car, she just looked. And the nurse took off in her car. What he had done he was with this woman in this car.

**NANCY RAY:** The stuck car?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** The stuck car. And when they got stuck he went up on the freeway and he tried to get somebody to stop. And when this nurse come down in her car she slowed down and when she got right even, he ran into the side of her car with his body. I mean dented it in on the door. And anyway... so we was there and I'm sitting on top of him trying to get my breath (*laughter*). Muddy!... From head to toe... my hat, everything... I was totally covered in mud and so was he. And finally this woman said I'm with him. Said uh... I didn't know what he was going to do. I said well I'll tell you what you do. You go back there to my car. You just mash that button and tell the guy who answers you to send the jailer out here to help me. That's the only one they had working at night like that... to drive the car. So the jailer come out there and he said what're you gonna do? I'm gonna put him in your car and I'm gonna get in the back seat with him. He said it's gonna mess up my car. I said well, what do you want to do? Do you want me to give him to you? Oh no! I said OK. So we got in the back seat and I told him again...I said no more fighting. I'm gonna hold my pistol on you all the way. He said OK. So we went to the jail. We put him in the jail up there and he had knots on his head (*laughter*). And we... I had to go home and change clothes but I kept looking at my hand and thought my... I must have bruised it pretty bad. But I could see that knot sticking up there right on top of that bone. So I

went back over to the hospital and they said yeah, you broke a little bone in there. So they wrapped my hand up and I stayed out the rest of the night and went down to the jail the next morning before going home. But about 8:30, they said we might have to fight that guy again so you better hang around and we'll take him to the judge. And so we did and boy his head was swelled up... eyes black. He weighed 280 pounds... 6 foot 7. And he didn't say nothing. We went over to the courthouse to see the judge and got through... he said, how come you jumped on that patrolman? He said well, I always wanted to whip one but I picked the wrong one (*laughter*). Turned out... I found out later, he'd cleaned out several bars, the nightclubs in Louisiana. He was a professional wrestler. He wrestled with the tag team the Dixie Rebels.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh my goodness... and you... you stood your ground.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Just lucky... but he had just drank enough his reflexes were a little too slow and I was able to get out of that one OK.

**NANCY RAY:** You had a very exciting career as a patrolman. You were supposed to be working traffic.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yeah....

**NANCY RAY:** Well was Beaumont your last station as a Highway Patrolman?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes. That was the last one.

**NANCY RAY:** Well is there anything else you want to tell us... these stories are good... about when you were a patrolman there?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Oh I got into several different things... always something. But nothing that I want to spend any time telling.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what made you want to become a Ranger?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well like I said, I knew I always wanted to be one. And at that time, the standard was you've gotta have ten years of experience. So immediately when I had the ten years, I applied.

**NANCY RAY:** Now at that time did you have to go through a testing process or how did you get into the Rangers?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Interviewed by the Public Safety Commission and the Director... all at one time.

**NANCY RAY:** OK... and that went well?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yeah... of course my Highway Patrol captain, his name Luther Moore, and he wrote me a really, very good recommendation when I sent in my application. I mean he spent some extra time. Of course right before that, I had got the Humanitarian Award for the Texas Police Association for another deal I was involved in with a little girl. But anyway...

**NANCY RAY:** Do you want to tell us about that?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Oh... just big bad accident. A little girl was left... I offered and I took her home and we kept her for a while until we got everything straightened out with the family and stuff like that.

**NANCY RAY:** Well that was good... Humanitarian Award... very good.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** I got a watch with the Humanitarian... I've still got the watch.

**NANCY RAY:** I guess so... I would be proud of that one. So your sergeant wrote or...

**LEFTY BLOCK:** My captain

**NANCY RAY:** Your captain wrote a letter. Well who was on this interview board?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** The Public Safety Commission... there were three at that time. And the Director was Homer Garrison back then. But anyway...

**NANCY RAY:** Do you remember anything they asked you... any of the questions?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** They asked me most of the routine type questions about why I wanted to become a Ranger and stuff like that. And my background and uh... would I tell a lie to protect my fellow officers, Rangers, stuff like that.

**NANCY RAY:** What did you say?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No. Those type questions. They were pretty informal because they was all business people except the Director. And he didn't say very much because he and Captain Moore were real good friends and I'm sure that Captain Moore had told him everything he wanted to know about me. And so they didn't really know just exactly what to ask of me.

**NANCY RAY:** Now what... you became a Ranger... I show December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1967, is that right?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Right.

**NANCY RAY:** OK and when you became a Ranger, where did you go?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Midland... with Jim Ray and Jim Riddle... brand new captain and brand new sergeant. And we lived together because we had not had time to move our families. So the, the captain and the sergeant who had been there were both transferred a good distance away and they didn't want the captain and sergeant and me to be very far off from the headquarters there. At the same time, there was a big... Odessa was pretty much wide open during the oilfield boom and there was lots going on out there. And they didn't want us too far away so we lived together. We rented a place and all stayed together. And that's where I really got to know Jim Ray the most. Captain Riddle was an older man and he was trying to get his feet on the ground as captain with

everything else that was going on. And so I spent a lot of time with just Jim Ray there at night talking. Because he was pretty dry and I was trying to ask him a lot of questions. He... he would answer but just in a dry way but he had a dry sense of humor. So I went over to Monahans one day and when I got over there, a deputy came in and he had a female mannequin that he found on the side of the highway. And they tried to find somebody that it belonged to... called around to a few stores there in Monahans... nobody knew anything about it. So about a week later, I got to thinking about that mannequin... that female mannequin. What could I do with that to pull a trick on Jim Ray? So I was back over there in Monahans again and I said what happened to that female mannequin y'all had? Well, it's back there in the storeroom just in the way. I said well can I have it? Sure, get it out of here. So I took it home, back to the place we had rented, that night. And he was gone, Jim was. And so I went in and lifted the covers back on his bed and put that mannequin in there, in his bed, and I heard him come in that night. I listened... he didn't turn on a light... I was listening real hard. He sat down in the rocking chair and he took off his boots and then he got up and took off his clothes and I heard him slide over there to the bed and sit down on it. And just about the time he laid down, he let out a yell (*laughter*). He jumped up and turned on the light and I got up and went in there just laughing my sides off. And when he got laid down in the bed, he just went to stretch his arm out and put it on top of her head. Her hair... he felt it (*laughter*). And he never forgot that but I laughed the rest of the night.

**NANCY RAY:** (*pause to change discs*) OK, we're back. And you have made Ranger and you're in Midland and you're living with uh Jim Ray and what happened there? Tell us a little bit about your Ranger history.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well it was in the winter time and I was involved in my first bank robbery investigation. The Ranger there stationed in Midland, his name was Dudley White. And they got a call in the afternoon about 2 o'clock the bank had been robbed over in Big Spring. So he said come on, let's go. And the first thing he did when we got in the car was put his leather gloves on. I thought to myself, what're you doing this for? But I didn't ask... I remembered, don't ask questions. So we got to the Big Spring Bank and the FBI was already there and we went inside and Dudley started kind of taking over the investigation. And one of the young agents told him hey, this is under FBI jurisdiction, the bank robbery. And he told him yeah, but so is... the jurisdiction belongs to the Rangers too. And the sheriff was there and he didn't say anything. But anyway, he... Dudley told me... Boy, get over there and start taking fingerprints. I said where am I supposed to do this? He said get the fingerprint kit out of the car and go over there and start on all the teller cages. I said there are gonna be thousands of fingerprints over there. Where should I get first? And he said well just take all the fingerprints you can get. I thought hmm... he kept taking his gloves off and putting them on. I said why is he doing that? So an FBI agent went over there with me where we were trying to lift some prints. He said you're wasting time. I said I know but he told me to do it. He said well just make like you're taking some, we've dealt with him before (*laughter*). I said OK. He kept... OK, I want to interview this teller... I want to interview that one... I want to interview the president... he kept taking off his gloves and putting them on. And finally the sheriff said he ain't hitting nobody yet. He said that's what he puts his gloves on for. I said oh! He said yeah, he takes them gloves off and slaps... (*laughter*). I said OK, OK. So about 6 o'clock that night, he said nobody's going home. We're gonna keep continuing with this interview. I said well I think they've been asked everything they can tell us.

He said nobody's going home until we find out... somebody's involved. So finally about 8 o'clock, the FBI said we're going home and these people are going home too. He said OK, I know who did it. Yeah? He said yeah, they live over in Colorado City. I know these two guys, they're responsible for this. We went to Colorado City. He got the sheriff up... he had already gone to bed. We went out to the guys' place, got them out of bed... the whole train of people, the FBI and everybody went over there. And pretty quick, we found out they didn't know nothing about what happened. He said OK, I know... so we went to Abilene, just he and I. Got there about 3 o'clock in the morning, got the Chief out and the Ranger stationed there. Got them down there and got to talking about who he thought it was in Abilene. Well, the Chief sent somebody out there to get the two guys he thought it was... get them up and bring them down there. Pretty quick... it wasn't them. Anyway, he said OK, I know where these two guys that moved out down close to Brownwood. We're going over there. It was almost daylight and it started snowing. And he called the sheriff about the time we got to Coleman and told him we were coming out there to see these people who lived out there in the country about ten miles... and get a deputy to meet us out there. And by the time we got out there it was snowing real hard. This deputy came... he said I've been by this place every day for the last two weeks and there ain't been nobody home. He said well we'll watch it for a while. So we sat out there in a snowstorm and watched for two hours... nobody moving, no nothing. Ten o'clock in the morning... and so he decided I don't guess they're there. So let's go knock on the door anyway. So we knocked on the door... very obvious wasn't nobody home, no lights, no heat or nothing going on inside. So he told the deputy to go back to Brownwood, we're going to Ballinger. I think there's a couple of guys over there we need to talk to. So we go to Ballinger and he gets the sheriff... the sheriff's office and we

were having a little trouble getting through on the road because of the snowstorm but we got there. And they discussed everybody in the county for two hours. He said OK, we're going to San Angelo. We go to San Angelo and get there about 4 o'clock in the afternoon and he gets the Chief down there and he said well, if anybody knows who done it, I got an informant upstairs in jail and he'll know. So we get him down there and start talking to him. Well it was very obvious to me this guy was a con artist. And he started well what do y'all want to know? And they, the Chief and Dudley, started talking and I didn't say nothing. Finally the guy looked over at me and said how come he don't say nothing? And I still didn't say anything. I said... finally I said I don't have anything to say. And OK... we leave at almost close to dark... headed back toward Midland. We'd been out of radio contact with Midland for at least twelve hours and when we got close to Garden City, he had me driving. And boy we... we didn't meet a car and that road, we went from fence to fence most of the time. And we finally got over to Garden City and topped the hill and he called Midland on the radio. They said where are you? He told them we were coming and they said we've been trying to contact you for two days. They caught the bank robbers yesterday (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** And how long had you been up and working on this?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Two days and nights. Anyway... so I made the point to stay way away from Dudley when he had anything going. He was a good old boy but he was appointed to the job during World War II. No experience. He was a constable in Austin and he had an uncle who was a Ranger, a good one. But poor old Dudley, he never... not long after that, he retired.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what kind of cases did you have in Midland? What were the major kinds of cases?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, most of the cases I had in Midland... they had a big hotel over in Odessa called Inn of the Golden West. There was a lot of gambling going on in there. The guy who owned it name was *unknown name*. And he was involved in the oil industry and a lot of... the big thing, he had about 25 liquor stores in West Texas. Big liquor stores... very profitable liquor stores plus that hotel there. And he had a lot of political clout. And the Commission told the Captain they wanted that cleaned up, period, before we did anything else. So we spent a lot of time going in and out of there and just keeping them on their toes and not having any gambling going on. And then the oilfield theft investigation... man, we spent many hours on oilfield thefts. And drill bits... drill bits was the biggest thing. And one would steal from one company and sell it to another company and wouldn't ask any questions because it was so hard to come by. And so we spent a lot of time chasing them oilfield thieves.

**NANCY RAY:** What about kidnappings? Did you ever get involved with a kidnapping?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, I've been involved in kidnappings but to a lesser extent as far as my part was concerned.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what cases stand out in your mind that you can... (*laughter*)

**LEFTY BLOCK:** One of the most interesting cases, I'll tell you about that one and then probably that's enough. I went to Brownwood in the spring of '68. And I started... I had six counties that were my responsibilities to start with. Because I wound up around all the state from the investigation started there and went somewhere else. But anyway, I was in the sheriff's office there in Brownwood. I had an office in the courthouse and the sheriff's office was located down the hall from me on the second floor. But I was in the sheriff's office discussing a case and I'd already worked two bank robberies and was successful in them. So I felt pretty good about

myself. And anyway, we were back in the sheriff's office discussing some case and the office manager, she came to the door and knocked on it. He told her to come in and she said there's somebody here that wants to meet both of you. And about that time, the guy just pushed beside her and walked right on in. A big guy... six foot eight, 325 pounds... but he was shaped like a milk bottle... narrow at the shoulders and big in the middle. Anyway, he come in "how y'all doing?" And he said my name is Thomas Richard Stevenson and I just moved to this county and I wanted to meet y'all. He said I'm having a house remodeled out here in the country and I'm inviting some kids from West Texas Children's Home for the weekend to come spend out there riding horses, swimming in the swimming pool, and enjoying the weekend. And if y'all have time, I'd like for you to come by and see the kids. OK... if we think about it. And about that time the sheriff said where is that? And he described the location about 15 miles out of town. And I said what kind of business are you in Mr. Stevenson? He looked at me... kind of glanced around the room and look back at the clerk and said I'm a crook. I said what? He said I'm a crook... but don't you worry, I'm not going to do anything around here for you to be concerned about... nothing for you to worry about. What I do will always be in some other state so don't you worry. I said well why did you tell me you were a crook then? He said that's what I do. He said I've gotta go. And so he left. I told the sheriff we've gotta find out where this guy lives. We're gonna go looking for that place. So about 30 minutes after he left, we got in the car and we went out there. Sure enough there were a bunch of people working there. There were about 15 guys working out there doing things... repairing this, painting that, working on fence. And he's sitting on the front porch in a rocking chair. So we just drove up to the house. First thing... "how y'all doing? Come on in and have a cup of coffee." (*laughter*) No, we've got to go we just thought

we'd check it out to see if we get a chance to come by when the kids are here so I wouldn't have to hunt for it. He said anytime... coffee's always on, y'all stop by. So we go back to town and the more I thought about that guy the more it bothered me. I got to find out what he's doing. And so I was in the police department that night about 11 o'clock and this teletype came out regarding a con game that happened in the state of Idaho that happened about a month before... describing this con game, how it happened. And they started giving the description of the suspect... it was one white and three blacks. The white fit the description as far as height and weight. I said maybe that's it. So the next morning I called the sheriff's office up there in Idaho and they said you got to talk to the DA and I said OK. So I talked to him and told him what the deal was. And he said can you get me a picture? Well, back then we didn't have driver's license pictures so I said well, I don't know where I can find one but I'll try. So the next day I had a Polaroid camera that I just got. In fact, the sheriff's office bought it for me after the bank robberies' solving. But anyway... so I took this camera and I went out there and he's sitting on the front porch... "how you doing? Come on in. Have a cup of coffee." And I said no, I got a brand new camera and I'm trying to make everything work right on it and I'm taking a few pictures for practice. Let me take a picture of your house... you've got it all cleaned up and everything and got all of the painting. Yeah, go ahead... he said I've got some more kids coming this weekend. And then he said did you see the ones here last weekend... did you drive by? No, I didn't get a chance but the sheriff told me he did... he saw the kids out here. So I started taking pictures. I told him well I've tried them on everything else except somebody, let me take your picture. He said OK. So I took his picture. And of course I beat it back to town and I sent that picture to Idaho. About two days later, they got it and in about four days, they called me and they

said that's him. We're gonna get a warrant for his arrest. I said just send it to me, I'll take care of it. It was about another ten days before they got the government warrant for his arrest. I got it... OK. So I told the sheriff let's go get him. So we go out there. Same old deal... "how y'all doing? Come on in." No, we haven't got time. He said what'cha mean? I said we've got a warrant for your arrest. He said oh, from where? And I said Idaho... that mean anything to you? I don't know. Anyway, he said well why didn't you call me, I could come on down there. You didn't have to come all the way out here to get me. I said no, we're gonna go through the whole routine. We're gonna advise you of your rights. We're gonna put the handcuffs on you. You're gonna get in the front seat and the sheriff is gonna drive and I'm gonna get right behind you. Well, why don't I just take my car and follow you down there and I'll have a car to go... I said it may be a while before... Oh no problem. He said I'm gonna call my lawyer. No, he talked to his wife, Kaydon, a very attractive young lady. He said you call my lawyer, Mr. Tatum, in Houston... tell him what the deal is. She said OK. And he said but it will save a trip if you'll let me take my car. I said no, you're not gonna take your car. So away down there we went. We got to the jail and of course I got a chance to take another good picture then with the jail camera. And anyway, I called Idaho and said we've got him. He said OK. I said but he called a lawyer, I don't know what's gonna happen. About that time, we get a call. The lawyer said no matter what bond you set, said I'm gonna make it. A big Houston law firm... I said well we'll see. So we talked to the judge and told him what that lawyer said. The next thing I know, two hours later, that lawyer flew his own plane out to Brownwood. Here he come... down there at the courthouse, demanding he post the bail and get him out. Well, OK... I said are you gonna fight extradition? And he said yeah. So the judge set an extradition hearing date and they let him out on bond. He

said, now remember, you don't have to come out there and get me. Just call me and I'll be up here. So... a week went by. Two days before the hearing, I get a call from Idaho. Well, the case has been dismissed. What? The case has been dismissed. His lawyer talked to the victim out here and they made some kind of agreement to get his money back and he don't want to press charges any longer. On no... so anyway, I kept worrying about that guy. He got by with that one but I can't let him keep on. And of course the word began to spread around in that surrounding community out there that this guy knows how to beat cases. And the little community of May was in the process of trying to put a sewer system in the town. And he ups and writes for a grant to get that money to do it and they got it. Well, he went to the community center over there every time they had a meeting and he was Mr. Big. And every time I ran into somebody from that community... how're you and Dicks getting along? They called him Dicks Stevenson. I said just fine (*laughter*). But every sheriff's office and police department in that surrounding area... the first thing I done when I got there I went in and talked to the dispatcher and say you see any teletype messages about con games and a guy fitting this description. Well I went to Goldthwaite two days later and the sheriff said I think the dispatcher wants to talk to you. I go in there and she said I think I got a teletype this morning and sounded like the guy you asked me about. So I go read it. It was a teletype from Wyoming... same deal. I called that DA on the phone over there. He said send me a picture. I said I've got a good one. I sent it. Two days later, he called me back after he got it. Said it's him... I'm sending you a warrant. I'm getting it. OK, send it. I'll be glad to take care of it. Well, same deal. Same thing happened. Mr. Tatum, the lawyer, he got to the client or the victim and he broke it this way... you want your money back? If my client goes to jail, you don't get nothing. I can give you your money back plus something for the trouble and

you dismiss the case. Well that happened in six different states... there was one from Florida, South Carolina, Idaho, Wyoming, uh Indiana, and Arizona. So I... man, I'm getting tired of this... something's gotta give. And it began to worry me at night. I begin to wake up... what am I going to do about this guy? He's just getting by with all this stuff and these people over here are beginning to laugh at me because he lives here and I can't do nothing. There's bound to be something I can do. So low and behold, a teletype came in on a con job in Kingsport, Tennessee. So I said something's gotta give. I called the sheriff's office and they got the DA over there and he said OK, what's the deal? And I told him. I said here's what happened in the past so I'm warning you in advance. He said it ain't gonna happen in this state. I said what do you mean? He said we've got a law over here called compounding a felony. If that victim tries to back off on me, I'll file on him for compounding a felony. He said it ain't gonna happen. I said send me the warrant. So he sent me the warrant and I called out there to Dick's house. In the meantime, we started watching the airport. He started parking his car, his Cadillac, at the airport and fly off somewhere. So we knew about when he was gone and when he came back to get his car. And he had personalized plates on that car, SLICK, slick... personalized plates (*laughter*). So I called out there to see if he is home and his wife said he had to go to Houston yesterday and he won't be back for a few days. I said something just told me that guy's not gone. So I went to the airport and looked and his car was not there. So I go out to his house... get out there about 6 o'clock in the evening. He's sitting on the front porch... "how you doing?" Same old story. Let's have a cup of coffee. No... we're going back to the jailhouse. I told you, the many times you come out here... all you've gotta do is call me. I said I called. She said you wasn't here. He said oh I just told her I was fixing to go. She thought I was gone but I was out in the garage. Well, we're fixing

to go down to the... Let me take my car. Same old story. No, you're not gonna take the car. Just me and you are going to jail. You're going to sit up there in the front seat. I'm gonna advise you of your rights and I'm gonna get the handcuffs. So get in. Well, he told her, call Mr. Tatum... get this taken care of right away. I said well OK, but you're going. You're gonna make the ride anyway. So he gets in. We start down the road and he said you think you're smart, don't you? I said well, I've got it where I am right now anyway. He said just like those rights you advised me of. I know them better than you do. I can recite them to you so he recites them off. He said I'm as smart as you are. I know about all the laws. I said yeah? He said just like in the state of Texas, an oral confession is not any good. It has to be in writing. I said that's right. And he said well I'm just gonna tell you about what I've been doing. And you can't testify against me because it's oral. I said OK, tell me about it. So he started telling me about... he said now where did you say they were? I said Tennessee. He thought a minute... oh yeah, that one. OK, he started telling me about the con games he pulled on the guy. And he went through the whole thing and he said but you can't tell anybody. I said is that right? He said yeah. He said I showed you, didn't I? He said I'm telling you. Just call me, I'll come down there. We'll get this taken care of. No use wasting all that time and energy. I said OK. So we get back to the jailhouse and I can't wait to go call that DA in Tennessee and told him about what he said. I said what kind of confession law you got in Tennessee? He said we have an oral confession law. I said I'm gonna be your start witness. So two days later, they came and claimed him... picked Dick up. Boy, Tatum was raising cane with the judge and everybody there. The judge set a million dollar bond on him. Anyway... so they took him back and he was in jail over there. I talked to them every two or three months... telling me how the trial date was coming. And one time I called and talked to the chief deputy and said

boy something's gotta happen pretty quick. He's baptizing in the bathtub up here in jail. Said he's got religion. OK... so anyway it was about nine months before they had the trial. Of course they called me and I flew out there and when we walked into the courtroom, Mr. Tatum was there and Dick... and he looked over there and saw me... it dawned on him what had happened. He said wait, wait... He said I know what you're fixing to do. You're gonna get me on oral confession. He said I'm just gonna plead guilty and get out the best way I can. So they gave him ten years. So I forgot about him. Well, Jameye and I are already stationed in San Antonio as sergeant down there. Jameye and I are driving down the street one night in San Antonio, big city... 10 o'clock at night, and we're passing a Church's Fried Chicken and I look over there and there's a guy at the door with two big boxes of chicken. I looked over there and I said that's Thomas Richard Stevenson. How did he get here? I said he's doing something wrong no matter what it is. So I stopped. Pulled in there and got out... "how you doing?" (*laughter*) Same old story... just like my long lost brother. Anyway, I said don't make no difference how I'm doing, how are you doing? What are you doing? Oh, said I'm in a legitimate business but I've gotta go. I've gotta take these chickens. I looked over there at the car. I said is that Kaydon? That was his wife's name. Yeah, said she married another guy while I was in prison but I got her back. She had a little girl but I got her back now. I said well where are y'all living? Well I gotta go... I.. I.. I'm real busy... got to take the chicken. I've got a business appointment first thing in the morning... I've got to go. So we looked the car and I said um hmm... I'm gonna find where's he going. But I knew not to move because I knew he was going to go around the block to see if I had left, following him. So we just sat there. Sure enough, he made the block and came back by. When he did, I took off on the prowl on the street and we kind of... the traffic was not too heavy

in that neighborhood where he was at. And we followed him to an apartment complex and went to see where he parked his car... behind the apartment. So I went home right quick and I called the dispatcher on the phone. I said anybody looking for a guy named Thomas Richard Stevenson? Check all your messages. She called me back in about 15 minutes and she said I found a warrant issued for him uh up in Temple. And I said OK... get them to send us a copy of that warrant. And about daylight, I had a good friend that worked for the police department, a detective, and he and I were supposed to pick up a motorcycle that had been stolen and returned to a lawyer's office and we had the pickup, the company pickup. And I told him we've gotta go early. I'm gonna go pick this guy up on a warrant. I'll tell you about him when we get it. Well this friend of mine, he's 6 foot 7, 285 pounds, big guy himself... uh did some professional wrestling before. And he was a wrestling referee on the side besides being a good policeman. He said OK. So we go out there and get the manager up at the apartments in case we had to get a key to get in the place. And she told us that the guy's name was Burton who lived in that apartment. I said what does he look like? And she gave me this... I said no, he's name is not Burton but we're fixing to pick him up anyway. So we get over there to the apartment. Knock on the door about 6:30 in the morning and Kaydon comes to the door. She cracks it open and I stuck my foot in there, in between the door and the door jamb. And she tried to close it. I said no, no, Kaydon, we're coming in. We've got a warrant for Dick so just back up. So she backs up. We take off and go in the bedroom and he's laying up in bed, jaybird naked, and "how y'all doing?" (*laughter*) Big smile on his face. Anyway, so we get him up... get him dressed... get the handcuffs on. So we got the pickup truck so here's two pretty good sized guys to get in there to start with, with him in the middle. We squeeze in there and we... and on our way to the jail where we had to

pick up the motorcycle at the lawyer's office... we were supposed to meet at 8 o'clock. So we drove up and sure enough he had the motorcycle there. We stopped and we got out and started talking to the lawyer and loading the motorcycle and Dick said, is this a lawyer? I said yeah. He said can I talk to him? I said I thought you had a lawyer in Houston, Mr. Tatum? He said no, not anymore. I said really? He said no, let me talk to him. So I said if he wants to talk to you, OK. So I told this lawyer and he said I'll talk to him just to see what he's got to say. Maybe I can help y'all. He used to be a state representative so he was kind of on our side to start with. But anyway, he went over and talked to him a little bit and we just kind of stayed to the back of the truck. And anyway, the lawyer came back and said I'm gonna come down there and make his bond. I said you're what? He said I'm gonna come down there and make his bond. He said... he showed us a big diamond ring. I knew it was Dick's diamond ring that he paid \$10,000 for because I had to (*unknown word*) one time. And so he said, he's gonna put this ring up and I'm gonna make his bond and he's gonna come back and pay me to get the ring back. I said don't count it. He said well I've got the ring. I said you do what you want to. So we left and went on down to the jail. We're walking down the hall of the police department and we passed the homicide lieutenant's office. And we're walking on back toward the jail and about the time we got ten feet down there passed that lieutenant's office, he stuck his head out... had the door open, and say hey! And my friend the detective just thought he was just hollering at him and he walked back there. He said what are y'all doing with that guy? He said we're putting him in jail. He said really? He said yeah, they caught him... He said I just won a fishing trip with him off the coast. I was fixing to invest some money in the deal he's got going (*laughter*). And so... no way. So we took him on back and put him in jail and I called Kingsport, Tennessee. I said hey, we've got your old buddy

over here in jail. What happened in Tennessee? He said haven't you heard? I said no. He said out at the penitentiary, he started writing speeches for the governor of Tennessee. And he got him out on a pardon and the next thing we know, they're selling pardons and got the governor impeached. I said well, he's back in the jailhouse now but I don't know for how long. The lawyer, he made his bond but he went right down to the court and he filed to get off the bond. He never saw him again. Well the next thing I hear, I kept checking to see if there were any warrants outstanding. The car was rented and we found all kind of paraphernalia in there. Went over checking accounts and the name was A&D Enterprises and a bunch of stuff like that. And anyway, uh his wife, Kaydon, took off and went back to the rancher she had the little kid by and we didn't hear nothing out of him. Well the next thing I know, up in Dallas, they found him dead and two blacks was involved that he'd been involved with on some of the con games. Anyway, that was one of the most interesting. But some of the stories I heard about the convict, they were elaborate. I mean if that guy had been legitimate, he could have made millions but he liked that living on the edge. And that's just the way he done things.

**NANCY RAY:** And that lasted for years.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** In fact, he got so good at it he would write a script on the con game and sell it to other con artists. He'd perfect it and sell it. Uh a short version of one of his con games was he goes to some little town like Breckenridge. Pretty small... about 5,000 population... but enough to have a few little businesses that made a living out of their business. And like this one... he goes up to this Exxon service station. He's got a Cadillac and he's dressed in a fine suit of clothes... big diamond ring, big wad of money in his pocket. He drives up to the service station... we had full service back then. Said I want this car cleaned up... do a wash job... do

you do a wax job? The guy said yeah. Well, do everything y'all do to this car. I'll just wait. Well, OK. Everything? Yeah. OK. So in the meantime he starts talking to the owner. He said you got a pretty good business here? He said yeah, pretty good. He said uh go ahead and change the oil too while y'all are at it. Change the air cleaners while... the filter. Just do it all while you're at it. He'd sit there and rub that diamond ring and kind of straighten up his clothes a little bit. And pretty soon, after he talked to the owner a little bit, kind of found out a little bit about his business, how he handled things. He'd say let's go get a cup of coffee... I'll buy you a cup of coffee while these guys take care of my car. Let's go get a cup of coffee. In fact, do you want lunch? I'll buy lunch. They go over there to the café. They're sitting there talking and finally this guy is curious enough to ask what do you do for a living? Same old deal... I'm a crook. He said yeah, I'm a crook. But he said you see these fine clothes? You see these hands... I don't have any callouses. I don't have anything. I don't do nothing. I just promote somebody else who does... furnish them expense money and they do the work. He said that's the way I make a living. I'm a crook... I told you up front but you don't want to know about that so let's talk some more about your business. Well... the guy is curious enough he wants to find out more. And of course he knows how to play. If one doesn't, he goes on somewhere else and does... where there's one that does. OK, he said what kind of things do you find? He said let me give you an example. He said I know where there's a warehouse full of stolen of tires that can be bought for a song. But you don't want to know about that... he said do you handle tires? He (*the owner*) says yeah, I handle a few tires in my station. He said well there's an opportunity if you... he said no, let's don't talk about it. Let's talk about something else. Well he wants to know more and he says OK, I'll tell you what. He said how many tires do you think you can use? The guy said well

depends on price. And he said well 10 cents on the dollar... he said all you want. Any brand you want... but you're not interested in that. We need to talk about something else. Anything else you can do to my car that you think I need? Well, how about these tires? He said you can get a U-Haul truck and say if you want \$10,000 worth I can handle it. If you want \$20,000 worth, I can handle it. Said uh... are you interested in that? If you are, I'll arrange it but you don't have to do a thing but go pick them up. And you don't have to fund any money up front. You just wait until we go to get them... He said I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make arrangements. You tell me how many you want, how much you've got to spend. I'll call you next Monday and you tell me. And you get your money together and get a rental truck and I'll meet you in Del Rio. They're across the river in the warehouse on the Mexico side. And we'll go... I'll go with you. We'll pick up the tires and you pay me then. So the guy goes and makes arrangements to get \$15,000 to get a load of tires and a rental truck. And he goes down to Del Rio, Holiday Inn motel... there Dick is waiting. He said it's all arranged for tonight. Said I'll meet you at midnight. We'll drive across the river with this truck. Back it up to this warehouse and load the tires and pay for them. So sure enough, the guy goes in there. They drive across the river. Dick gets out of the truck and said they don't want you to see them, they're Americans. So let me take the money in while they load your truck and I'll come back and get with you and we'll leave. Well, he takes the money. He don't come back. They guy sits there for two hours with the truck. Who's he gonna complain to?

**NANCY RAY:** Oh my, he just...

**LEFTY BLOCK:** That's just small to some of the others. I mean some that was so elaborate you can't think of it when they involve some other people like blacks involved. Some of them

three-card money deals just... I figured up one time he must have made \$500,000 in six months that he'd taken... the ones I knew about. No telling how many more. And he might have four or five working at the same time.

**NANCY RAY:** And you got him.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Anyway, he was something else.

**NANCY RAY:** Well your skills eventually led you to promotions, right?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Your skills as a Ranger...

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** And you went to captain.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** I went from San Antonio to Austin as Assistant Senior Ranger Captain.

**NANCY RAY:** And you eventually made Senior Ranger Captain?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Can you tell us how you did that?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Hard work.

**NANCY RAY:** Hard work, OK. As a Senior Captain, what did you do? What were your responsibilities?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** You're responsible for every Ranger in the whole state of Texas. But also as an administrator, I had to prepare budgets. I had to go down and testify before the legislature... those type things were things was I didn't really care to do but it had... Then it took me away from investigative matters which I loved to do. But uh...

**NANCY RAY:** And evidently you were very good at it.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well I was successful and lucky about a lot of them.

**NANCY RAY:** Well to become Senior Captain did you have to take tests for that too... and the interview board? Is that the same process?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, yes.

**NANCY RAY:** I could listen to your stories all day long. But if you were going to give advice to a future Ranger, what would you say?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Keep your mouth shut and look and see what is going on. Observe.

**NANCY RAY:** You learned that well didn't you?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Yes, ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** And I show that you retired June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1992. Is that right?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Correct.

**NANCY RAY:** And what have you been doing since then?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well before I retired we got started with this raising of good horses. And we got first started with Quarterhorses and then got into the Paints, American Paints. They're two kinds of Paint horses, the Overo and the Tobiano. The Tobiano is the horse of two different colors but the lines and design are smooth. Where the Overo is nothing but a Quarterhorse... got a few spots here may be a lightening bolt... nothing of any pattern to it... mostly solid colors with small markings of white on their body. And we got to, we had... we raised one world champion roping horse and we raised a reserve champion halter stallion. And got to breeding good mares with our own stallion to the point where we didn't want to breed anymore to offspring. And so we sold him and we own a syndicated stud right now that we breed to.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, is there anything else you would like to add? There is no way we can capture your whole career in this short time.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** No.

**NANCY RAY:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Not really.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. I would like to say thank you for your time today.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** You're quite welcome.

**NANCY RAY:** A most interesting interview... and we thank you for your service to the state of Texas.

**LEFTY BLOCK:** Well, I was glad to be what assistance I could be to the state and to my fellow man.

**NANCY RAY:** Well thank you very much.