



The

Issue 5, Fall 2001

# Texas Ranger Dispatch™

Magazine of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum  
Official museum, hall of fame, and repository of the Texas Rangers Law Enforcement Agency

## Issue 5, Fall 2001



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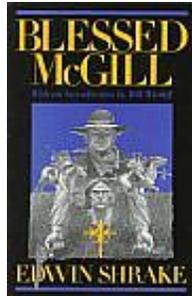

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## Book Review:

### *Blessed McGill*

by Edwin Shrake  
Review by Nelda Durham

Paperback - 248 pages (paperback, reprint edition 1997)  
University of Texas Press; ISBN 0292777248

**Editor's Note:** *Though not a book about the Texas Rangers, we feel this book is a great example of life in 19th Century Texas. It was a life that our Texas forefathers, in general, and the Texas Rangers, in particular, faced on an almost daily basis. For this reason we felt that a review of this book was appropriate.*

**Introduction:** *Edwin Shrake, seemingly quite a character himself, is an author from the Southwest who is most recently famous for his two books on golf and life: The Little Red Book and The Little Green Book, both written with golf master Harvey Penick. These books have become two of the best-selling sports books of all time. He has also been a noted sports writer for the Fort Worth Press, the Dallas Morning News, and Sports Illustrated. He has published over a dozen books.*

*Blessed McGill was first published in 1968. It has gone out of print and then been brought back several times, as interest never seems to die out. The combination of history, humor, and adventure along with unforgettable characters makes this a book that, like its character Blessed McGill, "refuses to die."*

## §

Set in Texas during the Reconstruction, *Blessed McGill* is filled with eccentric, rough-and-ready characters from the Old West. Although most are purely the author's creations, they come to life not only through the descriptions of their persons, but also through the vivid details of their exploits.

The tale's main character is Peter Hermano McGill. The reader is immediately drawn into the story when McGill announces: "It is odd in the midst of so much life around me, new with the spring, to know that I must go meet Octavio, for he will surely murder me."

From this point, McGill chronicles the story of his life. This includes his association from boyhood with Jacob Charles Gerhardt, who becomes the

infamous bandit Octavio, sometimes known as Gotcheye.

Jacob Charles Gerhardt, his mother (a Lipan Apache), and his stepfather (a Dutchman) lived on a farm near the McGills. After the old Dutchman was killed by a group of ruffians and the young Jacob blinded in one eye (hence the name Gotcheye) by the same men, the McGills take the boy and his mother into their home for a while.

Young Jacob and his mother have to leave the McGill's farm one day after Jacob murders a farmhand. They go west to join the Lipan Apache, the mother's tribe.

When Jacob Charles Gerhardt surfaces again, he is the leader of a group of treacherous Lipians and is now the much-feared Octavio. The paths of McGill and Octavio cross many times. The men remain on friendly terms and even have some adventures together. Then horrible tragedy strikes and creates enmity between them. From that point, it is only a matter of time before one of them kills the other.

The book is fascinating not only because of the McGill/Octavio story, but also for the glimpse into a culture that no longer exists. The reader rides across Texas with outlaws, Indians, and cowboys. All the elements of the frontier are evident, including individual freedom and lawlessness.

The reader realizes that life is about to change for these people. Men like McGill feel it is coming and resent it. One interesting comment about the change has to do with the railroads:

*The railroads are a curse. They are laying iron tracks across the grasslands. They are bringing noise, filth, fire, and ash. Most distressing of all, they are spreading white men throughout the country.*

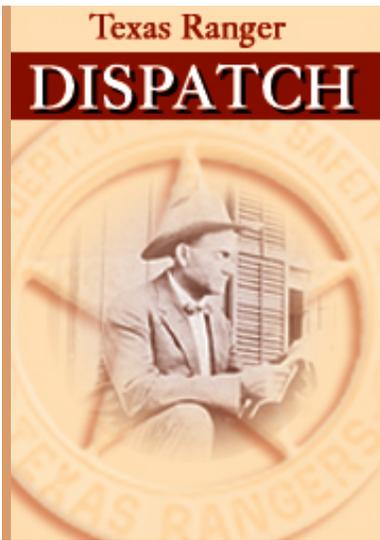
There is humor in the story when McGill travels east to Baltimore to Mrs. Merrilee Pritchett's School for Young Ladies. He goes there to find the girl he loves (he once rescued her from Comanche) and take her back to Texas. He creates a stir from the time he gets off the train in full Western dress, Bowie knife included, and enters a newspaper office to inquire about directions to Mrs. Pritchett's school. Realizing that he has material for a story that will sell newspapers, the editor sends reporters along with McGill to Mrs. Pritchett's- and what a story they get!

The biggest surprise of the narrative is that after his death, McGill is made the first Roman Catholic saint in North America. Edward Shrake is such a convincing storyteller that there are those who have actually searched for the grave of Blessed McGill.

§

Nelda Durham is an English teacher at Central High School in Waverly, Tennessee. She is a native of Bruceton, Tennessee, and received her degree at University of Tennessee Martin. She has been named Teacher of the Year at Central and has won numerous distinctions in her field. Nelda is a member of Checkmates, an editorial service, and plans to continue this work when she retires from the teaching





profession in 2002.



Nelda is married to Melvin Durham, a CPA. They have one son, Whit, a recent UTM graduate in geology and cartography.

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**Now You Know:**

## The Cinco Peso Badge

by Glenn Elliott,  
Texas Ranger, Ret.



Many stories have been written and many rumors told as to the origin of the current Texas Ranger *cinco peso* badge. As yet, I have not seen the whole story told. I was there and this is how it came about.

In the early 1960s, the Great East Texas Oil Field located in and around Kilgore was rocked by what became famous as the slant-hole business. The East Texas field, discovered in 1930, is and was the largest oil field ever developed in the continental United States.

By the early 60s, some of the wells were no longer the great gushers they had once been. Some had become marginal at best for most of the major oil companies. Often these wells were sold to small, independent operators who required much less money to operate and could therefore rework the wells and turn a small profit. *Small* is the key word here.

With millions of dollars on the line, it didn't take the crooks long to figure out a way to turn more than their fair share of profit. They developed a really simple method to steal someone else's property. They would send down a whip-stock (a directional drilling device) into the hole and dig the hole slanted toward a neighboring well that was a good producer. Suddenly, a marginal well turned into a gusher.

Like all good schemes, the secret couldn't be kept and word leaked out. Naturally, the legal owners of the wells being tapped were outraged that their oil was being stolen. They went to the Railroad Commission, which regulated the oil field, and demanded action to stop the theft.

There weren't just a few slant-hole wells; there were hundreds. Each suspected well would have to be physically inspected by an agent of the Railroad Commission to determine if the hole went straight down or slanted.

Many of the old boys working these slant-holes were pretty rough characters, and it was expected that some would resist physically. This is where the Rangers came in. "One Ranger, One Riot" aside, this was so big that over the next two years, just about every Ranger in the state worked at Kilgore at one time or another.

G. W. Burks, future captain of Company "B", was a private stationed in Fort Worth at the time. G. W. was a great reader of history, especially Texas Ranger history. He had read about earlier Ranger badges, many of which had been made from Mexican five (cinco) peso coins.

Burks went to our future Hall of Fame Captain Bob Crowder, described the badge to him, and requested permission to have one made. Captain Crowder liked the badge and gave the go-ahead. G. W. went to Halton's Jewelry in Fort Worth, explained how the badge was to be made, and had them make one. At a company meeting, we were shown the badge. We all loved it and naturally wanted one.



We had to furnish our own coin, which if memory serves me right, cost about six or seven dollars. The badge looks pretty much the same today as the one G W designed. The top of the badge had our name on it, and in the center was the letter "B," representing our company.

During the slant-hole business, when Rangers from the other five companies came to Kilgore and saw the badge, they also wanted one. Even more important, Colonel Homer Garrison, the director of the Department of Public Safety, saw it and fell in love with it. He wanted one, too. Colonel Garrison was the director for about thirty years, and the whole time after this, he wore this Texas Ranger badge-he loved the Rangers.

Shortly thereafter, every Ranger in the state was wearing the now world-famous Cinco Peso badge.

To borrow from my good friend Paul Harvey, "And now you know the rest of the story."

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*In Their Own Words:*

## Just Where was I Supposed to Go?

by Gary Henderson

*In 1989, the Texas Panhandle town of Pampa had one of Texas' newest Rangers, Gary Henderson. Rangers are notorious for the good-natured hazing that all rookies have to endure. The Rangers have fertile imaginations, but never could any of them have dreamed up the reception that awaited Gary. His description of the event is given below (yes, he survived):*

For years, the Texas Rangers Company C has held its meetings at the 6666 Ranch near Guthrie. The actual site of the meeting is at a place on the ranch that is appropriately named the "Snake Den." One night, this building gave me some very good training for being a Ranger.

I was sitting with my back to the wall. On my immediate left was Senior Texas Captain Lefty Block, and to my right sat Ranger Larry Gilbreath. Both are good-sized men. I had a Coke and had set it down near my left boot. Just as I reached down to pick it up for a drink, Captain Block said, "Don't move a muscle. There's a rattlesnake under your chair."

I thought he was joking and continued to reach for the drink. Again Captain Block spoke, but this time there was no doubt he was serious. "Boy, there's a rattlesnake right by your boot. Don't move a muscle."

I wasn't looking at anyone, but I remember that not a single Ranger was moving a muscle. Very slowly, I moved my head to look down. There was what had to be the biggest rattlesnake ever known. This thing wasn't big-it was huge! Of course, any snake is especially huge when it is under YOUR chair!

Either one Ranger or a whole company of Rangers has made some of the deadliest of criminals quake with fear. I have known Rangers to stand up against incredible odds without blinking an eye. Well, none blinked an eye that day either, but I promise you it was for an entirely different reason. No one wanted to take on that rattler, with the possible exception of Ranger Warren Yeager.

As for that old rattler, he was a picture of total unconcern. He

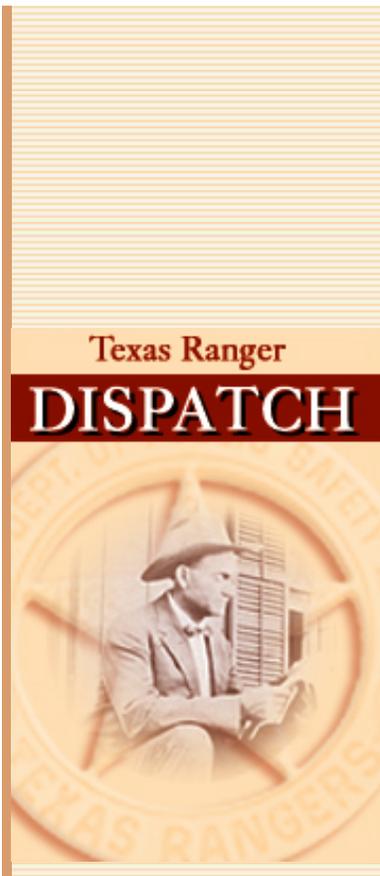
just crawled right on through my legs and across the floor as if there wasn't a soul in the room. Ranger Yeager jumped up as if he was going to catch the snake, and the snake suddenly stopped. A resounding message was sent to Yeager by all of the other Rangers: "Warren, sit down!"

Warren sat down, and the snake continued on its journey through our group. Reaching one of the numerous holes in the wall, he crawled right in and we never saw that snake again-or at least I didn't. But I have to admit I didn't go looking for it either.

When the last of the snake's rattles disappeared through the wall, there was a collective sigh exhaled by more than one Ranger.

Later, I was asked how I could just sit there. My response was very simple. Captain Block was to my left, and he surely wasn't going to move. Larry Gilbreath was to my right, and I knew that he wasn't going to move. There was a wall to my back, so I couldn't go that way, and I darn sure wasn't going to go the same way that the rattlesnake was going! So I just sat there and waited him out.

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## *Tales of the Texas Rangers*

by Bill O'Neal

*"Tales of the Texas Rangers, starring  
Joel McCrea as Ranger Pearson!"*

For more than two years, announcer Hal Gibney introduced this weekly radio show about contemporary Rangers.

*"Texas! More than 260,000 square miles!"* he would continue. "And fifty men who make up the most famous and oldest law enforcement body in North America!"

In 1950, television antennas were beginning to go up across the country, but radio networks still offered a full schedule of soap operas, game shows, mysteries, melodramas, comedies-and Westerns, such as *The Lone Ranger* and weekly series starring Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. Western movies and novels enjoyed great popularity, so a radio series about the famed Texas Rangers was a logical concept.

Producer-director Stacy Keach (father of actor Stacy Keach, Jr.) traveled to Texas with a write to do research. Keach met one of the most famous of all Texas Rangers, Captain Manuel "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas. Keach enlisted Captain Gonzauillas as the show's technical advisor and then traveled 1,500 miles across the Lone Star State observing the Rangers in field operations.

Keach lined up an established Western star for the role of Ranger Jace Pearson. By 1950, Joel McCrea (see photo above) had been a Hollywood leading man for two decades. He was born in Los Angeles in 1905, and he went on to attend Hollywood High. In the summers, he worked at California ranches and became a superb horseman.

When he was fourteen, McCrea began appearing as an extra in silent films, including a few Westerns. McCrea was tall and ruggedly handsome, with a sense of integrity that came through on the big screen. By the 1930s, he was a leading man in comedies and dramas. In 1937, he had his first starring role in a Western, *Wells Fargo*, and two years later Cecil B. DeMille cast him in *Union Pacific*. McCrea played the title roles in *Buffalo Bill* in 1944 and in the fourth remake of *The Virginian* in 1946. At this point, he began working almost exclusively in Westerns, starring in five in 1949.

With Joel McCrea lending star power, *Tales of the Texas Rangers* debuted over the NBC radio network on July 8, 1950. The thirty-minute show, sponsored by Wheaties, ran on Saturday nights at 9:30 for three months. In October, the show switched to Sunday evenings, eventually settling into the

six o'clock time slot.

When the weekly adventures were set during the past two decades in order that the show have a modern slant. Ranger Jace Pearson drove an automobile, but he had a horse trailer and sometimes galloped astride his horse Charcoal into the backcountry in pursuit of lawbreakers.

*Tales of the Texas Rangers* concluded its radio run on September 14, 1952. But within a few years, as Western series began to proliferate on television, *Tales of the Texas Rangers* was dusted off for TV. At first intended for juvenile audiences, a *Tales of the Texas Rangers* theme song was recorded by Shorty Long for RCA's Children's Bluebird Records. This theme song proclaimed the Rangers to be "a band of sturdy men." *Tales of the Texas Rangers* comic book was also published.

Joel McCrea, still a popular movie star, was not available for a juvenile TV series. Tall Willard Parker assumed the role of Jace Pearson, while co-star Harry Lauter played Ranger Clay Morgan.

From 1955 through 1958, *Tales of the Texas Rangers* was aired in the afternoons over CBS-TV. In the fall of 1958, ABC-TV picked up the half-hour show, running it at five o'clock on Thursday afternoons. But by this time, Westerns had reached a peak of popularity on primetime television. So on December 22, 1958, ABC moved *Tales of the Texas Ranger* to 7:30 on Monday evenings.

Unlike the radio version, television episodes alternated between the 1950s and frontier Texas. But Parker and Lauter could not carry the show in primetime. *Tales of the Texas Rangers* was cancelled after the May 25, 1959, episode.

This writer, however, still harbors fond memories of listening to the warm, reassuring voice of Joel McCrea as he drove across the Texas of my boyhood, often stopping his car to saddle up Charcoal.

*Note: For trivia fans, Charcoal was also the name of Lone Wolf Gonzallus' horse.*

§

Bill O'Neal first researched Jack Hays for his 1991 book, *Fighting Men of the Indian Wars*. Bill is the author of more than twenty books and three hundred articles and book reviews. He has appeared in televised documentaries about the West on The Learning Channel, TNN, and TBS. Bill teaches history at Panola College in Carthage, Texas, and recently he was awarded a Piper Professorship.

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## Shining Star:

### Ray Martinez

Kent County, Texas, is about eighty miles, as the crow flies, northwest of Abilene. It was here on his grandfather's ranch that Ray Martinez entered the world on January 20, 1937. He was the third of five children born to Manuel and Julia Martinez. The oldest child was Gilbert, followed by sister Celia, and then came Ramiro (Ray). After Ray, younger sister Mary and brother Charles arrived.

Ray attended his first four years of grammar school in Hobbs, Texas. For some unknown reason, his school was locally referred to as the largest country school in Texas. By the time Ray was ready for the fifth grade, his father had rented a farm near Rotan, Texas. Ray graduated from Rotan High School in 1956. He followed his brother Gilbert to Austin to attend the University of Texas.

Unfortunately, neither Ray nor Gilbert would have the luxury of devoting their full time to academics. The year 1956 was a tough one for Texas farmers and ranchers-it was the year of a great drought. Regrettably, the Martinez boys' father did not escape its ravages, so in addition to carrying a full academic load, Ray and Gilbert also worked forty-plus hours a week at the State Hospital and sent every spare dollar to Rotan to help their family.

The workload was too much, however, and Ray dropped out of school after one semester. He soon joined the Army and served three years as a combat medic at Fort Carson near Colorado Springs, Colorado; Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio; and finally in Germany.

As was common with most men from his era, when Ray got out of the Army, he started looking for a job-any job that would pay him a livable wage. In September of 1960, he was accepted into the Austin Police Department. When he graduated from the their Police Academy on January 20, 1961, Ray became a patrolman. At that time, the Austin PD did not have enough cars to go around, so his duties were those of a walking patrolman.

An eventful year in Ray's life was 1961. Not only did he become a police officer, but he got married. Vernell Schmidzensky, a pretty blond-haired girl from Fredericksburg, Texas, became his wife. Today they have two daughters, twins Janette and Janice.

August 1, 1966, was a memorable day in not only Ray's life, but also in America's. A former Marine marksman, Charles Whitman, barricaded himself in the Tower on the University of Texas' campus and started shooting. By the



time Ray and others put an end to his murderous rampage, Whitman had killed sixteen people-including his wife and mother, whom he had slain before going into the Tower. Another thirty-three were wounded. For his outstanding heroism that day, Ray was awarded the Austin Police Department Medal of Valor, named Peace Officer of the Year by the National Police Officers Association, and honored by the National Rifle Association.

Ray was promoted to sergeant in November 1966 and was assigned to the Criminal Investigations Division. During this period, the Austin Police Department's salaries were falling further and further behind the cost of living. As much as Ray loved being an Austin policeman, the pay was just not sufficient to support his family the way he desired. He decided he had no choice but to leave the police force. With a friend, he bought the Picnic Restaurant on Guadalupe Street beside the UT campus in downtown Austin. It only took about two weeks for Ray to realize he had made a terrible mistake: his heart was still in law enforcement. But rejoining the Austin Police Department was not an option he considered. To do so would have meant that he would reenter the Police Department as a patrolman-with a patrolman pay-and after eight years with the force, he was unwilling to start again at the bottom.

Ray knew that the Texas Department of Public Safety was expanding their Narcotics Division. In 1969, the unit was new and only had about fifteen members. Ray was accepted as a narcotics agent and was assigned to Houston. He worked many cases there, but in 1973, he applied for entrance into the Texas Rangers and was accepted. On September 1, he assumed his duty station in Laredo.

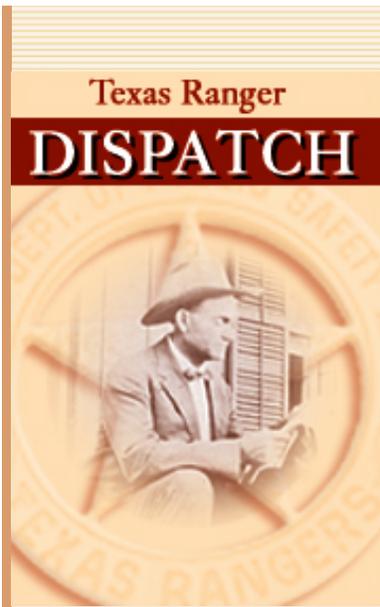
He learned quickly that when you worked in Laredo, you were going to have to contend with the Duke of Duval, George Parr. Parr ran much of South Texas from his headquarters in Duval County. Few politicians in American history have ever controlled an area so completely as he did. The aging George Parr had never known anything but power. His father Archie had run South Texas for decades before his death. With the passing of his father, George had taken over and continued with his iron grip.

With such a long history of power, bringing Parr down wouldn't be easy. He had friends who owed him much-friends ranging all the way from President Lyndon Johnson right on down the ladder. At the time, Ray was part of a task force composed of Texas Rangers and prosecutors from the Texas Attorney General's Office. For the next several years, he worked almost exclusively with this group, and the task force's persistence finally paid off. By the early 1970s, many of Parr's friends were either dead, in jail, or out of power. Eventually, the whole Parr organization was crushed. The connection from the courthouse to the White House was no more. Parr was convicted of tax evasion, and rather than face prison, he committed suicide on April Fools' Day, 1975.

Ray conducted official corruption- and voter-fraud investigations in many South Texas counties, but he still found time to work the criminal investigations that Rangers normally do.

In 1978, Ray transferred to New Braunfels, located just north of San Antonio. Here he continued his outstanding service to the people of Texas until his retirement in 1991.

However, Ray's service to the public wasn't finished. He was elected to the office of justice of the peace, a post he held for several years before he finally



put his official duties down.

Ray hasn't slowed down much. He is still very active in the New Braunfels community where he gives speeches about his first love-the Texas Rangers. In between, he finds time to devote to two other passions in his life: golf and the Former Texas Ranger Association, to which he was elected president in June 2001.

Ray summed up his Ranger service and his LAR (Life After the Rangers) when he said: "I just had a wonderful time in the Ranger service. [While] I was in the Rangers, I was helping people. So I'm just continuing, except this time I don't have a gun and don't have a badge."

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## Shining Star:

### Tom Davis

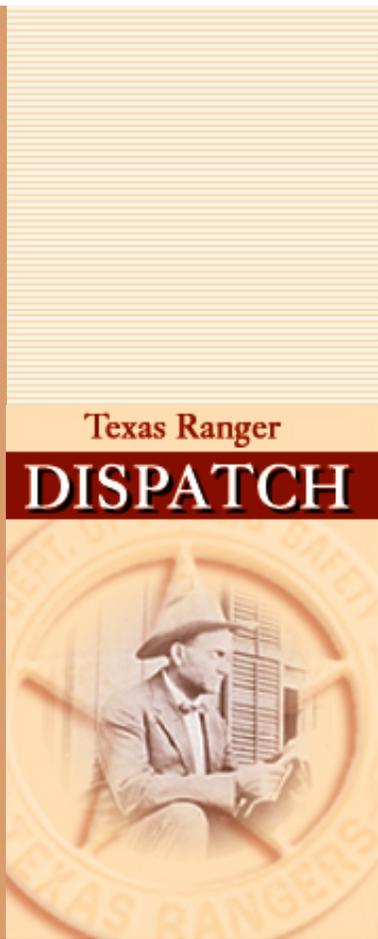
*"When it really counts, he is there. day in and day out. He is there to assist us and other agencies throughout East Texas each and every day."*

These were the words of Nacogdoches County Sheriff Thomas Kerss, president of the East Texas Peace Officers Association, when he presented Texas Ranger Tom Davis the ETPOA's esteemed East Texas Award at the annual convention on July 2, 2001. That was quite an honor, and it is treasured by the Nacogdoches Texas Ranger.

Tom was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 7, 1961. He was one of Warnie and Eva Davis' five children: four sons and one daughter. By the time Tom came along, his father had retired from the Navy and was working for the United States Customs Department, being very briefly stationed in Chicago.

The family ended up in the southeastern corner of Texas in the small town of Nederland, where Tom graduated from high school in 1980. He attended Lamar University in nearby Beaumont and Howard Payne University in Brownwood. He left college before completing his studies, but after being stationed in Nacogdoches as a Texas Ranger, he returned to school and graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University in May of 2001.

Along the way, Tom married his wife Andrea. Today, they have two lovely daughters.



Tom joined the Department of Public Safety in January 1987 and was stationed in Liberty County [between Beaumont and Houston]. In May of 1994, he was promoted to sergeant and transferred very briefly to Rio Grande City before moving on to the West Texas city of Lubbock.

Luckily for the Texas Rangers, Tom was accepted into their organization in October 1995. His first duty station was at Mount Pleasant in East Texas.

A year after Tom joined the Rangers, the Texas Ranger stationed in Nacogdoches, Bill Walk, announced his retirement. Tom and Andrea wanted to get closer to their families. Since Nacogdoches is only about one hundred and fifty miles from Nederland where both set of parents lived, Tom applied for Walk's vacancy. His request was granted, and in November 1996, he assumed his new duty station, which included Nacogdoches and Shelby Counties.

How well has he done? Again in the words of Sheriff Kerss: "Tom was selected as recipient of the East Texas Award for his outstanding leadership and the respect he has gained from his peers."

Powerful words. Job well done.

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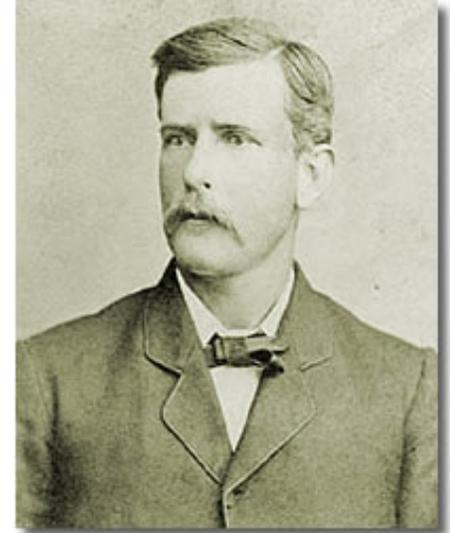
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## Charles Lilborn Nevill

by Chuck Parsons

*Although Charles Lilborn Nevill does not carry an entry in *The New Handbook of Texas*, he deserves special consideration for his contribution to the establishment of law and order in 19th-century Texas. He experienced exciting action on the frontier with outlaws and Indians and he also upheld the people's trust in political offices after his Ranger years.*



C. L. Nevill was born on April 6, 1855, in Carthage, Alabama, the son of Zachariah L. and Ann (Lewis) Nevill. In February 1858, the family relocated in Fayette County, Texas, where the future Ranger captain was raised.

Although Nevill's father intended that his young boy become a businessman like himself, the call for adventure was too strong. On May 25, 1874, young C. L. was in Blanco, Blanco County, where he was mustered into Captain Cicero Rufus Perry's Company D of the Frontier Battalion. He was not quite nineteen years of age, did not have the blessings of his father to leave home, and had only a butcher knife as a weapon. Apparently, he convinced Captain Perry of his sincerity and worth. He was allowed to enroll, obtaining a gun and horse on credit.

Over the next few years, Nevill would participate in scouts for marauding Indians, hunt for murderous fugitives, and pursue horse and cattle thieves. After serving under Captain Perry (May 25, 1874 - March 31, 1875), he continued under Captain Dan W. Roberts of Company D (September 1, 1875 - September 22, 1876) and then under J.M. Denton and Neal Coldwell of Company A (September 1, 1876 - August 31, 1877). He was then called to serve under Lieutenant N.O. Reynolds of Company E (September 1, 1877 - September 28, 1878). Reynolds had been given the command after arresting the Horrell clan in Lampasas County, and he was allowed to select the men he wanted. C. L. Nevill had been with Reynolds the night the Horrells were arrested. He had impressed his commander sufficiently enough that he was chosen to serve in the company, mustered in as a first sergeant.

Certainly Nevill's most exciting action during the months served under Reynolds was the pursuit and capture of noted outlaw Sam Bass. Rumor had reached the ear of Major John B. Jones that the Bass gang was planning to rob the bank at Round Rock, a few miles north of Austin. There were but a handful of Rangers in Austin, and Jones knew he needed additional help. He ordered Governor Coke's nephew, Ranger Corporal Vernon Coke Wilson, to mount up and get to Reynolds' company in Lampasas as fast as possible. The

orders were for Reynolds and a select squad to get to Round Rock to capture the Bass gang. Wilson sacrificed his horse to get to Lampasas, but on arriving there, he discovered that Reynolds had moved his camp to San Saba. Wilson then rode the stage there and found Reynolds' camp a mile from town. He finally delivered the orders.

Reynolds ordered Sergeant Nevill to select eight men with the best horses to prepare to ride to Round Rock. It was a wild trek through the night. Ranger J. B. Gillett, who made the ride and wrote of his experiences years later, recalled: "We left our camp on the San Saba River just at sunset and traveled in a fast trot and sometimes in a lope the entire night.... [People who witnessed knew] that hell was to pay somewhere.

In spite of their efforts, Reynolds and his men arrived too late to take part in the street fight that destroyed the Bass gang. Deputy Sheriffs A. W. Grimes and Maurice Moore, not realizing who Bass was, attempted to disarm him. Bass resisted, and the gunfight in Round Rock began as members of the Bass gang went against Major John B. Jones and Rangers Richard C. Ware and George Herold. Grimes was killed, as was gang member Seaborn Barnes, who was shot dead by Ware. Moore and Bass were wounded. Gang member Frank Jackson helped Bass to mount, and the pair galloped out of town, Bass having received another wound.

About two hours later, Reynolds and his group arrived in Round Rock. With darkness coming and their horses exhausted, Reynolds wisely made camp after reporting to Major Jones. At first light the next morning, Sergeant Nevill and the others from Reynolds' squad followed the trail of blood from Round Rock. When a wounded man was spotted leaning against a tree, Nevill approached with pistol drawn and ordered him to hold up his hands. Bass was too badly wounded to do anything but surrender. Realizing the seriousness of the man's wounds, Nevill ordered a wagon and doctor brought to care for Bass. Dr. C. P. Cochran did what he could for the dying man, but informed him there was little time left. Bass died the afternoon of July 21, 1878, on his twenty-seventh birthday. Reynolds, Nevill, and the other Rangers returned to camp in San Saba.

Reynolds resigned his commission in late 1879, and Sergeant Nevill was selected to replace him. He assumed command on September 1, 1879. Nevill served with the Frontier Battalion until August 31, 1882. His career had started in the beautiful Hill Country, but he was now assigned to far West Texas in Presidio County. The most noted adventure Nevill experienced there was with Captain George W. Baylor, captain of Company A, against a group of Mescalero Apaches. It began when a small band attacked the Overland stage in Quitman Canyon, between Eagle Springs and the Rio Grande in January 1881. On the 21st, Nevill and his nine men left camp to scout for the marauders. Eight days later, Nevill's group, along with Baylor and his eleven men and three Pueblo Indian trackers, struck the Indians at sunrise on the summit of the Diablos, overlooking the Salt Lakes. The band of twenty was hit hard by the Rangers: twelve were killed and a squaw and two children were captured. This engagement proved to be the last fight between Rangers and Indians on Texas soil.

Later that year, Nevill served as escort to the Gano surveying party on a boat trip down the Rio Grande. Here he almost lost his life, perhaps in greater danger from drowning than in any Indian fight. On December 23, 1881, the boat he was in overturned. Nevill later wrote of this experience: "I barely escaped drowning as I had on my pistol and belts, coats and boots. I lost my Field Glass and 300 rounds of ammunition.

Within months of leaving the service, Nevill was again in the role of lawman. On November 7, 1882, he was elected sheriff of Presidio County. He was reelected on November 4, 1884; again on November 2, 1886; and served until November 6, 1888. That was a total of six years in a wild part of the country. For a while, Nevill and former Ranger James B. Gillett became partners and embarked in the cattle business.



Perhaps the spirit of adventure that had drawn Nevill to the Ranger service as a teenager was satisfied, because Nevill now relocated to San Antonio. Instead of a mundane job, Nevill was now attracted to public service. He was a back-tax collector for five years. In 1900, he was chosen to serve as chief deputy district clerk under Nat Lewis. He was then elected deputy sheriff under John Tobin and served two terms. In 1904, he was elected clerk of district court for districts 37, 45, and 57. All of these districts had their jurisdiction in San Antonio and Bexar County.

Nevill married Miss Sarah "Sallie" Ellen Crosson on January 4, 1883, and they were parents of nine children: Alice, George, Guy, Charles, Kathryn, Ella Mae, Harvey, Tobin, and Sally Francis.

Nevill died unexpectedly of apoplexy in his sleep on June 14, 1906, in his home in San Antonio. He was survived by his parents, his wife, and eight children. He is buried in San Antonio City Cemetery Number Six. The grave is marked by an imposing headstone.

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## The Memoirs of William Callicott, Texas Ranger

Edited and annotated by Chuck Parsons

### Part 3

*Texas Ranger William Crump Callicott would have been forgotten had it not been for Walter Prescott Webb and his classic study, [The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense](#), first published in 1935.*

*While researching the Rangers for the book, Webb located Callicott in Houston and began corresponding with him. Some of these letters he incorporated in [The Texas Rangers](#). Although these letters were believed to be destroyed, Chuck Parsons found them and painstakingly translated them. They are fully presented for the first time here in [The Dispatch](#).*

*Previous installments can be accessed by clicking on [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) here. The series will conclude with Part IV in the next issue.*

Houston  
May the 2nd, 1921

Mr. W. P. Webb,

Kind Sir:

. . . It has been many years since I have tried to read print on account of my eyes being so bad, but yesterday I had Mr. Coffe's [?] details read to me of the Palo Alto Bandit fight by Captain McNelly and twenty-two of his Rangers on Sunday, July [sic, June] the 12th, 1875. Mr. Coffe states that we found the dead body of the schoolteacher and dug the grave with Bowie knives and other implements and laid him to rest on the bandits' trail ride with both feet cut off and both hands [cut] off at the wrist. We [had] heard of the man being killed, and the bandit had on the white teacher's suit of clothes when we killed him [the bandit], but we never saw him, nor did we dig any grave with knives, nor did we deliver any of the two hundred head of cattle back to old Captain King or anyone else. We only passed the cattle rounded up on this side of the lagoon and we didn't stop to look at them. We left it to them to drift back to the range where they belonged, which is natural for stock to do. Both the cattle and horses will do that if they are not kept under herd. And about the wolf hole, we never seen one nor did I hear Captain McNelly speak of it nor any of the boys. And about the big rattlesnake, if there was one seen, we didn't stop to look at it because old Captain McNelly had bigger game ahead that he soon overhauled on the other side of the Palo Alto bayou lagoon.

Captain McNelly was in command of us all when we started across the lagoon in line of battle. While the Mexican bandits were firing on us all the time, the Captain- not paying but little heed to their bullets, happened to cast his eyes to the right and discovered a long skirt of timber running north and south in direction of the Rio Grande River. The Captain knew that as soon as we got onto where the water and mud was shallow enough to allow us to make the charge, it would be made. So he didn't want to give them [Mexicans] any chance to get to the timber. So he called old Casuse, our old Mexican Ranger, and five or six of the other boys nearest to him to follow him. He took the right flank going angling across the lagoon in water and mud from knee-deep to belly deep to their horses reaching the bank all okay.

The bandits saw they were going to be cut off from the timber, so they mounted their horses and started in that direction. They ran altogether for about a half mile. [They] saw they were cut off from the timber. They rallied and got ready to fight.

The Captain and his Rangers pressed up [as] close to them as they could get [and then] opened up, firing on them, killing one or two of them. They [Mexicans] lit out every man for himself, and the fastest horses in the lead. The Captain and his six men stay[ed] on the side next to the timber till we got them beyond the timber. Then we all closed in on them. It was a running fight from where the Captain and his men killed first to where the Captain killed the last one in the dagger thicket. It was between eight or ten miles, [a] running fight.

I was an eyewitness to it all, from start to finish, and I don't say but what Mr. Coffe's [article?] is correct. Part of it [is] and part of it is not. In regards to the wolf hole and the snake and the digging of the grave with Bowie knives and

the handing of the cattle back to their owners and the graceful [?] riding in the morning breeze with the butts of our guns resting on our knees, Captain McNelly's orders didn't spell that way. It spelt get there [early?] or die, and we went there in the old cowboy style of riding. For it took good riding to catch them.

Well, Mr. Webb, .I have already given you the full details of the Palo Alto fight from start to finish, and this is only to let you know that Mr.Coffe was mistaken in part of it or he got details mixed together of different engagements with Indians or Mexicans and is not to blame for it.

This writing is not to go into [the] history. I am only explaining it to you, and you can use my details of it-or Mr. Coffe's, rather-just as you see fit about it, if you like.

William Callicott, Ranger

As I am in a hurry to send it off, I will close.

P.S. What I wrote to you in regard to our trips in Mexico: don't use any of it till I send you the full details from start to finish.

§

Houston  
Dec. 29th, 1921

Mr. W. P. Webb,

Kind Friend,

. . . I wrote to you some time ago and sent you a letter that I got from my old comrade George Durham that served with me and Captain McNelly on the Rio Grande River in 1875. He still lives at Raymondville, Texas. He served with Captain McNelly a long time after I left and had many engagements with the bandits in Texas and in Mexico. He tells me I [*sic*, he] would be glad for you to write him and have him to give you the details of all the engagements that they had after Dec. 25th, 1875. That was the time I left the service on the Rio Grande River. He tells me of several trips they made into Mexico after cow bandits, and I think.he's had or [is] properly vaccinated with book learning. He can quote some details to you in the way of making up your history. George was only seventeen years of age at that time, but a truer or braver Ranger never lived. He was with us in the Palo Alto fight [and] with us in Mexico. Whenever the Captain called for volunteers, George was always ready and willing to go to the front. He was a native of Georgia and had been in Texas only a short while before he joined us. He was a cousin to the two Wright boys, Lon and Linton Wright: two noble Rangers.

P.S. I enclose [for] you a map of the Palo Alto fight. I made it, as [it is] still fresh in my memory as it was Sunday, July [*sic*, June] the 12th, 1875, the day it occurred though it has been forty-six years ago. The red dots stand for mounted Rangers; the black dots stand for mounted cow bandits-Mexicans.

As I am no sketch artist, I have no other way of explaining it to you. You will see two hundred fifty head of cattle rounded up on the left-hand side of the bandit trail, this side of the lagoon. The black dots stand for the bandits lined up on the other side of the lagoon, shooting at us as we were going over in

mud and water from knee-deep to belly-deep.

You will see seven red dots going to the right. That's Captain McNelly and six Rangers crossing the lagoon to cut them off from the long skirt of timber to the right across the lagoon, two miles away.

As soon as the Captain and his six Rangers got over the lagoon, you will see the seven red dots going to the left to meet the bandits' first volley after they broke ranks and fled from the lagoon.

You will see the fourteen red dots making the charge as soon as we got up near the bandits. You will see where Old Ball made that unexpected lunge and went out from under my hat. When the lieutenant [T. C. Robinson] shouted out, "Let 'em slide, boys! Go for them!", the boys were all ready and willing to ride, and the faster horses went to the front. The red dots are the Rangers.

The "db" are the dead bandits on the running trail. You will see the dagger patch to the left of the trail where our sixteen-year-old Ranger boy was killed. To the left of the dagger patch, you will see the rough pond where we found [Spencer J.] Adams and old Sorrel Top guarding the wounded bandit as we came back over [the] dead bandits' trail.

The last dagger patch, on the trail to the right going towards the Rio Grande River, is where Captain McNelly killed the last running bandit. The four red dots you see around the dagger patch are four mounted Rangers guarding the patch to see if he came out while the Captain went in after him.

The five red dots you will see coming back over the dead bandits' trail after the Captain had the last one in the dagger patch-that [is] Captain McNelly and four of us boys. You will see to the left of the trail as we came back over the dead bandits' trail where Ball and Bill [Callicott] got the dead bandit's hat. You will see where Lon Wright killed two bandits off of one horse at one shot with his Colt .45 pistol. Next you will see where Captain McNelly and his six Rangers killed two when the bandits left the lagoon and rallied for the last time, till the last one was killed by Captain McNelly.

[You will see where] our sixteen-year-old Ranger [died], from where he was killed going towards the Rio Grande River on the right-hand side of the bandit trail, or where Captain McNelly killed the last running bandit before we started back over the trail to where we first started them from the lagoon. The map will show you the whole thing from start to finish. All red dots are Rangers; all black dots are cow bandits; all dead bandits are branded "db." This is a true and truthful map of the Palo Alto fight that took place Sunday, July [sic] the 12, 1875, with Mexican cow bandits and Captain McNelly and twenty-two of his Rangers.

Mr. Webb, I hope you will be able to understand it and can read my writing. My eyes are bad. I can't see but little. If you get this, let me hear from you at once.

Yours Truly,

William Callicott  
A McNelly Ranger in 1875  
1408 Nance Ct.  
Houston, Texas

## Las Cuevas and the Invasion of Mexico

In 1875, while Captain McNelly and his little band of Rangers were on the march about forty miles north of the Rio Grande River in Texas, we came to a good creek of water where there was plenty of grass and wood. We camped there that night, being November the 16th, 1875. The next morning being November the 17th, 1875, at roll call the Captain McNelly said, "Boys, our horses are tired and need a day or two rest and as we have plenty of good grass and water, we will stay here a day or two. All of you wash and sun your clothes and blankets as I don't know when you will have another chance to clean up."

And he said [to me], "Bill, our jerked beef has gotten low. Go and get a good beef. Get a big one that will last several days as I don't know when we will stop again."

I rode Old Ball out about a mile to a big bunch of cattle, selected out a big four-year-old beef of old Captain King's, killed and skinned [him], cut him up, and tied him on top of Old Ball. I took the hide and spread it on top of the meat, with the flesh side of the hide next to the meat. I got on top of it and rode Old Ball in to camp, hung it up in a tree and told the boys to tighten up their wrinkles on good King beef. After they got all they wanted of it, I made me a scaffold and jerked the rest to take with us when we started out the next march.

The next day being November the 18th, 1875, about two p.m., a Mexican ranchman came to Captain McNelly with the news that he had seen a band of Mexicans with a herd of cattle going towards the Rio Grande River in the direction of the Las Cuevas Ranch, Mexico. [He] said they were bandits with a big herd of cattle, about seventy-five or one hundred head, and he thought they intended crossing the river near the Las Cuevas Ranch in Mexico. He said they were headed that way. The Captain said, "All right." The Captain asked Casuse how far it was to the place where they would be likely to cross the cattle into Mexico, near the Las Cuevas Ranch in Mexico. Tom Sullivan, our interpreter, asked Casuse, and he said the nearest way we could go. It was sixty miles or more. It was then 2:00 p.m. The Captain told Tom Sullivan and Old Casuse to get ready as fast as they could and, not having all of the boys with him at that time, called out for twenty-four volunteers to saddle up and fall into ranks as fast as possible and not to take anything with them except what they had on, and to take with them forty rounds of pistol cartridges and forty rounds of gun cartridges.

"All ready and into ranks!" the Captain said. "Well, boys, this ride will have to be made in five hours or less, if possible. I want to beat them to the river if I can." He told the guards left with the wagons to remain where they were till further orders. "All ready," he said, "now follow me and Casuse."

Casuse knew the way and took [illegible] him and the Captain in the lead. We went in a fast trot and a lope all the way, making the sixty miles in a little less than five hours. But we got there a little too late. They had beat us to the river and had crossed the cattle over into Mexico to the Las Cuevas Ranch, the headquarters for all the cow bandits.

A U.S. captain with two hundred regulars from some nearby fort had followed them to the river and camped on this side of the river. They had two Gatling guns planted on Mexico from this side of the river.

It had then gotten dark. The Captain said to me, "Bill, take two of the boys and go up to that near ranch and get two or three muttons and dress them for supper, and I will step up and see that U.S. captain and see what I can do with him in regards to getting one hundred of his men. You boys cook and eat all the mutton you want and broil a chunk for dinner tomorrow. You won't need any breakfast. It will make us too late getting over. Have everything ready by twelve o'clock tonight and we will start to cross by one tonight. I have made the arrangements with this Mexican on this side to cross us [over] and to swim our horses over for us. He has a little dugout of a canoe that will hold up four at a time. It has a leak in it, but one of you can keep the water dipped out so as it won't sink with you. We will swim one horse at a time. Loosen your flank girths, as a horse can't swim well with a flank girth tight, and take your guns in your hands so if the horse drowns, you won't lose your gun. And take your morral on your shoulder that has your cartridges in it, and your dinner. Do like I tell you, and be ready by one to start over. I will be back and let you know what I can do with the U.S. captain. If I can get one hundred of his men we're all okay."

The Captain told him [U.S. captain] he had only twenty-six men in all and had rode sixty miles in a little less than five hours to beat them to the river. As he didn't [beat them], he wanted him to let him have a hundred of his men to go with him over into Mexico after the cattle. The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly he couldn't. It was against the law to invade a foreign country and he couldn't let him have his men at all.

Captain McNelly said, "Well, if you can't let me have the men, I will risk the law in Mexico with my twenty-six men. They can't get any more of us than we can of them. If we don't get the cattle back, we can say we had the pleasure of killing a few of them."

So at twelve o'clock, the Captain came back to us and said, "Well, boys, the U. S. captain says he can't let me have any of his men. Have everything ready by one to start over. I am going over if I never get back." So at one [o'clock] the Captain said, "Fall in to ranks!" We all fell into ranks on the Texas bank of the Rio Grande River.

The Captain stepped out in front of us and said, "Boys, you have followed me as far as I can ask you to do unless you are willing to go with me." He said, "It is like going into the jaws of death with only twenty-six men in a foreign country where we have no right according to law, but as I have went this far, I am going to the finish with it." He said, "Some of us might get back, or part of us, or maybe all of us, or maybe none of us will get back. And if any of you don't want to go over with me, step aside. I don't want you unless you are willing to go as a volunteer," he said. "Understand, there is no surrender in this. We ask no quarter nor give any. If any of you don't want to go, step aside."

We all said, "Captain, if you can risk your life, we can certainly risk ours." He said, "All right boys, that's the way to talk it. We will learn them a Texas lesson that they have forgotten since the old Mexican War. Well, boys, all of you get ready to go over. I will take Old Casuse, Tom Sullivan, and myself over first. There can only [cross] but four at a time. I will take old Casuse's horse as we go. Then I want Lieutenant Robinson and Lieutenant [John B.] Armstrong and Sergeant George Hall to come next and bring with them their horses, and the rest of you have your horses ready to swim over as fast as you can. You can't swim over but one at a time alongside of the little canoe. Be careful and don't drown any of the horses and don't lose any of your guns or pistols. Keep them with you."

After getting Casuse's horse, Lieutenant Robinson's horse, Lieutenant Armstrong's horse, and Sergeant George Hall's horse, and Sergeant George Orrill's horse, the Captain came back on this side of the river and told us to let our horses stay where they were, that the quicksand was so bad on the other side, it was impossible to get them all over in time; that what horses he had taken over they had to pull them out of the sand with ropes; that he had only got over five horses; and to take all the horses over that way, it would make us too late for the surprise on the Las Cuevas Ranch.

He said, "Unsaddle your horses and I will get this Mexican ranchman to look after them on this side of the river." So we did. The Captain said, "Boys, leave everything except your guns and pistols and your morrals with your cartridges and grub." The Captain said, "I will take over with me the Mexican guide that I have got to pilot us to the ranch." He said, "Two of you boys come on with us and the rest come as fast as possible. I want all [of you] over by half past three as I want to start up to the ranch at four. It is two miles and a half or three miles to the ranch, and it will take us hard walking to make it in time." So we all went, three at a time. One would have to dip out the water to keep the little dugout from sinking while the Mexican paddled us over. We all got over all okay, all twenty-six together. Once more in Mexico, the Captain said, "Fall into ranks, boys." That being the 19th of November 1875 and four a. m.

The Captain said, "Boys, the pilot tells me that the ranch is picketed in with high posts in the ground and has bars for a gate to get in at. The five on horseback will fall in behind in single file of the rest of us. The pilot said it is only a little cow trail for a road, not wide enough for us to go in twos. So we will go Indian file, one behind the other, till we get to the ranch. Then the bars will be let down and I want Old Casuse, Lieutenant Robinson, Armstrong, George Hall, [and] George Orrill to dash through the ranch, yelling and shooting to attract their attention. The other twenty-one of us will close in behind and do the rest as best we can. I want you to kill all you see except old men, women, and children. He said, "That's my orders and I want them obeyed to the letter."

Captain McNelly always planned his battles before he went in and told the boys what to do, and he expected them to do as he said. All ready, the Captain and the guide led the way up the little cow trail that had heavy undergrowth of bushes and trees so thick that you couldn't see a rabbit ten steps away. The Captain and [the] pilot stayed about fifty yards ahead of us till we got near the ranch, it then being daylight. Just before he got to the bars going in to the ranch, he came back to us. He said "halt." We all stopped.

He walked up and down the little line of only twenty-six of us, three miles in Mexico afoot. He looked in each man's face and said, "Boys, I like your looks, all right. You are the palest-looking men I ever looked at. He said, "That is a good sign. You are going to be good fighting [men]." He said, "In the Confederate Army, I noticed just before battle, all men get pale." He then went back to the pilot. We were then within fifty yards of the ranch. As soon as the Captain and the pilot got to the bars, the pilot let them down. When we got to the bars, the Captain said, "Stand to one side boys. Let Old Casuse wake them up, that being the first chance Old Casuse had to breathe Mexican air or to have a chance to give a yell in over twenty years."

It was between daylight and sunup. The Captain said to go through. The five went through, shooting and yelling. Old Casuse, as he went in, pushed his hat back on the back of his head, drew his pistol, rammed both his spurs to his

old paint horse, gave a Comanche Indian yell, and away the five went, yelling and shooting.

The Captain had told them not to stop in the ranch, to get out of the way of our shooting. The Captain and the other twenty-one of us closed in behind and opened up on them, and if the angels of heaven had of flown down amongst them [Mexicans], they would not have been any more surprised, as we were the first Rangers or soldiers that had been in Mexico since the old Mexican War. The Captain said [to] kill all except old men, women, and children. Lots of the men were on their woodpiles cutting wood while their wives were cooking breakfast outdoors. Not one of them moved a muscle. We shot them down on their woodpiles and wherever we saw one. We killed [them] till we killed all we saw in the ranch.

After we had them all killed, the pilot told the Captain that he had made a mistake in the ranch; that this ranch had been started since he was here ten years ago; that this was the Cuchattus Ranch; [and] that the Las Cuevas Ranch was a half mile up the trail. The Captain said, "Well, you have given my surprise away. Take me to the Las Cuevas Ranch as fast as possible."

The rest on horseback, not hearing any more shooting, came back to us. The Captain then told the pilot to lead the way as fast as he could. The Captain said, "Come on boys."

Old Casuse and the rest on horseback fell in behind us. We marched up to the main Las Cuevas Ranch. Just as we got to the ranch, we saw two hundred fifty Mexican Regular soldiers dash in to the ranch on horseback. The Captain said, "Form a line, boys."

We were then about one hundred fifty yards from the ranch. The regulars opened fire on us from behind the horses. It was all open ground between us and the ranch, except now and then a big tree standing. We were lined up in the edge of the woods in plain view of the Mexicans at the ranch, only a tree standing now and then between us and them at the ranch, shooting at us from behind the houses.

Old Casuse, our Mexican Ranger, on his old paint horse, stood with us in line and whenever he could see one from behind the house, he would yell and shoot at him. He couldn't talk but a little English but he could say, "Son-a-bitch, kill 'em." They still fired at us all the time from behind the houses, and whenever we could see one, we did the same. Their bullets went wild over our heads, not hitting any of us or any of our five horses.

We stayed there for about an hour. The Captain said, "Well, boys, as our surprise is gone and the Mexicans have got all the advantage of numbers and houses to protect themselves in, and we are only twenty-six in all against two hundred fifty Regulars and no telling the [number of] bandits that are there, this pilot tells me that this [next] ranch is the headquarters of all the bandits; that the ranch belongs to General Juan Flores; and that they have several pieces of artillery here; and to charge it with only twenty-six men would spell death to all of us. And [it would] do no good, so we will go back to the river."

He told Lieutenant Robinson to take the five on horses and get in front and he would stay with us in case they charged us from behind while we were going back to the river. [He said] that they would be in our way on horses [and] to go the way we came and to stay close to us, so if they did follow us, they could dismount and help us fight. He told us to hit the trail the same way we came back through the Cuchattas Ranch. He said he would stay behind and

keep a lookout if they followed us so as we could be ready for them.

We came back through the Cuchattus Ranch and there was nothing there except the dead, and they lay like they fell, on the woodpiles and in the streets or roads. The women and children and old men were all gone, not a living soul to be seen.

We went back to the river and put out pickets. Between the pickets and us at the river had been an old field with not a bush or tree from the eye of the thicket to the bank of the river where we had stopped. The old field was about one hundred fifty yards wide from the eye of the thicket to the river. The Captain told Lieutenant Robinson and Lieutenant Armstrong to keep a close lookout; that he thought the Mexicans would think we had taken a scare or had stampeded and were swimming the river back into Texas and they could kill us as we were swimming over. We had just got to the river and were getting ready in case they did follow us, to be ready to meet them.

All at once we heard yelling and shooting towards the pickets, and about that time, Lieutenant Robinson jumped old Jack Ellis [the horse which had belonged to bandit Jack Ellis, killed on the Palo Alto prairie fight, now named "Jack Ellis"] off of a ten-foot bluff of the riverbank, almost on top of us. [He was] still on old Jack when he hit the ground. Lieutenant Armstrong was sitting on his horse sideways near the trail under a shade tree and so was Sergeant George Hall when General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, and twenty-five other Mexicans came out of the thicket, yelling and shooting. Armstrong's and Hall's horses jumped from under them and ran off with the saddle on. Sergeant Orrill made it to us with his horse.

Old Casuse was already with us, as the Captain never let him stand guard duty at any time on account of his age and [he] couldn't speak but little English. He was between forty-five and fifty years of age, but a braver and truer Ranger never lived.

General Juan Flores and his twenty-five Mexicans ran up to the riverbank, yelling and shooting. Not seeing any of us on top, they thought we had taken a scare and were swimming the river back to Texas. There was not a tree on the bank at that place on the river. It was an open field for one hundred fifty yards back to the thicket.

The Captain said, "Charge them, boys!"

We ran to a cow trail going up the bank, low enough for us to go up in a run. After getting on top of the bank the Captain said, "Open up on them, boys, as fast as you can." We opened fire on them and they broke back to the thicket as fast as they could run on horseback. It only took but a second to make the one-hundred-fifty-yard run into the thicket towards the Las Cuevas Ranch. We fired on them till they got into the thicket. General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, fell dead from his horse within seventy-five yards of the thicket, with his pistol in his hand, with two needle gun bullets through his body, killing him dead.

The Captain then said, "Boys, I think the rest have stopped in the thicket. Widen out in line of battle four feet apart, march across, and fire into that thicket. We will start them out again."

We did fire volley after volley, till we had marched up to where General Juan Flores lay dead. The Captain stooped down and picked up the pistol. It was a

Smith & Wesson, plated with gold and silver, the finest I ever saw. Old Casuse and the pilot knew who he was. They said it was General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, the headquarters for all cow bandits.

The Captain placed the pistol in his belt and said, "Boys, we will go back to the river. This is giving them too much the advantage in this open field and them in the thicket. They can kill all of us and we can't see them in that thicket."

He said, "We will go back to the river. March back, boys."

We went back to the river and placed out two guards, one up the river about fifty yards and one down the river about fifty yards from where we were stopping under the bank of the river. It was an open field for a mile up the river or a mile down the river, without a tree standing on the banks. About seventy-five yards from the river in the middle of the field stood a big patch of dead blood weeds that were higher than a man on a horse, but next to the river there was nothing in the way, and down the river there was nothing in the way, nor in front of us there was nothing between us and the thicket.

Two guards were all that were needed in the daytime. It was then about 11:00 a.m. The Captain told Lieutenant Robinson to take charge of us and told the guards to keep a good lookout, and if they saw any Mexicans in the thicket, to report to the lieutenant. And [he] told the lieutenant if the Mexicans charged them, to meet them on the bank; that he would go over and see the U.S. captain again and see if he could get one hundred of his men to go back to the Las Cuevas Ranch with him. If he would get a hundred men from him, he would take it yet or get the cattle if they were there. And [he] told us boys not to eat our mutton till he got back; that he would try and get us some bread to go with our mutton.

He went and saw the U.S. captain and told him he would like to get one hundred of his men that he had already taken the Cuchattus Ranch and had killed all there except old men, women, and children through the mistaking of his pilot in the ranch for the Las Cuevas Ranch. And [he said] after killing all in the Cuchattus Ranch, his surprise had been given away by our shooting at the Cuchattus Ranch. That when we got to the Las Cuevas Ranch, that at one side he saw two hundred and fifty Mexican Regulars on horseback dash into the ranch, dismount, and open fire on us from behind the houses. [He said] that we stayed there for an hour and fought them the best we could without any protection, them being behind houses and in houses. [He said] we had but little chance to take the ranch with only twenty-six men and came back to the river. [We] had just got back to the river when General Juan Flores and twenty-five of his bandits charged us at the river. We had met the charge and they broke back towards the Las Cuevas Ranch. We [had] opened fire on them, killing Juan Flores within seventy-five yards of the river.

[The Captain said,] "I have found out that Juan Flores (or the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, the headquarters of all the cow bandits) and besides there are two hundred fifty Mexican Regulars camped near by, and that they have several pieces of artillery there. And if you will let me have one hundred of your men to go with [me] and [my] twenty-six Rangers, [I will] go back and take the Las Cuevas Ranch and get the cattle."

The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly that he had no U.S. men to send over into Mexico to a slaughter pen to all be killed. [He said,] "And if you don't come back on this side, you and all of your Rangers will be killed in less than twenty-four hours, for you have no right over there."

Captain McNelly told him he was there all the same and intended to stay there till he got the cattle. Captain McNelly then asked the U.S. captain if he would let one hundred of his men go with him if they would volunteer to go with him over; that twenty-six Rangers volunteered to go over; that he never used any other kind of men but volunteers; that any other kind wasn't any good.

The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly no, if the whole two hundred were to volunteer, he wouldn't let them go. The Captain told him, all right, he would do the best he could with his twenty-six Rangers.

The Captain came back to us with some breadstuff and told us to eat our mutton and bread that we had broiled the night before we started over into Mexico. After we all got through eating our dinner, the Captain said, "Well, boys, it is all off. The U.S. captain says he can't let me have any of his men to go with us up to the ranch." And he said, "I know of no other Rangers in Texas but Major Jones' Rangers, and they are on the Texas northern frontier and too far away to get here.

"Well," he said, "We will stay here awhile anyway. They can't surround and cut us off from forage and water, as we have the river right at us. And I have made arrangements with that Mexican that paddled us over in the canoe last night to bring us over all the mutton and bread we need and coffee."

He told Lieutenant Robinson to swim his old paint horse (the horse we killed Jack Ellis off of in the Palo Alto fight-we always called the horse "Jack Ellis") and Casuse's horse and Sergeant Orrill's horse, as they would have no more use for them in Mexico. [He said] that he had got that Mexican over there to take care of all of our horses and [he told us] to swim one at a time.

After they got back, we were all together once more and all afoot, as the Mexicans already had Lieutenant Armstrong's horse and Sergeant George Hall's horse that jumped from under them that morning and ran off with the saddles. The Captain said, "I don't like this place on account of the bank being too high. We will move from the river about fifty yards to that place yonder where the banks are not so high. The banks at this place were about four feet high and about fifty or sixty yards long, and a little further down, the bank was sloping to the sand bar at the edge of the river water.

The Captain said, "Boys, this is the place for us to stay. I have never seen better breastworks in my life. We can stand off a thousand or more without any trouble. We can stand here and see them when they come out of the thicket and see up and down the river for a half-mile. And if they charge us, they will have to come across that open field for a hundred and fifty yards and we can stand here and mow them down with but little danger of even getting hit with a bullet unless it is in the head. And if you do, the pain won't last long."

It was then about 4:00 p.m. The Captain asked the sergeant how long had the guard been on duty. About two hours. The Captain asked who was next on duty. The sergeant said Bill Callicott.

The Captain said, "Bill, go and relieve him. I don't want any of you to stay on guard duty but two hours at a time till you all get a little rest."

I went and relieved the guard. I hadn't been there but a little while till I saw coming down the river about a half-mile off, five men with a white flag raised. I

went and told the Captain that they were coming down the river with a white flag, five of them. He said, "All right. There is no danger in white flags." He said, "If they start down here, halt them. I don't want them to find out what a few men we have."

They came up opposite me and stopped. The Captain took five men and went to them. It proved to be the governor of the state of Mexico we were in and a white man from Arkansas [Dr. A.M. Headley]. He told Captain McNelly he came to get General Juan Flores' body that was killed this morning. The Captain told him yes; that his Mexican pilot and his Mexican Ranger Casuse Sandoval knew him and said it was General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch.

The governor said, "Yes, you killed him and seven more in that charge. At least three or four have died from their wounds since they got back to the ranch, so I am told. The governor said, "I am told you wiped out the Cuchattus Ranch entirely-all except old men, women, and children, and you killed several up at the Las Cuevas Ranch this morning. They tell me you have two hundred fifty Rangers with you, fifty on horses, and two hundred on foot." The governor said, "Captain, you haven't got men enough to stay in Mexico. If I were you, I would take my men and cross back into Texas. You are in danger of all being killed." The governor said, "There are two hundred fifty Mexican Regulars camped near the Las Cuevas Ranch that will defend the ranch."

Captain McNelly said, "Yes, I saw them this morning when we were there. That spells nothing. I came over after the cattle and I will stay here till I get them or leave myself and the last man I have in Mexico."

The governor said, "Well, it's with you. Do as you like."

The governor and the five Mexicans went and got the [body of] General Juan Flores, bade the Captain good-bye, and left for the ranch.

The second day [in Mexico], November the 20th, 1875, found Captain McNelly and his little band of twenty-six Rangers still in Mexico and all alive, with plenty to eat, with no sign of trouble till about 10:00 a.m., when the guard on post duty called the Captain's attention to the Mexicans lining up along the edge of the woods and along the edge of the thicket, composed of regular bandits and citizens.

The Captain said, "Boys, that looks like old Confederate War days in time of peace. We will prepare for war. Two of you boys go over on the other side of the river and get me two spades."

They called the Mexican over that paddled the little dugout boat for us. They went over and got two spades and a shovel and came back to the Captain. The Captain went down towards the river edge of the water. About halfway from the bank to the water, [he] stepped off a trench about forty feet long, fronting it towards Mexico. Then he stepped off thirty feet at each end and told three of the boys to come there.

He said, "Boys, I want this trench dug two feet deep and three feet wide and pile all the dirt on top of this bank and pack it down level and at each end the same way. For when they charge us again, they will come in big numbers. And when they do, we will fight them from the thicket to the bank and if we can't stand them off till they get to the bank we will fall back to this trench and fight them to a death finish. I am willing to die with you boys and I expect the

same of you." He said, "Boys, now work. I will only work you one hour at a time. I will have three fresh men on every hour till it is finished." If ever you saw boys scatter dirt, we did.

The Captain went back to the boys behind the bank and watched the Mexicans lining up along the edge of the woods and thicket. And [he] kept time for us, and every hour he would send three fresh men to the trench to relieve each other. Every time they came, they would bring the news that the Mexicans were still lining up for the charge. The boys all worked hard to finish it, for well they knew that if the Mexicans did charge over the bank, that trench would be our death sellout. For the Captain always meant what he said.

We got it finished by 3:00 p.m. The Captain came and looked at it and said it was a good job [and] that the old Confederate veterans of 1864 and '65 couldn't of did any better in the way of trench digging. We all went back to the river bank to await the charge that evening.

About 4:00 p.m. that evening, the guard on duty came to the bank and told the Captain he saw five men coming down with a white flag. The Captain told him all right, that there was no danger in white flags but not to let them come under the bank, as he didn't want them to know how many men we had. They stopped the same as they did the day before. The Captain took five men [and] went out and met them.

It proved to be the same governor. The governor said, "Captain, I have come to appeal to you again to take your men and cross back into Texas. I am afraid you and all of your men will be killed over here." He said, "The Mexicans are gathering together and flocking to this place to either kill you all or drive you back to the other side of the river." The governor pointed up the river along the edge of the woods and said, "Captain, can't you see them lined up? The most of them are Mexican Regulars."

The Captain said, "Yes, they have been lining up ever since about 10:00 a.m. and coming nearer all the time."

The governor said, "Captain, while you have a chance, take your men and go back before it is too late for you to save yourself and men from death."

The Captain then said he would stay till he got the cattle if we were all killed; that he came after the cattle and he intended to get them before he left.

The governor said, "Well, I hate to see you all killed that way." The governor bade the Captain good-bye and went the way he had come.

It was then about 5:00 p.m. The Mexicans still lining up [and] down the timber edge, and by sundown had got opposite us at the riverbank.

That night was my turn to go on guard duty. After dark, the Captain came to me and said, "Bill, it's your turn to go on guard." I told him all right. He said, "I will locate you on the outside post next to the Mexican line." He said, "I will tell you what to do before we go, for we will be too near them to talk." After we got out there, he said, "You will be in a hundred yards of them, or probably nearer." He said, "I will locate you up there in that blood-weed patch about seventy-five yards up the river and about one hundred yards from the Mexican lines." And he said, "When I get you to where I want you to stop, I will press you on the shoulder. And you sit down with your face towards the Mexican lines and keep a good lookout. And if one man comes toward the

river, halt him three times. And if he don't stop, shoot him and come to me at the riverbank. It might be a spy trying to locate us before they make the charge on us. Be sure and let him get close enough so you won't miss him. And if it [is] more than one, fire to them and come to me at the riverbank."

When we got to the place, he pressed me on the shoulder and I sat down in the blood weeds with my face towards the Mexican lines in the thicket. I had on the hat I [had] taken off of a dead bandit in the Palo Alto fight. I had been on guard about an hour, had seen nothing, nor heard nothing. Presently, I heard the dry blood weeds breaking towards the Mexican lines, coming towards me. It came nearer all the time. The weeds would crack every time they would move. It was a starlit night, and finally it got nearer to me. Finally, I saw the object and took it for a man. It still came on towards me. The weeds were so thick and high, I couldn't see far ahead. I let it get in about three yards of me and I said, "Halt!" It still came on towards me. I said, "Halt!" again. It still came on. [illegible] felt my old Mexican hat Santy rose up on my head, but I still sat there, expecting about a thousand Mexicans to charge me at anytime. It still came on. It looked like one man. I cocked my gun and leveled it at him, intending to shoot as soon as I said "Halt!" But just before I said "Halt!" it turned to the left. The man proved to be a cow. My old hat went back on my head as fast as it came up.

In a little while, the Captain came with another guard to take my place. Me and the Captain went back to the riverbank together. When we got back, I told him how near I came shooting a cow for a man. He said he was glad I didn't shoot, for it might have woke up that U.S. captain on the other side of the river, and he would think the Mexicans were charging him, and he would turn them Gatling guns loose on us, and [we] wouldn't last twenty minutes. I am afraid of his Gatling guns than I am of the Mexicans.

But everything went off that night without any trouble. The next morning came November the 21st, 1875, with Captain McNelly and his little band of twenty-six Rangers still in Mexico, and the Mexicans still lining up along the edge of the woods and thicket. You could see them up and down the edge of the woods as far as you could see.

That day, the white citizens of Rio Grande City [the Anglos] heard that Captain McNelly and his Rangers had got back to the river all right [but] had no way of getting grub across the river to us. They sent the Captain down a fine skiff called [ITALICS>] The Queen of the Lake that would hold up fifteen or twenty men. But we had the little Mexican dugout boat that did the work. We always had plenty to eat.

That evening about 4:00 p.m., the guard on top of the bank came and told the Captain he saw five men coming with a white flag down the edge of the timber. The Captain told him all right; that there was no danger in white flags, but to stop them on the bank.

They came up opposite us and stopped as they did before. The Captain took five men and went to them. It proved to be the same governor, and the governor said, "Captain, I have come again to see if I can't get you to take your men and cross back into Texas before it is too late. If you stay here till night, you will all be killed, and I don't want to see it. Take my advice and go back."

The Captain said, "I still say I won't go back without the cattle, if it takes my life and all of my men to get them."

The governor said, "Captain, there are four hundred or fifteen hundred armed Mexicans in front of you. They have conscripted every boy up and down the river from fourteen years old [and] up, and I fear I can't control them any longer." The governor said, "Will you go?"

The Captain said, "Not yet."

The governor said, "I am the governor of this state of Mexico and it is in my power to act, and I will act rather than see you and all of your men killed. If you will take your men and go back into Texas, I will deliver the cattle, and the two horses, saddles, and bridles to you on the Texas bank of the Rio Grande River at Rio Grande City tomorrow, and all the thieves I can find.

The Captain told him he didn't want the thieves; he had killed all he wanted of them. The Captain said, "Can I depend on you?"

The governor said, "Upon my word and honor you can, Captain."

The Captain said, "I will cross back this evening and we will go to Rio Grande City tomorrow after the cattle and horses and will expect them there on the Texas side of the river."

The governor said, "They will be there without fail."

The governor and Captain bade each other good-bye and parted.

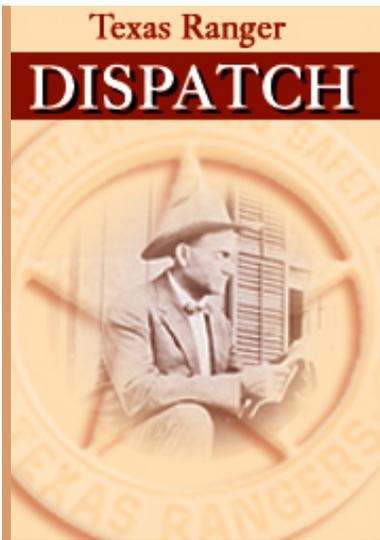
The Captain came back to the riverbank and said, "Boys, get your saddle blankets and the two spades and shovel, and thirteen of you cross back at a time. The governor has promised to deliver me the cattle and both horses tomorrow at Rio Grande City, ten miles above here on the Texas side of the river, and I believe he will. Take the big skiff, and thirteen go at a time. And I will get the guards, and the rest of us will come next. You can't trust a Mexican. When you get over on the other bank, keep your guns loaded, and stop on the bank. It might be possible that when I call the guards in, they might think we have taken a scare and are swimming the river. And if they do charge us, you can open fire on them till we and the other thirteen get across.

## §

### CHUCK PARSONS

Chuck Parsons is currently completing a biography of Texas Ranger N.O. Reynolds and has just completed a biography of Texas Ranger Leander H. McNelly. Previous books include biographies of Clay Allison (1977, 1984), *The Capture of John Wesley Hardin* (1978), *Phil Coe: Texas Gambler* (1984), *Bowen & Hardin* (1991), *James Madison Brown: Texas Sheriff*, *Texas Turfman* (1993), *Captain C.B. McKinney: The Law in South Texas* (with Gary P. Fitterer, 1993), as well as several hundred periodical articles and book reviews.

From January 1983-2000 he conducted



"The Answer Man" column for *True West* magazine. In addition he is editor of the *Quarterly* and the *Newsletter* of the National Association for Outlaw and Lawman History (NOLA). Parsons is a member of NOLA, The English Westerners Society, The Brazos Corral Westerners, and a board member of The James-Younger Gang. He is currently retired from the field of education, having been a high school principal for eighteen years in Wisconsin and Minnesota schools and a classroom teacher for eight years in Wisconsin.

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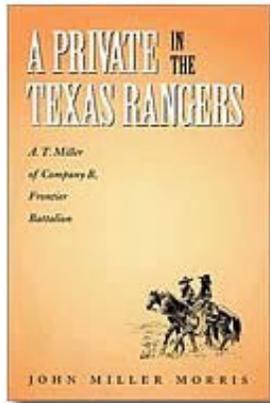

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## Book Review:

### A Private in the Texas Rangers

by John Miller Morris  
Review by Chuck Parsons

Published by Texas A&M University Press, Lewis St. Lindsey Bldg., 4354 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-4354. xii + 334 pages, 26 photographs, 4 maps by Jack Jackson. Appendices, notes, bibliography, index.

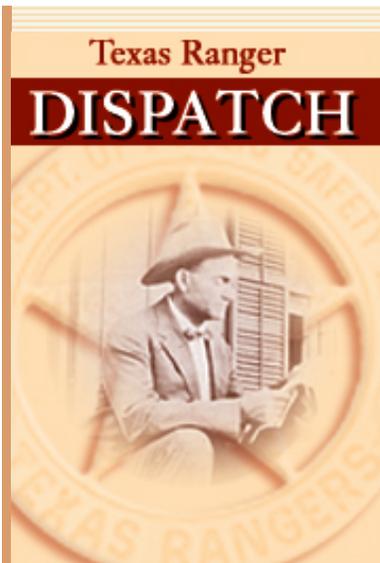
Most previous writings on the Texas Rangers of the Frontier Battalion period stress the violence of the frontier, the battles with Indians, and gunfights with American or Mexican outlaws and fugitives. Although such actions were always distinct possibilities, most Rangers' days were spent with minor camp chores and long rides, often resulting in nothing being accomplished. In this book, we have a clear picture of real Ranger life in the 1880s: social, personal, and professional. Abner Theophilus Miller joined Company B of the Frontier Battalion on February 12, 1887, at Quanah and served until August 31, 1888. During that period of service, Miller kept three diaries that were preserved by his descendants and is now annotated by his great-grandson, John Miller Morris.

Diaries kept by a Texas Ranger are virtually unknown. Alonzo Von Oden of Company D kept what might best be called a scrapbook, but not a daily recording of events. T. C. Robinson of McNelly's Washington County Militia wrote letters describing his activities but here again, they were not a daily record of his experiences. What A. T. Miller provided for posterity is unique.

From the diaries and various other sources, we glimpse what Ranger camp life was like. This understanding is assisted greatly by the reminiscences of Mrs. Dan Roberts and the photographs of M. C. Ragsdale, taken in 1878 in Menard County. But Miller's daily record is even more real. On Christmas Day 1887, he wrote:

One more Christmas has come and still I am in no better circumstance than ever. Tis a cloudy morning and looks as we may have some falling weather. The boys has all gon[e] up Town to get a free drink this morning and I will get breakfast myself I reckon. Tom Platt got full and came to camp last night, and got hot and killed both dogs.

This is certainly a different view of camp life than what is presented in Mrs. Roberts' *Reminiscences*. We see a Texas Ranger inebriated to the extent that he loses his temper and kills the camp dogs! But this is what makes these diaries so valuable: they present a realistic picture of Ranger life without embellishment and without any effort to glamorize.



Besides the fascinating detail that Ranger Miller recorded, the extensive annotations by John Miller Morris make the work even more valuable. In addition, there is biographical material about the Rangers with whom Miller served, such as the Platt brothers, Thomas O'Hare, J. M. Bradbury, and others. These mini-biographies are presented in the epilogue.

*A Private in the Texas Rangers* is a true contribution to Ranger history and is highly recommended for all Western history and Texas Ranger fans.

- Chuck Parsons

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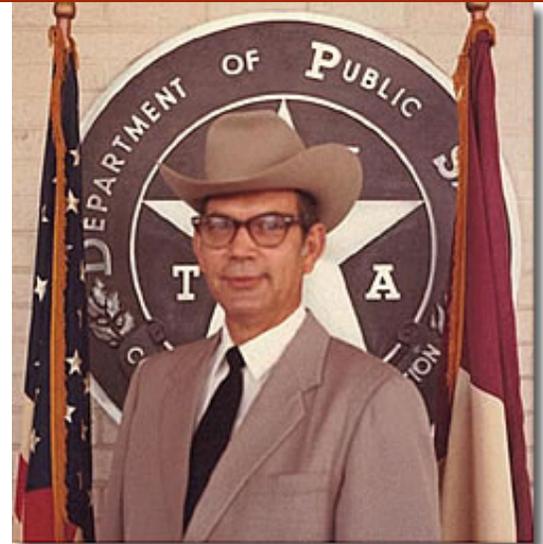
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## Remembrances of My Dad: Hollis Milton Sillavan



by Randy Sillavan

*My* dad, Hollis Milton Sillavan, was born August 26, 1915, at Honey Grove, Fannin County, Texas, but he didn't stay there long. During the 1920s, my grandparents moved around a lot in search of work. They finally settled in Austin County, between Bellville and Hempstead. Dad graduated from Navasota High School and briefly attended the University of Texas in Austin. In 1936, Dad and Mom (the former Sadie Paine) got married and set up housekeeping in nearby Genoa. Dad started off operating a grocery store, but he soon moved on to Houston. There he went to work as a route salesman/truck driver for Dentler's, a potato chip and salad dressing company.

When the United States entered World War II, there was a definite scare of sabotage, and Dad joined the Houston Police Auxiliary. In October 1942, he took the next step when he joined the Houston Police Department as a patrolman. He was soon promoted to detective and worked in the Burglary and Theft Division. I guess the long hours were taking a toll on Mother and Dad because in 1951, they decided they had enough of Houston and moved to Burton. Sheriff Tieman Dippel, a long-time acquaintance, offered Dad a job there as his chief deputy.

I was very fortunate to be the oldest sibling and to have a dad who tried to include me in a lot of things. While he was chief deputy at Brenham, I was still in high school. I spent most Saturdays at the Sheriff's Office dispatching, keeping the office, etc. when the others were out. The Sheriff's Office was very small back then, and the city police did not have a dispatcher at all. In fact, the patrol officers stayed on the street and got their calls either from the Sheriff's Office or by telephone.

In March 1956, I was in Dad's car that he used for work. He was in Houston visiting relatives. I got a call from the Brenham dispatcher saying that Captain

Clint Peoples was trying to get in touch with Dad. I called Dad in Houston and relayed the message. The message was that he had received an appointment in the Rangers. Through the years, Dad, like most Texas lawmen, wanted to be a Texas Ranger and he had made his desire known to Captain Clint Peoples, the commander of Company F in Waco. In those days, if a captain wanted you to be a Ranger, you were a Ranger-no tests, no interviews-that was it.

On April 4, 1956, I drove Dad to Austin, where he was sworn into the Texas Rangers by Colonel Homer Garrison, Jr. Captain Hardy Purvis, commander of Company A in Houston, had decided to retire within the year, and Johnny Klevenhagen was in line to be promoted from sergeant to captain as his replacement. Sergeant Klevenhagen had known Dad since his days in the Houston Police Department and wanted him in Company A. Captain Klevenhagen worked out an arrangement with Captain Peoples to allow Dad to be temporarily stationed at Hearne in Robertson County. He would work an eight-county area for Company F until an opening developed in Company A. Several months later, Captain Purvis retired and Johnny Klevenhagen was promoted to captain. Dad transferred to Brenham in Company A's area of responsibility.

Knowing the Hearne station was only temporary, Mom and my brothers and sister did not move to Brenham, but stayed in Burton. Dad would come home on weekends whenever he could. For Rangers at that time, those weekends were few and far between. One weekend, Mom went to Hearne to stay with Dad for a few weeks and fix up his rent house a bit. My youngest brother Russell and sister Linda were visiting relatives, so that left my brother Bob and I to take care of the chores around the farm. I was going to nearby Blinn College in Brenham at the time.

On Friday morning, July 6, 1956, I got a call from Dad. Constable Milton Lewis had been shot in Somerville. He said he was going back to the house and pick Mom up at a beauty shop. I was to meet them in Somerville and take Mom back to Burton.

Bob and I took off for Somerville, which is about a fifteen-minute drive from Burton. Just as we pulled into the parking lot in front of the drug store where we were to meet Mom and Dad, I saw Dad driving down the street. When Mom got out of the car, she was shaking like a leaf. She said that never again would she ride with Dad when he was in such a hurry. They had covered about three times the distance I had in the same amount of time. Not only that, but there was an electrical problem with Dad's car, and the siren and lights only worked some of the time. This caused her untold anxiety as they flew through intersections.

When I got Mom safely situated back at the farm in Burton, I headed for the Sheriff's Office in Brenham. I had been spending a lot of time dispatching there whenever all the officers were out. I figured that everyone in the office would be in Somerville to assist in the manhunt. I was certainly correct in that assumption. After I got a few hurried instructions, I had the Sheriff's Office basically by myself for the next four days.

Shortly after arriving at the office on Monday morning, a call came in saying that a suspect had been found, and a few officers had him pinned down. There was only one officer with me when the call came in, and he yelled out to me to get all the agencies in the area to return to Somerville to help with the capture. I contacted the sheriff's departments in the surrounding area, as well as the Ranger office in Houston.

I remember a news reporter for the *Brenham Banner Press* came into the office, pulled up a wastebasket near the radio, and listened to the events as they unfolded. I never saw a man get so excited.

Soon I got a message that the manhunt was over. I was to contact the Ranger office in Houston and advise them that the suspect had been shot and killed by Ranger Johnny Klevenhagen.

It wasn't until Dad and Sheriff Dippel returned to the office that I found out exactly what had happened. Investigation had determined that Constable Lewis' shooter, Alton Halson, had been undergoing treatment for mental illness, and his family was scared to death of him. That he was mentally bothered was obvious. During the pursuit, he had stripped off his clothes and had run all over the area, armed with at least two guns. Naked or not, he had successfully eluded officers all weekend. There was a large hill in the creek bottom area called Green's Mountain, and it was here that the suspect had holed up. From his vantage point atop the mountain, Halson could see officers approaching from a distance and thus evade their best efforts to capture him. By Monday morning, most of the officers had returned to their home bases to take care of their own business, leaving just enough officers to prevent the suspect from leaving the area.

That Monday morning Dad, Sergeant Klevenhagen, and Sheriff Dippel had been having breakfast and discussing a way to end this mess. Their final plan was devilishly simple. All three officers would ride up Green's Mountain on horseback from three different directions at once, forcing the suspect to flee down the fourth side of the mountain into the waiting arms of other officers.

Their plan had worked like a charm-almost. They had flushed Halson just as they planned, but instead of going down the fourth side of the mountain as he was supposed to, Halston had begun shooting and had run into a heavily wooded thicket. Klevenhagen had ridden down the hill to get the bloodhounds while Dad and Dippel had kept Halson pinned down. When Klevenhagen had returned with the dogs and their handler from the TDC (Texas Department of Corrections), the suspect had begun shooting at the animals. The handler hadn't wanted any part of this and had run for cover.

Not Johnny Klevenhagen. Still astride his horse, he had charged the suspect. Halson had opened fire on Klevenhagen. He had missed. Klevenhagen had leveled his double-barreled shotgun at Halson. \* He didn't miss. He had cut Halson almost in half. The manhunt was over.

Constable Milton Lewis, the original victim, survived his wounds.

Captain Klevenhagen was using a sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun that belonged to the Washington County Sheriff's Office. I remember seeing it many times through the years. It had a pistol grip and was a mean-looking weapon.

## §

Shortly thereafter, Dad transferred to Company A, just in time to take part in the shutdown of the gambling dens in Galveston. The attorney general of Texas, Will Wilson, had ordered the open gambling in Galveston to cease, and Captain Klevenhagen and the Rangers of Company A took the order to heart. They swept Galveston and busted slot machines, poker tables, roulette

wheels, and other gambling equipment with a vengeance.

For years, at least one Ranger from Company A would stay at the Buccaneer Hotel in Galveston for a two-week period, joined for a week at a time by a Ranger from one of the other companies. Then it was back to his regular duties for four weeks before coming back to Galveston for another two-week stretch. It took three-and-a-half years, but when the Rangers finally checked out of the Buccaneer Hotel, gambling had ceased in Galveston for at least a while.

There is one side note on the gambling crackdown. Not surprisingly, some of the big gamblers were not ready to give up such a moneymaking operation. They bought a motel in the Sealy area and spent thousands of dollars refurbishing it. They moved gambling equipment into place to begin operation away from the heat in the Galveston area. The Rangers found out about the move early on, but waited until everything was in place and a lot of money spent, and then SURPRISE! Just like a repeat of several places in Galveston, the Sealy operation was down and out before it was ever actually up. Texas Rangers are just as deadly with an axe as they are with a six-shooter.

## §

In the early 1960s, I was working at the Houston Police Department. One morning, an old sergeant in the jail called me and told me to come up to the men's cell block. He led me down a row of units and said he wanted me to meet someone. There was a prisoner in one of the cells that looked to be in his early forties. The sergeant had been talking to the prisoner and had mentioned that there was an officer on the Houston Police Department named Sillavan. That's when the prisoner asked to see me.

When I walked up to him, the prisoner kind of laughed and said, "I believe that one of your relatives come pretty close to killing me a few nights ago." He continued, "I don't believe I have been any closer to death."

He told me he and another character had been hijacking (robbing) warehouses in Houston, but had lately been working their way to other locations. They had hit a house in Sealy around Christmas and were on their way to La Grange a few days later to hit another one, the infamous Chicken Ranch, which was the subject of the Burt Reynolds and Dolly Parton movie, *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*.

The two burglars had been heading up Highway 71 between Columbus and La Grange when they had passed a car sitting off the highway. The car had pulled onto the road, fell in behind them, hit the siren, and flashed his lights. He said they had pulled over and he had gotten his pistol out. He had started to open his door when he noticed the officer getting out of the other car was a guy he remembered from his earlier days in Houston-Hollis Sillavan. He also remembered that Dad worked with another Houston police officer named Woody Stephenson.

He said he had quickly dropped his gun on the floorboard, put his hands out the window, and told his buddy to do the same. He told me he had just known that they were about to be blown away if they made the slightest incorrect move. He had known Dad was a cop you did not mess with. He also told me that when he had found out Dad was now a Texas Ranger, he had actually peed in his pants. This guy had been a thief, burglar, and hijacker all his life. He had been arrested several years ago by Dad and Woody Stephenson when they worked burglary and theft at the Houston Police Department. Apparently,

Dad and Woody had made quite an impression on that old thief.

I later talked to my dad about the encounter, and he kind of laughed. Dad said he had worked on the Sealy hijacking and had been in touch with Brenham Police Department and Harris County officers. They had believed these two guys were hitting a bunch of places. He had gotten a call at home from one of the Houston officers, who had told him they had information that the La Grange whorehouse was going to be hit. Dad said he had driven out on Highway 71 and pulled off to check out the traffic for a while. He said he had been sitting there for only a short time when a car passed, fitting the description of the car he had been given. The same prisoner I had talked to had said, "Mr. Sillavan, don't shoot me!" and had dropped to the ground. Dad said he had called for a wrecker to pick up the crooks' car and took them to the jail in Columbus.

End of story.

Many a time I have been sitting in my dad's living room when he would get a call from some informant in Houston that he had developed as far back as the 1940s. I cannot get over how he maintained contact with the underworld for over twenty years after leaving the Houston Police Department. I was always running into some old character while I was working at the Houston Police Department who would ask me if I was kin to Hollis Sillavan. When I would say yes, they usually would say, "That guy arrested me once and that was enough!" I never heard one of them really say anything bad about Dad, but they always said they didn't want to run into him a second time.

I guess that's what the whorehouse hijacker meant when he said, "I don't believe I have ever been closer to death." That was his second encounter with Dad. This robber had a gun and was planning to use it until he recognized the officer who had stopped him.

## §

In 1966, a young lady was savagely sexually assaulted by six men in El Campo, Texas. Dad was stationed in Columbus at the time and was called to the scene by Sheriff Mike Flournoy. This case is a perfect illustration of the power of inter-agency cooperation in law enforcement. Three Texas Rangers, Department of Public Safety lab personnel, the Sheriff's Department, Police Department, and the Highway Patrol all worked together, and after some ninety hours, arrested and charged all six suspects.

I do not have a lot of details regarding the case, but I did see a letter sent to my dad by the victim, thanking him for his help in apprehending the suspects and more importantly, helping her cope with such a traumatic experience. I know that Dad called in Detective Lanny Dixon from the Houston Police Department Homicide Division to work and comfort the victim. Lanny was one of the first female detectives in the Houston Police Department and specialized in sexual assault cases for years. She later married Woody Stephenson. Upon their retirement, they moved to Lake Buchanan where Lanny served many years as the justice of the peace.

When hurricane Carla hit the Texas Gulf Coast, the Rangers were sent to the coastal area to assist in aiding the victims, preventing looting, and generally offering assistance. I believe Dad first went to the Port O'Connor area while

the winds were still near hurricane force. He remained down there for several days and received several letters from citizens expressing their appreciation.

§

I believe it was during the 1960 election that Dad received a telephone call from Colonel Homer Garrison. Colonel Garrison directed him to go to Rio Grande City before the polls closed, and impound all the voting boxes in the county, and lock them in a bank vault, and make sure they were secure until they could be properly counted. Several other Rangers were sent to different counties in the valley with similar orders. The state of Texas was trying to take every precaution to see that George Paar, the Duke of Duval, did not steal yet another election.

I remember Dad later saying he drove about three hundred miles in four hours. A couple of times, a Highway Patrolman turned around on him to stop him. Dad would identify himself via the radio and the response from the trooper was usually: something like, "I would never catch you anyway."

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Another incident I recall occurred when my family was visiting my parents. Dad got a call from the sheriff in Hallettsville. He stated that he had three suspected burglars in custody and was sure they were good for numerous cases in the area. Several attempts had been made to interrogate them, but to no avail. The sheriff asked Dad to take a crack at them. I rode down with Dad, and after the sheriff filled him in on some of the details, he went into a room to talk to the suspects one at a time. I remained in the Sheriff's Office, visiting. In less than thirty minutes, Dad came out and told the sheriff that the three were ready to make written statements, and we went back to Columbus. I have no idea what went on in the interrogation room, but apparently a Texas Ranger got his message across.

§

In 1959, Dad transferred to Columbus, and that was his home station until his retirement in April of 1976. He established a great working relationship with all the law enforcement agencies throughout his district and maintained his old contacts with the Houston Police Department and other offices throughout the state. He was a firm advocate of officers from all jurisdictions and levels working together to stop criminal activity. He was an active member of numerous organizations such as the Southeast Texas Association for Identification & Investigation, Texas Division of the International Association for Identification, Sheriffs Association, and many others.

I suppose that years of too many cases and far too many hours were typical of most Rangers. It all caught up with Dad in 1970 when he had open-heart surgery. But it only slowed him down for a short time before he was up and at it again. I really did not notice his slowing down, even though Eddie Oliver, his captain in Houston, tried to get him to pace himself. I believe Dad really wanted to get his twenty years in and retire. He still never gave less than one hundred percent and was able to pull his weight and get the job done. I had several conversations with Johnny Krumnow, who was the Company A sergeant during this time. He told me that he and Captain Oliver worried about Dad overdoing it and tried to send someone to help out whenever possible, but usually to no avail.

Dad did get his twenty years in and retired from the Texas Rangers in April of 1976. But typical of Dad, he didn't stay retired. Waller County District Attorney Oliver Kitzman appointed him a special investigator in his office. In January of 1977, though, Dad's heart just gave out.

Mom continues to live in Columbus and my sister Linda lives in Eagle Lake. My brother Russell was a Houston Police officer, an officer in Eagle Lake, and chief of police in Brookshire before deciding he had enough of law enforcement. He currently lives in Sealy, Texas. Brother Bob spent several years with the Harris County Sheriff's Department and then was a deputy for Jim Flournoy (portrayed by Burt Reynolds in the *Greatest Little Whorehouse in Texas*) at La Grange during the Chicken Ranch mess. Flournoy had been a Texas Ranger before becoming sheriff of Fayette County, and he and Dad had known one another for several years. Bob left law enforcement when Jim went out of office. Sadly, Bob died of cancer last year (2000). He had lived in LaGrange for several years.

As for me, I went to work at the Houston Police Department in August of 1957. I worked in the Identification Division as a fingerprint specialist, and later became the first official firearms examiner (ballistics) in the department. I spent 10 years as the assistant superintendent of the division, retiring in 1982. I tried working in the insurance and investment business for a few years, but couldn't get law enforcement out of my blood. In 1989, I went to work for the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office as a crime scene investigator. I finally retired for good in March 1999 as a lieutenant. I was honored as the 100 Club Officer of the Year in 1969 and again in 1999.

I am proud to say that I have three fine sons who have all worked in law enforcement. Ron, my middle son, has worked for the Houston Police Department and the Brazoria County Sheriff's Department. He is currently in his twelfth year as an officer with the Webster Police Department. My oldest, Rick, spent some fifteen years working at Texas Department of Corrections and the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office. My youngest, Mike, worked for the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office and the Angleton Police Department for several years before getting into the automobile business.

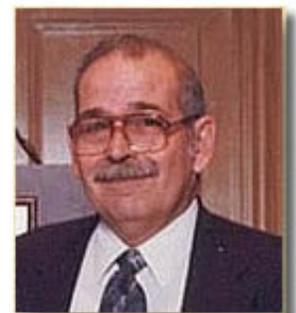
My dad's brother John retired from the Houston Police Department. Currently, several nephews and cousins are law enforcement officers.

I guess my dad started something when he went to work as an auxiliary officer in Houston in 1941.

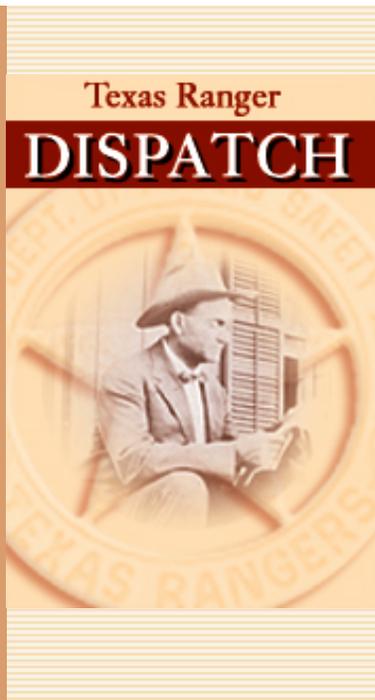
But first, last, and always, my dad was a Texas Ranger.

## §

Being a Sillavan, police work was a natural for Randy. He started in August 1957 with the Houston Police Department, ending up in the Identification Division. He was a fingerprint specialist and became the first Houston Police Department official firearms examiner (ballistics). Before retiring in 1982, he spent ten years as assistant superintendent of the Identification Department.



Randy tried working in the insurance and investment business for a few years, but the call of law



enforcement was too strong. In 1989, he went to work for the Montgomery (Conroe) County Sheriff's Office as a crime scene investigator. Before his retirement in March 1999, Randy had risen to the rank of lieutenant and had been honored as the 100 Club Officer of the Year in 1969 and again in 1999.

Texas Ranger Hollis Sillavan would be proud of his children and grandchildren. His son Randy is the proud father of three fine boys who have all worked in law enforcement. Ron worked for the Houston Police Department, Brazoria County Sheriff's Office, and is currently working as an officer with the Webster [Texas] Police Department. Another son, Rick, spent fifteen years working for the Texas Department of Corrections and the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office. Randy's youngest son, Mike, also worked for the Brazoria County Sheriff's Office before joining the Angleton [Texas] Police Department. Randy also has several nephews and cousins currently in law enforcement.

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