



The

Issue 6, Spring 2002

# 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 6, Spring 2002



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This issue of the *Texas Ranger Dispatch* is funded in part by a grant from the Texas Ranger Association Foundation. Their generosity makes this publication possible.

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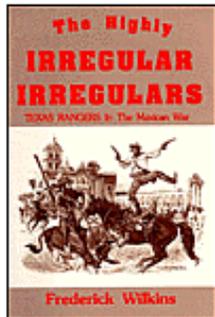
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## *The Highly Irregular Irregulars: Texas Rangers In The Mexican War.*

by By Frederick Wilkins

Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1990. Bibliography, index, pp. i-ix, 1-227.

After a closely contested election in 1844, James K. Polk and the Democrats emerged victorious. Polk was elected, in part, on a platform that called for the annexation of the Republic of Texas and the acquisition of the Oregon Country. President John Tyler, who had been trying to annex Texas, took Polk's election as a mandate by the American people to do just that. This was accomplished by a joint resolution of Congress, and Tyler invited Texas to enter the Union as a state. President Polk approved what Tyler had done. This led Mexico to break diplomatic relations with the United States, preparatory to war.

Polk tried to negotiate with Mexico over the California question, the debts Mexico owed Americans, and the Rio Grande as the southern boundary of Texas and thus of the United States. But Mexico would not negotiate. Instead, General Mariano Paredes overthrew the Mexican government and came into power, dedicated to fighting the United States. In the meantime, Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to the Neuces River, the edge of the disputed territory, and later ordered him to the Rio Grande.

Mexico declared war on the United States, crossed to the north of the Rio Grande, and killed and captured some American soldiers. Polk now asked Congress for a declaration of war, and soon the Mexican War was under way. This conflict started in May 1846 and was ended by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February of 1848.

*The Highly Irregular Irregulars* by Frederick Wilkins is the story of the mounted riflemen from Texas - the Rangers. It did not take General Taylor long to drive the Mexican Army back to the south of the Rio Grande. Involved in the fighting was a company of Rangers that was recruited from men at Corpus Christi and Point Isabel. They were commanded by Sam Walker, who had a long service record with the Rangers before Texas became part of the Union. Taylor won the Battle of Palo Alto and shortly forced General Mariano Arista to recross the Rio Grande. Sam Walker became one of the first heroes of the war in this action.

Ultimately, the First Regiment, Texas Mounted Rifles, was formed. Jack Hays was colonel; Sam Walker, lieutenant colonel; and Michael Chevallie, major. All were experienced Rangers from before the war. This would be the most famous of the Ranger units. It and other Ranger units would be with Taylor through the capture of Monterey and the Battle of Buena Vista, both hard-fought victories against great odds.

The Rangers were good for scout duty, wagon escort, and courier service. They also participated in pitched battle, such as the Battle for Monterey. These Ranger outfits were a sight to see. They furnished their own horses and most of their own weapons, and they wore no uniforms. There was great informality between officers and men. This informality had nothing to do with discipline. A captain might use a man's first name when he told him to do something. The man would obey the order, using the captain's first name in reply. Informality was not insubordination, no matter what the regulars might have thought. What really counted was how the Rangers gathered intelligence and fought. They proved their worth in every situation worth mentioning.

After Buena Vista, the center of war shifted to the south, where General Winfield Scott was marching inland for Mexico City, after taking Vera Cruz. However, there was still guerrilla activity in the north, and Taylor still had the service of some Ranger outfits. Sam Walker fought in Scott's epic campaign against Mexico City. Another Ranger outfit, the Second Texas, also commanded by Colonel Jack Hays, did get to Central Mexico. They landed at Vera Cruz and were occupied fighting guerrilla bands in Scott's rear areas. In one action, Sam Walker was killed.

Colonel Hays received orders to move to Mexico City, a move that was accompanied by a great deal of fighting. The Texans entered Mexico City on December 6, 1847. Until the Rangers arrived, there was little control in the city. The people who doubted the reputation of the Rangers were in for a terrible time, because the Texans brought a great deal of law and order to the city.

The Rangers also fought guerrilla bands in south central Mexico until the war was ended by a treaty of peace. Two of these bands were led by General Paredes and an ex-priest, Celedonia de Juarata. They caused the Rangers a great deal of trouble, but they paid a very high price for doing so. General Joseph Lane, who commanded the cavalry brigade, had high praise for the Rangers, mentioning Hays and Alfred Truett by name. In an earlier report, he had also praised the Rangers and singled out Major Chevallie for special mention.

*The Highly Irregular Irregulars: Texas Rangers In The Mexican War* by Frederick Wilkins is a very interesting and well-documented account of the voluntary cavalry units from the Lone Star State. They served gallantly in the north under Taylor and in Central Mexico under Scott. Their service was to a lesser extent in Central Mexico because the war was almost over by the time they reached Scott. This book is highly recommended for the scholar as well as military history buffs.

**Lonnie E. Maness, PhD**  
Professor of History  
The University of Tennessee at Martin  
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## Sgt. Max Womack

By Robert Nieman

Born October 1, 1929, in the West Texas oil town of Big Spring, Max Womack was the third child born to Ray and Louise McDavid Womack. His sister Dorothy preceded him. His brother Edwin died in infancy. Max's father worked in the oil fields. While Max was still an infant, his family moved to New London in the heart of the fabulously wealthy East Texas Oil Field. They stayed there until 1936, when Ray was transferred to the newest Texas oil field in Talco. It was in Talco that Max grew up. He graduated from Talco High School in 1946.

It had been in the middle of the 1936-37 school year when the Womacks moved to Talco. Max's sister Dorothy, who was several years older, did not want to leave New London School and her friends there. She persuaded her parents to allow her to live with some close family friends until school was out. On March 18, 1937, the school exploded when natural gas accumulated under the school building, killing more than three hundred people—mostly children—in the worst school disaster in American history. Thankfully, Dorothy was one of the survivors.

Though only seventeen years old, Max entered the Army after graduation. He was stationed in Japan for a year and a half with an engineering unit. After getting out of the Army, he attended North Texas Agricultural Junior College (now the University of Texas at Arlington) for a couple of years and then went to work in the oil patch for Humble Oil.

Max, however, had always wanted to be in law enforcement. Through the years, Max would often visit with Dorothy, who had married and lived in Henderson. Also living in Henderson was Errette Hale, who was not only a Highway Patrolman, but a friend Max had known most of his life. Max's parents had owned a small grocery store during their years in New London, and Errette had worked for them. Whenever he was visiting, Max would ride

with Errette and his partner Pat Spier. Spier would later become the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

In 1951, Max applied for admission into the Highway Patrol and was accepted. His first duty station was in Corpus Christi. In those days, Corpus Christi was part of the domain of the legendary Texas Ranger captain A. Y. Allee. The captain's son was a local Highway Patrol dispatcher and he rode around frequently with Max. Because of this friendship, Max got to know not only Captain Allee, but also most of the Rangers in South Texas. He knew he wanted to one day be a Ranger.

By the late 1960s, Max had transferred to Paris. This city, his wife Wanda's hometown, is near the Texas-Oklahoma border and is also close to his hometown of Talco. Almost from the time Max joined the Highway Patrol, he wanted to be a Texas Ranger. But then—like now—the competition was stiff. Consequently, in 1968, he decided to apply for an opening in the narcotics division. He was accepted and assigned a duty station in Houston, to the sorrow of his wife. She really didn't want to raise their children in Houston.

Ranger Frank Kemp of Paris had become a great friend of Max's, and he told him that a new duty station was going to be created in Atlanta, Texas, shortly. He said he would do all he could to try to get Max the appointment. Max therefore turned down the narcotics appointment. When the opening in Atlanta developed, Max applied for the position. He was promptly reminded that he had turned down narcotics appointment. Future Hall of Fame Captain Bob Crowder of Ranger Company B in Dallas spoke up: "I am the one who told him not to go in narcotics. I told him that this Ranger vacancy is going to come open and it'll be yours."

And that was that. In those days, the only review board that mattered was a Ranger captain saying he wanted you to be one of his men. On September 1, 1969, Max Womack became Texas' newest Ranger. Ironically, Captain Crowder had retired the day before, so Max never had the opportunity to work for the man to whom he owed so much.

To his peers, Max is one of the best-liked and most respected Rangers that ever wore the badge. The people of Texas were never shortchanged with Max's work ethic. From 1951, when he became a Highway Patrolman, until his retirement from the Texas Rangers on August 31, 1989, Max served the people of Texas with great honor and distinction. The people of Texas owe Max a great debt of gratitude.

Today, Max and Wanda still live in the Atlanta area, where they spend much of their time traveling and enjoying their grandchildren.

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## Sgt. Danny Rhea

By Robert Nieman



You will find few, if any, Rangers who would dispute that no star shines more than that of Danny Rhea.

The son of a military family, Danny was born on October 25, 1947, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Being a military child, he went to school all over the world but calls San Angelo, Texas, his hometown.

In 1967, Danny followed in his father's footsteps and joined the military—the Navy. For almost four years (three-month early out for a force cutback), he served in the Navy Security Group Activity as a cryptographer. Nineteen sixty-seven was an eventful year for Danny in more ways than one. After finishing boot camp, he married Sue Baker on June 17, 1967, in San Angelo, also Sue's hometown.

Unlike his father, Danny did not want to make the military his career. He left the Navy in 1970 and enrolled at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. He graduated in 1974 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

With degree in hand, Danny tried to gain entrance into the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife as a game warden. Fortunately for the Rangers, no hiring was being done for a couple of years. With a family to support, Danny could not wait around for a few months, let alone a few years.

Danny is an easy person to like and he had become a good friend with Jimmy Wood, the game warden in Nacogdoches. Jimmy obviously saw a good employee in Danny. Even though the Department of Parks and Wildlife had no opening, he did not want to see a person with Danny's ability be unused. He convinced Danny to apply to the Department of Public Safety.

Danny thought about it and decided that a man could do a lot worse in life than have a career in the DPS. He agreed to apply. While working to get Danny into the DPS, Wood found a willing accomplice in a former Nacogdoches County sheriff named Joe Evans, who was currently a state trooper. Through no small efforts of these two men, in 1976 Danny found himself attending the Department of Public Safety's academy in Austin.

In September 1976, Danny became Texas' newest member of the Highway Patrol. Later he transferred to the License and Weight Division. For the next ten years, Danny served much of Texas in the cities of Denton, Cross Plains,

Odessa, and Snyder. In 1986, he was promoted into the DPS' Criminal Intelligence Division and was stationed back in San Angelo.

Things seemed perfect. Not only was Danny doing a job he loved, he was doing it in his hometown. He could have served out the remainder of his career in San Angelo and he and Sue would have been completely happy. But the possibility of being a Texas Ranger is a pull that few have been able to resist, and Danny was no exception. After meeting and talking with Senior Texas Ranger Captain Bill Wilson, he knew that whenever the opportunity presented itself to apply for the greatest law enforcement organization in the world, he had to try. The people who sat on the review board that decides who will and will not be a Ranger realized what an outstanding asset Danny would be to the organization, and they were not about to let him get away.

On January 1, 1988, Danny pinned on the most famous badge in the world—the *cinco peso* badge of a Texas Ranger.

Danny's first duty station was in the West Texas town of Ozona. While working on a lengthy investigation with the Texas attorney general's office, he was with an AG investigator as they passed through Sulphur Springs. He fell in love with the area. Two of his passions were hunting and fishing, and the Sulphur Springs area offered plenty of opportunities for both. He decided right then and there that if Lloyd Johnson (the Ranger in Sulphur Springs) retired, he would apply for that duty station.

But that was a hope for the future. In the meantime, he remained in Ozona, making himself into as good a Ranger as he possibly could. In 1993, Lloyd decided to call it a career and retired. Danny had not forgotten Sulphur Springs and on February 1, he transferred to the East Texas town.

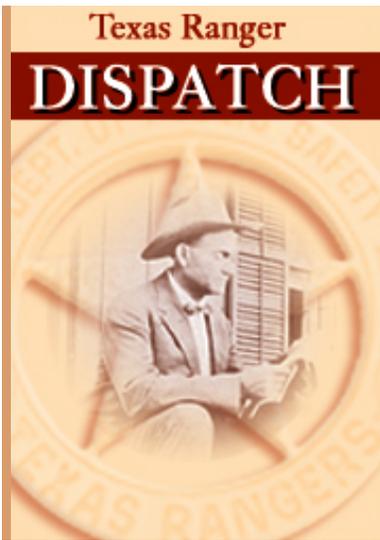
Geographically, Ozona and Sulphur Springs could not have been more opposite. Ozona sits in the middle of the vast West Texas desert. The face of West Texas is sprawling, open spaces; huge cattle ranches; minute rain; and an endless, treeless landscape. Sulphur Springs, on the other hand, consists of farms, trees, plentiful rain, and lots of lakes with great fishing.

In 1998, a deranged man entered the Department of Public Safety's offices in Sulphur Springs with what he claimed was a bomb. For more than an hour, Danny and DPS officers tried to reason with the would-be bomber. Things came to a head when the assailant pulled a gun and pointed at one of the officers. Danny reacted heroically. For his outstanding gallantry above and beyond the call of duty, Danny was awarded the Texas Medal of Valor. Since the formation of the Department of Public Safety in 1935, only five Texas Rangers have earned this distinction.

Today, thirty-four years after exchanging their vows, Danny and Sue are still happily married. They have two children. Devin followed his father to sea ten years ago when he decided to make the Coast Guard his career. Daughter Carissa and her husband, Eric Mouton, live in Oklahoma with their two-year old son Dawson, Danny and Sue's pride and joy.

Danny is a man of deep convictions who refuses to compromise his beliefs. He considers his faith, his family, and his friends the most important things in his life. Pretty good standards for anyone to follow.

Of being a Ranger, Danny says, "Serving as a Texas Ranger is a great privilege and honor. And serving the great people of Texas is a truly



rewarding experience.”

Whether a Highway Patrolman, intelligence agent, or a Texas Ranger, Danny’s work habits and professionalism are known and respected by his peers.

Texas is fortunate to have her Rangers, and none is a better representative than Danny Rhea, a true Texas Ranger Shining Star.

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Now You Know:

Yes, there are *Still* Texas Rangers

by Robert Nieman, Editor

Running a family-owned freight company requires me to travel throughout the United States. In discussing my avocation as editor of the *Texas Ranger Dispatch*, it never ceases to amaze me when I am asked: "You mean there are still Texas Rangers?" or "Are the Texas Rangers really like *Walker: Texas Ranger*?"

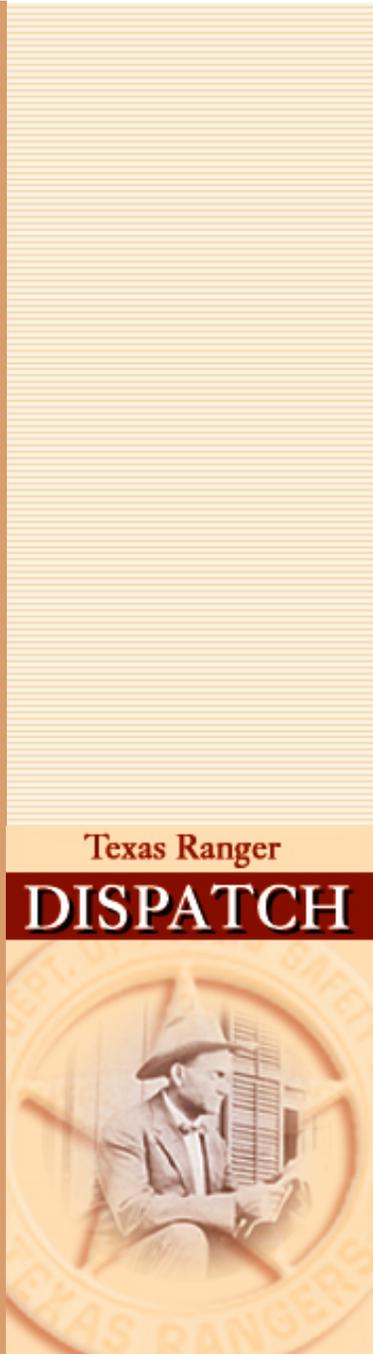
A few statistics, provided by Captain Earl Pearson, Assistant Chief of the Texas Rangers, brings folks up to speed:

Capt. Earl Pearson, Assistant Chief

Complement

The Texas State Legislature has currently authorized (year 2000) 107 Texas Rangers to protect the lives and property of the people of our state. There are 16 captains and lieutenants; 91 field sergeants. Their performance in 2001 was impressive:





### Economic Impact

- \$2,737,083 in funds recovered from crimes - an average of \$30,078 recovered per sergeant
- \$9,260,066 in restitution of property - an average of \$101,759 per sergeant
- Total of \$11,997,149 - an average of \$131,837 per sergeant

### Cases

- Cases worked: 3,157 - an average of 35.0 cases per sergeant
- 2,861 cases closed - an average of 31.4 resolved per sergeant
- 1,697 arrests - an average of 18.6 arrests per sergeant
- 1,481 convictions - an average of 16.2 convictions per sergeant
- 534 homicides worked - 361 cases were closed, resulting in 56 life sentences and 9 death sentences. An average of 5.9 homicides per sergeant.
- 1,814 robberies, thefts, and burglaries - 1,088 were closed  
An average of 19.9 cases and 12 cases resolved per sergeant.

So, my answer to those asking is very simple. Yes, there are still Texas Rangers . . .

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## The Memoirs of William Callicott, Texas Ranger

Edited and annotated by Chuck Parsons

### Part 4 (Final)

*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](#) and [Part III](#) here. The series concludes with Part IV below.

## The Las Cuevas Fight - Part II

The boys, when they got in the skiff and started across, waved farewell to our Mexican trench breastwork that we thought at one time would be our death knell. They made it over all right and sent the skiff back after the rest of us. The captain went on top of the bank, and told the guards to come on, and left the Mexicans still lined up along the edge of the woods and thicket in front of where we were. We all landed back into Texas, safe after three days and nights. We all had a good supper and a good night's rest in Texas once more – [things] that we never expected to get when we went over on November the 18th, 1875, only twenty-six of us and the captain.

The next morning, the captain took ten of us and went up to Rio Grande City to get the cattle. We stayed all day looking for the cattle to come. They didn't come till about 4:00 p.m., and when they came with the cattle, the Mexicans in charge of the cattle stopped on the Mexican side of the river. The captain sent them word to bring them over. The Mexican boss in charge of the cattle sent the captain word back that he couldn't cross the cattle back to Texas until they were inspected.

The captain said, "Well boys, we are in for it again." We could see the cattle and the Mexicans from this side of the river. There were twenty-five of the Mexicans and only ten of us. The captain said, "Well, boys, twenty-five to ten. That's near enough. We will go over again if we never get back. What do you say, boys?"

We said. "We are with you, Captain."

A Mexican had a ferryboat at the place and on the Texas side of the river. The captain said, "All aboard!" We all went over. We found they [the Mexicans] had seventy-five head of cattle and our two horses. They had the cattle rounded up in a close herd, and when we got on top of the bank, they left the cattle and met us on the bank, all twenty-five of them armed with Winchesters and pistols. They stopped [with]in ten feet of us.

The captain told Tom Sullivan, our Ranger interpreter, to tell them that the governor promised to deliver the cattle and horses on the Texas bank of the river. The boss [of the Mexicans] shook his head and said not till they were inspected. The captain told Tom to tell him the cattle were stolen from Texas and drove to Mexico without being inspected, and that they could certainly be drove back without it. The boss shook his head and said no.

So the captain said, "Fall into ranks, boys." We all fell into ranks. He said, "Load your guns."

We all loaded our guns and presented them on the Mexicans. The captain told Tom to tell him [the Mexican boss] [that he was] a son-of-a-bitch [and that] if he didn't cross them cattle in less than five minutes, he would kill the last one of them.

If ever you saw cattle put across the river, they did it in less than five minutes, all except one cow that was so near gave out that she wouldn't take [to] the water. We roped her and pulled her on the boat, and they brought her back to Texas, and the captain gave her to the Mexican boatman for his trouble taking us over and bringing us back to Texas. We also got Lieutenant Armstrong's horse and saddle; and his gloves were still tied to his saddle. Also, [we got] Sergeant George Hall's horse and saddle.

That was the first curse words I ever heard Captain McNelly say when he told Tom to tell the son-of-a-bitch if [he] didn't cross the cattle in five minutes, he would [shoot] the last one of them.

He would have done it, for he had his red feather raised. He was a man that seldom got mad and never did get excited. He always handled his men like a father would his children. I never did hear him speak a cross word to one of them, but whenever he gave a command, it certainly had to be obeyed. He would wrestle with the boys, run foot races with them or horse races with them like a father; but when he gave an order, it had to be obeyed to the letter.

Well, after we got back into Texas with the two horses, we penned the cattle at Rio Grande City that night, and the captain and three or four of us went up to the fort to get some forage for our horses. Captain McNelly and a U.S. captain were sitting on a wagon tongue discussing our trip into Mexico when one of our Ranger boys went up and sat down by Captain McNelly. The U.S. captain jumped up and said, "Captain McNelly, do you allow one of your privates to sit down by you?"

Captain McNelly said, "Yes, sir. I do at anytime. I haven't got a man in my company but what can lie down and sleep with me if he wishes to do so."

The U.S. captain said, "We don't allow our privates that privilege with officers."

Captain McNelly said, "I wouldn't have a man in my company that I didn't think was as good as I am."



Capt. Leander McNelly

That showed the kind of love that Captain McNelly had for his men, and he didn't have a man in his company but what would of stepped in between him and death. For we all loved him like a father as well as a captain. He always said, "Come, boys." He never said, "Go, boys." He never sent us where he wouldn't go himself. He always went in front to battle and told us to come. We always went after [him].

We got the forage for our horses. We all went back to the pen where we had the cattle penned, took our saddle blankets, and made our pallets down in front of [the] cow pen gate, Captain McNelly and all of us in a row.

The captain said, "Well, boys, we got the cattle back in Texas without losing a man." He said, "I went into the Confederate Army at sixteen years of age and at seventeen, I was given a company as captain. But I can say I was in many places that looked like me and all of my men would be killed before we could get out, but I always got out with part of them. But [this] morning, we went into Mexico with only twenty-six men, and all afoot but five, and three miles from the river, and no hopes of getting any aid. If the pilot hadn't of gotten mistaken in the ranches and we had of dashed in to the Las Cuevas Ranch instead of the Cuchattus Ranch, we wouldn't of been here tonight. Of course, we could have taken the ranch, but that two hundred fifty Mexican Regulars would of surrounded us. And two hundred and fifty of them against only twenty-six of us - we would of had but little show. And if we had went into the houses to protect ourselves, they could of taken the artillery and shot the houses down on us and killed us all. That U.S. captain never would of

come over to help us. God pity such a captain. I claim that to be the tightest place I was ever in for us all to get back alive."

The next morning after we had all ate breakfast, the captain said, "Boys, I hate to ask it of you as you haven't had but little rest for several days and nights." He said [that] the old Captain King had been so good to him and us that he wanted to send what cattle belonged to the old captain to him at his home ranch, Santa Gertrudis. That was one hundred miles away, and he wanted four volunteers to drive them [the cattle] back to his {King's} home ranch and turn them over to no one but the old captain himself. A Ranger by the name of [William L.] Rudd said he would go, for one. Ed Pitts said he would go. George Durham said he would go. William Callicott said he would go. That made the four.

We drove the seventy-five head of cattle out about two miles from Rio Grande City, and cut out the thirty-five head that belonged to old Captain King, and left the rest to drift back to their range where they belonged. The captain gave us money to get grub with and told us to take our time and not to drive them fast. [He told us] that we had no limited time to return to him, and to keep a good lookout: that we might meet up with some bandits. If we did, [he said] to hold the cattle, let come what would. He told us to pen them whenever we could get a pen at night; and if we couldn't get a pen, to herd them at night. But if we did pen [the cattle], to always keep one guard on duty at a time so they couldn't get away and to sleep at the gate or bars. So we did like he said.

Everything went all right until one night we camped at a ranch [and] got a pen from the Mexican to pen our cattle. The way they make a pen: they put the posts in the ground end way closest together. We penned the cattle in a good pen, ate supper, and put on a guard. The other three of us made our pallets down side by side. We slept with our guns by our side. And in front of us had been a pen, but the most of it had been taken away, leaving a post standing every two or three feet apart that in the dark looked like a man standing.

All three of us were asleep. George Durham had one of his nightmares that he often had when asleep, jumped up with his pistol in his hand, pointed at the post that wasn't ten feet away, saying, "There they are, boys, there they are."

We all jumped up with our pistols in hand and leveled on the post, ready to shoot, when some of us happened to touch George and wake him up and found out it was only a nightmare he had. We then put him on guard in the other fellow's place and went back to bed. We slept all right till day. That was the only trouble we had on the trip.

We made the trip all right to the Santa Gertrudis Ranch, the old Captain King's home ranch, without the loss of a cow. We got there about 3:00 p.m. We sent the old captain word that we were there with a herd of cattle that Captain McNelly had sent him from Mexico.

The old Captain King came to us. He said, "Well, boys, I am glad to see you all and glad you are still alive. From the report at one time, I didn't think any of you would ever get back to Texas. How many men did the captain have with him over in Mexico?"

"He had himself and twenty-six of us."

"What? Only twenty-six men to invade Mexico with?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you mounted or afoot?"

"We had five on horses and twenty-one on foot."

"How long did you stay over in Mexico?"

"Three days and nights and all afoot but five."

"And the ranch you attacked was Cuchattus and Las Cuevas?" The old captain said, "Them are the two worst ranches in Mexico. They are the headquarters of all the cow-thievin' bandits that steal cattle from this side of the river. I know all about the place and knew when it first started. It was settled by General Juan Flores, and I understand he still owns it."

"No, captain. The other fellow owns it. We killed the general after we got back to the river [following] the first charge him and twenty-five other Mexicans made on us. After we got back to the river, we killed him [with]in seventy-five yards of the river. They made the charge, and we stood it. They then started back to the ranch as fast as they could run on their horses. We opened fire on them as fast as we could. General Juan Flores fell dead from his horse, with his pistol in his hand, with two needle bullets through his body. Captain McNelly has the pistol. It is a fine one. It is plated with gold and silver. It is a Smith & Wesson of the finest make."

"Well," the old captain said, "I am glad you all got back to the river. It was reported that you all were surrounded and cut off from forage and water, and that it would be a second Alamo case with you all: that you all would have to surrender."

"No, sir. Captain McNelly told us when we went over that he wouldn't have any surrender. It would be death or victory or get out all together, the best we could. And he meant what he said."

The old Captain King said, "Well, boys. There is not another captain on earth like Captain McNelly, [one] that would invade a foreign country with only twenty-six men and stay there three days and nights and all get back alive. I heard of it and had raised one hundred men and started to McNelly's rescue when I heard you all had got back on this side of the river, all alive. Couldn't you all get no help?"

"No sir. A U.S. captain and two hundred U.S. regulars followed the Mexicans and the cattle to the river and camped on this side of the river before we got there, but he wouldn't go over the river after them. Captain McNelly tried to get a hundred of his men to go with him to the Las Cuevas Ranch, [seeing] that he only had twenty-six men with him. The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly that he had no U.S. men to send over to a Mexican slaughter pen, and that we would all be killed in less than twenty-four hours. After we got over, Captain McNelly told him if we did, we would all go together or get the cattle."

"Well, boys. That was a daring trip. Captain McNelly is the only captain that has ever invaded Mexico and got back stolen cattle." He said, "Out of the many thousand head I have had stolen and driven to Mexico, this thirty-five head is all I have ever got back."

He told a Mexican hand to go and tell his [ranch] boss to come and bring some ropes, saw, and two hands to help him. When the boss came, he [King] told him there were thirty-five head of cattle that Captain McNelly and twenty-six of his rangers had got out of Mexico and had drove them to him from Rio Grand City. . . . And [King said] for him to saw off the right horn of all of them and to turn them loose on the big range, with the understanding that none of the thirty-five head were to be sold or killed for beef; that he wanted them to remain the balance of their days in peace. He said, "I value that thirty-five head more than I do any five hundred head I have."

The old captain stayed at the pen and seen it done. He then told the boss to open the gate and let them go free as long as they lived and to never pen them again, if he could help it. He then said to us four boys to ride our horses down to the stable, and to tell the man there to take charge of them, and for us to come up to the house and stay all night. We thanked him and told him we were too dirty to go where there were ladies [and] that we hadn't had a chance to change our clothes in ten days, since we left our wagons seventy miles below Rio Grande City.

"Well, boys, if you won't go to the house with me, I want you to go up to my warehouse and stay all night upstairs. I have a nice, vacant room up there. We told him no, we would camp near the stable; that we had our saddle blankets to sleep on.

He said, "No, leave your blankets with your saddles. You will have plenty bedding up there to sleep on. Take your guns and pistols and leave the rest. I will send you plenty of supper and I want you to make yourselves at home. Use anything you see up there," he said. "I will see you all in the morning."

He bade us goodbye and went back to the house. We went to the warehouse. Upstairs, we found plenty [of] nice clean blankets, pillows, chairs, tables, wash bowl and towels, water, candles, and matches - everything nice enough for a store drummer. We all got all the blankets we wanted, made our pallets, and got ready for a good night's rest - something we hadn't had in ten or twelve days. And about dark, the old Captain King sent us up a good supper: ham and eggs, butter, cakes, and pies - in fact, everything good to eat with plenty of good fresh butter, milk, and coffee. He had two daughters that had just graduated in Kentucky and had come home to spend the winter. They sent up two big pound cakes tagged, "Compliments of the two Miss Kings to the McNelly Rangers."

Well, we hadn't had any dinner that day: we were all hungry. George Durham [was] the only boy in the crowd and the youngest one in the company after Berry Smith was killed in the Palo Alto fight. . . . George was only seventeen years of age. We all went to eating the good thing we had in front of us. George, not having the first joint of his stomach gauged[?], he overloaded it with good stuff. After we all got through supper, we all went to bed. Everything went on all right till about 12 or 1:00 o'clock that night when George had the worst nightmare he ever had. We were all sound asleep when, all at once, George jumped up with pistol in hand saying, "Shoot, boys. Here they are, boys. Shoot!"

We had blowed out the light and, all in the dark, we could only find him by the sound of his voice. Two of us caught him and held him till the other one disarmed him; for if we hadn't, he might have killed us all in the dark. We kept his gun and pistol till day, and we all slept well till day. The next morning, the old captain sent us up a nice breakfast, but poor George couldn't take on any

more. He said the old captain sent too much for supper. We ate breakfast and got ready to start back to the Rio Grande River to Captain McNelly.

Captain King came to us and said, "Boys, don't you all want fresh horses? If you do, leave yours and take fresh ones." We told him ours would do.

"Well," he said, "don't you all need some money?"

We told him Captain McNelly gave us money to buy grub with.

"Well," he said, "go by the house. I have had you all plenty of grub fixed up to last you two or three days." He said, "Tell Captain McNelly if he ever goes into Mexico again, to let me know and I will go with him if the U.S. captain can't."

We got our wallet of good eatin' stuff, bade the captain goodbye, and started back to the Rio Grande River. The two Miss Kings waved us goodbye as we rode away. They are still living at the old home place, Santa Gertrudis. But [it] now goes by the name of Kingsville, as the Gulf Coast Railroad runs through there, where no railroads in western Texas [were] when I was there forty-seven years ago.

We got back to the captain and boys all okay and glad to see one another. In three or four days after we got back, Captain King sent Captain McNelly a check on the Brownsville Bank for one thousand dollars to divide with the twenty-six of us that were with him in Mexico.

This ends our two trips in Mexico after cow bandits. It is the details as it occurred, from start to finish. I enclose one of my pictures with my little eight-month-old grandbaby boy, William Charles Marndrich [?]. If you can use any of my pictures in your history, let me and him have a place near Old Ball and Bill. [Illegible-I will send?] you two of them.

P.S. I will finish up the rest of my details of ranger life in 1874 and 1875 the next writing. And if you have the time to spare, if you will write up what you have in book form and send me a copy of it, I will pay you whatever you ask. Write all you have of the other boys. They were the last four, and they have been dead for several years. If you have space in your history, I would place these pictures on the first page, for they are the ones who made Texas what she is. I have read the battle of San Jacinto by Sam Houston and think it was the best-planned battle that was ever fought. The old battlefield is still kept up. It is only twenty miles from Houston, and these four [in the] pictures attended the last reunion there by the old veterans of 1836. They were in the battle and pointed out everything as it occurred [on] the day the battle was fought by Houston.

P.S. This little grandbaby boy is my oldest daughter's child, Mrs. Anne Marndrich [?]. I have two other little granddaughters by my dead son.

§

[Undated # 4]

After the funeral, we went out about three miles from town and camped for two or three days to give our run-down horses a little rest, as they hadn't had any for over a week. The captain sent three or four of the boys after our wagons that were sent miles away, that we hadn't seen in over a week. They

got in all right. The next day we were glad to see the old boys once more and glad to have a chance to get one more good meal, as we hadn't had but a little while we were on the bandits' trail and but little sleep. What little we did get was on our wet, sweaty, saddle blankets.

The captain sent Old Ball and Bill [Callicott] out after a good, fat, four-year-old beef, which he got all right. That was my job only when we were on a bandit trail. After I got him [the beef] into camp, I hung him up in a tree, and the boys would help themselves to all the good, fat beef they wanted. Old Captain King told Captain McNelly to never let us go hungry nor ride tired horses to kill his beeves or anybody else's, and when we rode our own horses down, [he ordered] to send to his ranch and get fresh ones.

What beef the boys didn't eat fresh, I always made me a scaffold and jerked it so as we would have plenty to take with us when we started on a scout. There are not many people that know what jerked beef is. I would make me a scaffold, cut it [the beef] up in thin slices, and spread it on the scaffold, and start a fire under it, and cook it till it was done. That ended my job till we wanted more beef. After staying in that camp two or three days, the captain's wife and Rebel [Rebel Leander McNelly] left Brownsville for their old home [in] Burton, Washington County. The captain then came out to our camp [and] told us his wife was gone and for us to get ready to march. Everything ready, the captain and old Casuse [Jesus Sandoval] led the way in [the] direction toward the old Captain King's Santa Gertrudis, the old Captain King's home ranch, a distance of one hundred miles from the Rio Grande River. We headed in to the old captain's home ranch and camped in his little saddle-horse pasture. For the first night, Captain McNelly left us in charge of Lieutenant [T. C.] Robinson, and he went up and stayed all night with the old Captain King.

The next day, Captain McNelly and Captain King came to our camp. Captain King had forty-two head of fresh horses penned up at his ranch for us to ride and to let ours rest. Captain McNelly sent me and two other boys after them. We went up [and] the boys let me have the first pick of the bunch.

I had the first pick of the horses and picked a big ball-faced chestnut sorrel horse, the finest one in the bunch. I led him back to camp with me. When we got back, Captain McNelly and Captain King were setting out under a tree talking [when] Bill Templeton, one of our Ranger boys, walked up to me and said, "Bill, you better let me have that horse, as I am so much larger than you. Any of them smaller horses will do you as well."

I told him, "Well, as I had to give up Old Ball, I didn't have much choice. One would do me as well as the other, [but] none of them could fill the place of Old Ball."

So, I picked another little roan that proved to be a splendid horse and let Templeton have that one. Templeton was six feet and a half high and weighed something over one hundred seventy-five pounds. He said to me, "Bill, let me have your saddle, as it is a better one than mine." Mine was a double-ridged stock saddle. I told him all right. He saddled the horse; got up on him.

It was just one mile around the pasture. When Templeton got on the horse, he slapped both spurs to him at once and hit him with the whip at the same time. The horse downed his head between his front legs and went at it for all he could. He pitched around that pasture a solid mile around. [He] pitched up in front of us where old Captain King and Captain McNelly and several of us boys were standing, watching Templeton ride the western outlaw horse. He pitched up to where we were standing and stopped still. Templeton got

behind the saddle, put both spurs in his flanks. He wouldn't move. He then got back in the saddle, putting both spurs in his shoulders. He still wouldn't move. Templeton then got down and led him to where we were standing.

Captain King reached down in his pocket and got out a little blank book, wrote out a bill of sale to the horse, handed it to Templeton, saying, "Young man, I will make you a present of that horse. You are the only one that has ever been able to ride him. That horse is an outlaw. I have never had a Mexican on my ranch that could ride him. He has thrown everyone that tried to ride him. You can't get a Mexican in twenty-five miles of this ranch that will try to ride him." He said to Captain McNelly to not think hard of him for sending such a horse to him; that he told his boss to send nothing but the best and gentlest horses I [he] had, for most of these western horses will pitch a little when they are rested up. And he said, "I know nothing about the cow horses that's used on the ranch. It is all left to my boss to handle the stock horses. I have a few that I keep and feed for my family's use."

Templeton was proud of his horse. That one ride broke him [the horse] forever. He never did pitch anymore. Templeton could go out to the herd at night or day and walk up to him, put a half hitch on his nose, jump on him bareback, and ride him into camp. He proved to be the best horse in the company and the best saddle horse. He was a natural racker. He could buck as fast as a [?] horse could lope.

The rest of our horses proved to be gentle, except a few of them. Sometimes when the boys saddled them up, they would show a little spine [?] that they wanted to pitch. All the boys would have to do was to call Templeton to come and ride him. Templeton would come take the bridle reins in his hands [and] make a lip in the saddle if he was already saddled; and if he wasn't, he would go on to him bareback [and] ride him just the same.

Old Captain King finished [evaluating?] our horses that evening, giving all of them a good price. [?] in Ranger life, your horse is evaluated at what he is worth; and if he is killed in battle, you get full value from the U.S. government. In the Lost Valley fight, the Indians killed fourteen head of the Rangers' horses. They all got full value for them.

After Captain King got through, he told Captain McNelly to have us turn our own horses loose in the little pasture, and that he would have his boss send them on to his big pasture where they could have plenty of good grass and water. And [he told him] to ride that forty-two [horses] down and to send back and get forty-two more if we needed them. [He said that] those horses were nothing to him: that he had western Texas full of them. The old captain told Bill Templeton that if he ever happened around again and he had another outlaw horse, he would make him another present of a horse.

Then Captain McNelly told Lieutenant Robinson to have everything ready to start out the next morning; that he would stay all night with the old Captain King. So, the next morning, Captain Mc. was on hand bright and early, on a good, fresh horse. He ordered us to saddle up. All ready, him and Old Casuse led the way back to the Rio Grande River, all on good, fresh horses. We scouted the country out from Roma to the Corpus Christi Bay.

We seldom went further north than Corpus Christi or King's Ranch, as the bandits hardly ever got that far from the river. We never stopped, only when we were compelled to, and that was only long enough for me to kill a beef and jerk it. And then we were gone again. The captain told me, as I understood it, if I would kill the beeves and jerk them, he would let me off of all other duty

except when we were on a bandit trail. I could ride out and kill a four-year-old beef, skin him, dress him and cut him up, tie him on Old Ball, spread the flesh side of the hide next to the meat, get on top of it, and ride into camp by myself without any trouble.

P.S. Mr. Webb, Kind Sir, I am writing more than there is any use, but you will please use only what you wish and send the rest up in smoke? I can only see how to write a little when the sun shines bright by a big window.

William Callicott  
A McNelly Ranger  
age 68 passed.

§

Houston  
May the 2nd, 1921  
Mr. Webb, Kind Sir

I have written you all the details of Ranger life of 1874 and 1875 with the exception of Captain McNelly and twenty-six of us in Mexico at one time and ten of us at another time. [This was] after bandit cow thieves and the disbanding of a company of men that claimed to be rangers [but] that were not . . . were doing devilment on this side of the river. Captain McNelly disbanded them and sent them home with orders to never let him catch them anymore.

I will give you the details of our trip to old Captain King's home ranch with the thirty-five head of cattle we got out of Mexico and what he did with them. I think the driving of them back to King's is where Mr. Caffee made his mistake. In the Palo Alto drive to the range, . . . we didn't stop to look at the two hundred fifty head rounded up on this side of the lagoon and near the range where they belonged, as western Texas had no limit this side of the Rio Grande River in 1875.

Don't use any of our trip in to Mexico until I send you the full details of it all from start to finish, which I will do as fast as my eyes will allow. The sun has to [be] mighty bright for me to see at all. If my details gets to you too late to use, send them back to me at my expense. Don't leave them there. I have explained it the best I can, with the eyes I have, the career of Captain McNelly in DeWitt County with the Sutton and Taylor party and[?] the Palo Alto fight. The captain never claimed that he did much good in DeWitt County. I will give you a few names of the men that was with the captain on the Rio Grande, the time I was [with] Sergeant George Hall, a cousin of Mrs. McNelly [of] La Grange, Texas:

Linton Wright, Sheriff; Corpus Christi City, Nueces County

Sergeant George Orrill; Cuero City, DeWitt County, Texas

Bill Templeton, the outlaw horse rider; Kingsville, Nueces County, Texas

Well, I will close for this time. Let me [know] if this gets to you okay, and keep all the writing in the envelopes they belong to, so you will not get it mixed up. Always start at the first number. It is all numbered, if I haven't made



any mistake.

Callicott

**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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## Movie Review:

## Texas Rangers

Review by Chuck Parsons



*Several years ago, the Hall of Fame and Museum staff learned that Dimension Films was planning a new Texas Ranger movie to be released in 1999. It was to showcase rising star Dylan McDermott of television's *The Practice*. The script writers had purchased the rights to the 1962 book *Taming the Nueces Strip* based on Texas Ranger George Durham's reminiscences of Capt. Leander McNelly and the Special Force.*

*As a matter of courtesy, the staff contacted Dimension Films to let them know that historical assistance was available. They informed us that the \$30 million production would be shooting in Calgary, Canada and forwarded a script for our archives.*

*From the start we sensed a certain lack of enthusiasm on Dimension Films' part for the project. The release date of the movie was vague and was pushed back several times in the following months. The star, Dylan McDermott, was reported to be none too happy with the production or his stay in Calgary.*

*As time passed, it became obvious that *Texas Rangers* was a movie the studio would rather forget. It was not previewed for critics prior to release (a bad sign) and its run at most theaters was a few days.*

*We asked Chuck Parsons, an authority on Capt. Leander McNelly, to see the movie and give us his opinion. Chuck co-authored *Captain L.H. McNelly -- Texas Ranger: The Life and Times of a Fighting Man* with Marianne Elizabeth Hall Little.*

Review: Texas Rangers

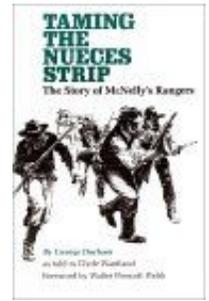


*Texas Rangers* purports to be the story of Captain Leander McNelly who commanded a force of Texas Rangers in South Texas during the mid 1870s.

Script writers John Milius and Ehren Kruger loosely based the screenplay on *Taming the Nueces Strip*, the



border reminiscences of 80 year old Ranger George Durham as told to newspaperman Clyde Wantland in the 1930s.



### The Real McNelly and the Nueces Strip

The "Strip" was a large area of ranch land on the south Texas border between the Nueces and the Rio Grande rivers. The sparsely populated area was home to millions of cattle that attracted rustlers and bandits.



### The Real Leander McNelly

Capt. Leander McNelly, Confederate veteran and Reconstruction lawman, was sent to the Nueces Strip by Governor Richard Coke in early 1875. Influential cattlemen like Richard King had petitioned for an end to raids from Mexico that threatened the herds of the giant King Ranch and smaller outfits. Emboldened by the lack of law enforcement, the raiders had attacked the small settlement of Nuecestown and even planned to attack Corpus Christi.

In response to the raids, Governor Coke authorized the organization of a Special Force of Rangers comprised of McNelly and thirty volunteers. Captain McNelly was given authority equivalent to martial law -- he was to use whatever force he deemed necessary to establish order. Bandits were to be pursued and killed with no quarter given and none expected. Considering the small number of Rangers (never more than 30), and the hundreds of rustlers and bandits in the area, it is surprising that McNelly and his men survived. McNelly was audacious, in part because he had little to lose -- he was dying of terminal tuberculosis.

Two exploits against Mexican raiders earned Capt. McNelly a place in Texas folklore. In June of 1875, he surprised and engaged a group of raiders on the Palo Alto Prairie battlefield. Sixteen Mexican raiders were killed, against the loss of one Texas Ranger, young Berry Smith.



Juan Cortina

In November of 1875, McNelly invaded Mexico to attack Las Cuevas, the stronghold of factional leader Juan Cortina. The Rangers recovered several hundred head of stolen cattle, and may have killed-- by gunfire or summary execution -- somewhere between two and three dozen raiders.

The Special Force became an anathema to criminals as well as a portion of the law-abiding population. After two years of service, McNelly died of tuberculosis at 33 and was buried in Burton, Texas, leaving behind a wife and two children. The State of Texas had dismissed McNelly from service earlier because of his mounting medical bills and the political fallout from his summary actions and violations of the Mexican border. In the end, Capt. McNelly did what he was sent to do, establish frontier justice in the Nueces Strip. He also earned a reputation for ferocity and swift retribution that increased with the passage of time.

## McNelly's Texas Rangers in the Movie

John Milius' and Ehren Kruger's script takes huge liberties with Durham's recollections as recorded by Wantland. McNelly was never a preacher, but the film identifies him as being one prior to his leaving Texas to fight in the Civil War. The McNelly of this short, 93 minute film (played by Dylan McDermott) suffers the murder of his family by bandits before becoming a Ranger. This fate conveniently provides him with a personal motive for revenge. (The real McNelly was survived by a wife and two children.)

To make the story line tighter (?), the film transforms historical figure John King Fisher (played by Alfred Molina) into the crime boss of the bandits and McNelly's arch nemesis. In real life, Juan Cortina, was the crime boss of the Rio Grande, at least to the Texas ranchers who lost their cattle to his raiders. But Cortina appears only briefly in a conference with King Fisher. Cortina's appearance in the film adds nothing to the storyline.

In the major episode of the film, McNelly (McDermott) and his Texas Rangers invade Mexico to attack John King Fisher's headquarters at Las Cuevas. The real McNelly did invade Mexico to attack Las Cuevas. However, it was the stronghold of border strongman Juan Flores Salinas (not John King Fisher), whom McNelly's men did kill.

At the end of the film both McNelly and Fisher die by each other's hands in a less than dramatic shoot-out. McNelly's proteges, George Durham and the fictional Lincoln R. Dunnison, are left to carry on the McNelly tradition of taking the fight to the raiders.

This film may be appealing to the crowd that likes to hear the firing of thousands of blanks accompanied by legions of stuntmen jumping, falling and writhing on the ground in mock agony. There is also a token romantic interest provided by the nascent longings of two young Rangers, Durham and Dunnison, for a Miss Dukes -- in real life the daughter of Cattleman Richard King. The tone of the movie is dark with much of the action occurring at dawn or dusk. There is very little colorful language and sex takes a holiday, as in the matinee westerns of old.



The true story of McNelly's Rangers is best found elsewhere. This film reduces it to visceral entertainment -- gun fights, hangings and galloping horses. It is what western film enthusiasts refer to as an "oater" -- a \$30 million version of a 1950s cowboy matinee movie. In the end, it is unlikely to do much for the career of Dylan McDermott.

Leander McNelly -- played by Dylan McDermott  
 Lincoln R. Dunnison -- James Van Der Beek  
 George Durham - Ashton Kruger

Texas Ranger

# DISPATCH



Caroline Dukes -- Rachael Leigh Cook  
John King Fisher -- Alfred Molina  
Directed by Steve Miner,  
Produced by Alan Greisman and Frank Price



Chuck Parsons is currently completing a biography of Texas Ranger N.O. Reynolds. He is the co-author of Captain L.H. McNelly -- Texas Ranger the definitive work on the McNelly's Special Force.

His 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.

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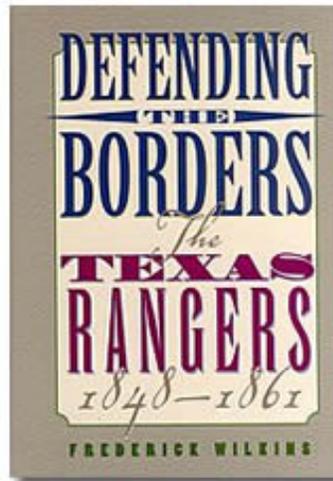
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## *Defending the Borders: The Texas Rangers, 1848-1861*

by Frederick Wilkins

State House Press, PO Box 15247, Austin, Texas. ISBN 1-880510-76-6. xiv + 194 pages. Endnotes, bibliography, index. 14 illustrations. Hard cover only \$27.95.

With this fourth and final volume of his series on the history of the Texas Rangers, Frederick Wilkins has established himself as the current authority on this famed law enforcement body. Previous volumes in the

series are *The Highly Irregular Irregulars: Texas Rangers in the Mexican War* (Eakin Press, Austin, 1990); *The Legend Begins: The Texas Rangers, 1823-1845* (State House Press, 1996) and *The Law Comes to Texas: The Texas Rangers, 1870-1901* (State House Press, 1999). Now one can study the origin, development, and glory years of the Rangers from 1823 to 1901 in their entirety.

The history of the Rangers between the Mexican War and the Civil War is perhaps the least-known period of their existence. During this time, the Rangers were called to defend the frontier against Comanches and other Indian tribes. In addition, the turmoil with Mexican marauders was ever present. Indians and Mexicans have become ingrained in the popular mind as traditional enemies of the white man's advancing civilization westward into Texas. An additional problem, however, was the continued inability of the state to make payment to those men who risked their lives to defend it. Wilkins treats these various issues with sound research and balanced treatment.

During this period between wars, several events have become famous. The capture of Cynthia Ann Parker and the defeat of Peta Nacona's band of Comanches are well known. The conflict in the Brownsville area between Americans and Juan Cortina is not as familiar, but Wilkins devotes an entire chapter to the "Cortina Troubles." The Mexican leader continued to plague Texans until the latter 1870s.

Wilkins provides an excellent treatment of the turmoil in Texas between the two wars and gives two of the state's best-known leaders, John S. "Rip" Ford and Sam Houston, proper attention. But others are mentioned as well, such as Ed Burleson and Lawrence S. "Sul" Ross. The bonus is that lesser-known Rangers whose names are nearly forgotten are also studied.

For those who have patiently waited for a balanced and non-biased treatment of the Texas Rangers from the origins to the end of the 19th century, this is a must read.

## §

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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## Guns of the Texas Rangers:

### The Colt Model 1860 Army

by David Stroud

In 1850, Sam Colt placed into production two of his most popular revolvers: the '49 Pocket and the '51 Navy. Only one new revolver was offered after that until 1860. That exception was the New Model Pocket Pistol, a side hammer designed by Colt's chief lieutenant and factory foreman, E.K. Root. It was placed into production in 1855.

Sam had experimented with an Army-sized sporting revolver in .44 caliber. However, it was too large and awkward to gain popularity and had little chance competing against Colt revolvers already on the market.

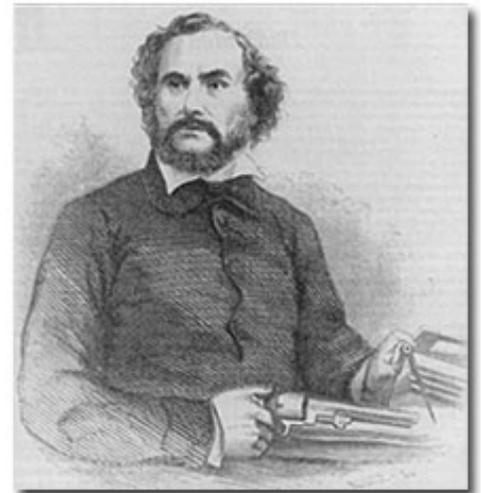
The U.S. Army desired a new weapon to issue its cavalry service for the Mormon Campaign. The board of officers convened at the Washington D.C. Arsenal on February 16, 1858, to examine Colt's revolver "with breech attachment, and Pistol-Carbine."

The board examined three of Colt's Pistol-Carbines with barrel lengths of 12,15, and 18 inches. They also looked at his revolver with a 7" barrel and breech attachment.

*To test the accuracy of fire, a number of shots were fired from all these arms, at the following ranges: at one hundred yards, and at three hundred yards; at five hundred yards with the three specimens of the Pistol-Carbine, and at two hundred yards from the Pistol with breech attachment.*

*The "results were satisfactory" as to accuracy. To test the penetration, "a target of white pine boards, seasoned, one inch thick, with an interval of one inch and a quarter between the boards, and two feet by two in size, was used."*

*The weapons were fired at a distance of thirty feet: The "Carbine with 12 inch*



***barrel penetrated 9 boards. The Carbine with 15 inch barrel penetrated 8 1/2 boards. The Carbine with 18 inch barrels penetrated 9 boards. The Pistol with breech attachment penetrated 7 1/2 boards.***

The officers concluded: "Colt's Carbine-Carbine, and Colt's Pistol with breech attachment, [is] superior for our Cavalry Service to any arm with which they are acquainted" and they recommended the Colt revolver with the 7" barrel "be procured in time for the operations of the approaching campaign" since no revolver with an 8" barrel could be produced in time.

The only revolver Colt had produced with an 8" barrel was the Second Model Colt Dragon, which quickly gave way to the Third Model with a 7 1/2" barrel. At any rate, Colt modified a few Third Models in early 1859 to lighten the bulky revolvers, but the method was unsuccessful. Therefore, the company concentrated on producing a lighter, 8"- barrel revolver of Army caliber.

The New Model Holster Pistol, or New Model Army Pistol, was placed into production in 1860 and quickly won favor with the military. The first 2,000 had the full-fluted cylinders, but they were replaced with the more common rebated ones. Only around 4,000 fluted cylinders were produced before the end of production in 1873. The first 1,000 Army revolvers were equipped with 7 1/2" barrels, but they quickly gave way to the 8" barrel the Army desired.

The 2 lb. 11 oz. 1860 Army is 14" overall. It has a round barrel and a round, rebated cylinder roll engraved with a scene of the Texas Navy engaging the Mexican fleet. It fires six shots of .44 caliber. The trigger guards are oval brass with iron back straps. The loading lever is the creeping-ratchet type, with the top of the barrel sterilely numbered below 1,600 is etched "ADDRESS COL. SAM'L COLT, HARTFORD, CT." After that, most are marked "ADDRESS COL. SAM'L COLT, NEW-YORK US AMERICA" with a few etched "ADDRESS SAM'L COLT, NEW YORK, U.S."



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Most of the first 50,000 1860 Armies had butt straps cut for shoulder stock and 4-screw frames to accept shoulder stocks. The standard Army revolver, however, had no such features.

In May 1860, the new revolver was ready to present to the Army, and a board of officers inspected the arm on the 10<sup>th</sup> of that month. The officers tested the New Model Holster pistols with a 7 1/2" barrel and an 8" barrel. They also tested a Third Model Dragon for accuracy and penetration. The officers reported: "The new model revolver with eight inch barrel will make the most superior cavalry arm we have ever had."

However, while the United States Army tested and evaluated Colt's new revolver, Southern dealers were placing orders. Before the Army placed its order, 2,230 New Model Holster Pistols were shipped South. No doubt, most

landed in the hands of Confederate soldiers.

In April 1861, Fort Sumter was fired upon and Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers. With battle smoke still drifting north, Colt turned his manufacturing to wartime production, and his '60 Army became the standard weapon of the Union Cavalry. The Ordnance Department ordered 127,000 before 1864, and another 15,000 through the open market. The revolvers were sold for twenty-five dollars each.



The U.S. Navy ordered 1,150 New Models in May and September 1861, and many of these were sent to Rear Admiral David Porter's Mississippi Squadron. Thereafter, Colt's 1861 Navy revolver became the favorite of the Sea Service.

Sam Colt died in January 1862. Soon after, his contract was cancelled by the Union government. However, production continued and thousands were sold to individual officers and enlisted men seeking the ultimate revolver. After the war, gunfighters and lawmen such as the Texas Rangers used the 1860 Army, and these old Colts have written many colorful chapters in our history.

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David Stroud was born in Tyler, Texas, and graduated from Henderson (Texas) High School in 1963. He enlisted in the Marines the following year and served a tour in Vietnam and two years as a drill instructor at Parris Island, South Carolina. He earned his B.S. and M. A. degrees in history at Stephen F. Austin State University and is a history instructor at Kilgore (Texas) College. He has written seven books, along with fifteen articles and book reviews.



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## Lon Oden The Rhymin' Ranger

by Karen Holliday Tanner & JohnD. Tanner, Jr.

Originally published in *Old West* magazine Vol. 34 (Summer 1998): 10-14

*In the words of an observer, a Texas Ranger could ride like a Mexican,  
track like an Indian, shoot like a Tennessean, and fight like a devil.*

- Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers*

Nowhere is it written that a Texas Ranger need turn verse like a poet, yet Alonzo "Lon" Van Oden possessed a unique blend of strength and sensitivity. He bravely took on the responsibilities of Rangerhood by day; and in the evenings, he recorded his feelings with uncommon insight, intellect, and talent. This made him unique among those Rangers who were already distinguished by their uniqueness.

Lon Oden was born on March 15, 1863, in Dogtown, McMullen County, Texas. Located on the Frio River, the town was formerly called Rio Frio but was later renamed Colfax in 1871. The local residents, however, continued to use the colorful name of Dogtown. In late 1876, Colfax once again changed its name - this time to Tilden, in honor of that year's United States presidential candidate, Samuel J. Tilden. At the same time, it was designated as the county seat. Located in the heart of the brush country, Dogtown was a perilous place, as the Oden family discovered.

Lon's twenty-eight-year-old father, Aaron Van Buren Oden, was born August 31, 1834, in that portion of South Texas's Bexar County later organized as Frio County. Aaron had served several stints as a Texas Ranger when he became a father. Four months after his son's birth, Aaron, accompanied by Atascosa County rancher George Hinds, encountered Julian Gonzales, a noted horse and cow thief from Starr County, Texas. The ensuing gunfight took place about twenty miles south of Eagle Pass on the old trail between Los Ojuelos and Presidio on the Rio Grande. Aaron and Gonzales died simultaneously on July 22, 1863, each having been shot by the other. Hinds did not have the proper tools, so he was able to dig only a shallow grave in which he buried Aaron on the spot where he had fallen. Hinds, a nineteen-year-old bachelor, then had the formidable task of informing Martha Jane, also just nineteen, of her husband's death. The grieving young widow was left to care for her four-month-old infant son in the heart of this rough frontier land.

Lon's mother, Martha Jane Walker Oden, was born on April 11, 1844, and was the first child of Joseph (1818-1888) and Mary Walker (1821-1860). Martha Jane's parents had fled Shelby County, Texas, after Joe was involved in the killing of two men in the same day during the well-known Regulator/Moderator War. Joe, a member of the Moderator faction, and his wife hurriedly left town

and traveled through nearly a dozen counties in Texas before eventually settling in Atascosa County, where they were among the early pioneers of South Texas.

It was there that their daughter Martha Jane met and married Alonzo Van Buren Oden when she was eighteen years old. The following year, she gave birth to their son Lon. Later, Joseph Walker's day book revealed that his daughter, the young Mrs. Oden, passed away on August 31, 1864, one year after the death of her husband and birth of her son. The family speculated that it was a broken heart that took the life of this young mother so soon after her twenty-first birthday. Pragmatically, death by violence or disease was often the price one paid for living in this uncivilized heart of the rugged [ITALICS>] *brasada*.

When young Lon became an orphan at the age of one year, the Oden family and the Walker family shared the responsibility of raising him. Grandmother Oden had been a student of the classics in her native Sweden. Presumably, she imparted to her grandson an appreciation for the written word and was influential in developing his sensitive and refined nature, his love of poetry, and his ability to express himself on paper.

Lon's grandfather, Joseph Walker, had a total of nineteen children with first wife Mary and second wife Amanda, so there was no shortage of Walker aunts, uncles, and cousins. It is probable that from them, Lon learned the necessary skills of survival: riding, shooting, ranching, and hunting. When Lon was two and a half, Grandfather Walker gave him 150 head of cattle and registered the ODN brand for him. Also among the family living in nearby McMullen County were Lon's Walker uncles: James ("Bud"), age fourteen; and Tom, age eleven.

The Walker men were a rugged bunch. The *brasada* of South Texas required a toughness that they taught to young Lon. Bandits and outlaws from East Texas and Mexico sought the haven of the brush, while the Comanche and Kickapoo Indians found it the ideal launching point for their frequent and devastating raids. Grandfather Walker and his sons stood ready to defend their homes and their livestock. Lon was only two years old when he received his first lesson in the necessity of always being prepared to defend against attackers. On August 19, 1865, Comanche Indians raided McMullen County, seizing horses from the Walkers and a number of other families and killing neighbor John Hines.

Indian depredations ended in McMullen County in 1872, but another source of violence had already arisen: the infamous Sutton-Taylor feud. On November 3, 1869, Captain Jack Helm led a party of the Sutton faction to the McMullen County ranch of William B. Morris on San Miguel Creek. The ranch was located about four miles upstream from the confluence of the San Miguel and the Frio River. Morris and his son-in-law, Martin Luther Taylor, were taken at gunpoint with the alleged intention of placing Taylor in the Oakville jail. Taylor was a cousin of William P. "Buck" Taylor, whose 1868 Christmas Eve killing was considered by many to be the beginning of the feud. Taylor submitted voluntarily, while Morris went along to help his son-in-law make bond. Near Calliham, in Live Oak County, Taylor and Morris were murdered and buried where they fell. On May 30, 1873, at the height of the feud, Lon's Uncle Bud married Martin Taylor's widow, Sophronia, aligning Oden's Walker relatives with the Taylor faction.

Violence also stalked Oden's other uncle, Thomas I. Walker. Tom was a top hand, gambler, and gunman, and he had constant brushes with the law in

South Texas. Following several acquittals on charges of assault with intent to commit murder, he drifted to Seven Rivers, in the New Mexico Territory, and was soon involved with the Lincoln County War. In a dispute and subsequent gunfight, Tom was gunned down at Seven Rivers on November 23, 1879.

Amid the lawlessness of South Texas's brush country, Lon Oden grew into a strapping six-foot, two-inch, good-looking, rugged yet intellectual young man who dressed immaculately. He married in 1889. The reason for the termination of the brief marriage is unknown, but it may have been the impetus that caused him to enlist in Captain Frank Jones's Company D, Frontier Battalion, of the Texas Rangers on March 1, 1891. At this time, he began his journal with the entry:

*I'm twenty-seven, and have just joined the ranger service. I am twenty-seven, and have just started a diary-I wonder why? I also wonder what kind of diary I shall keep. This book is large, and the leaves are blank.*

Lon's handsome uncles, Bud and Tom, had carried a reputation among the girls of Dogtown as ladies' men. This heritage was continued by young Lon. One of the early entries in his journal, which may have been composed in his younger days, reads:

#### A Bachelor's Song

I'm a jolly old bachelor, blithe and jocose  
 I'm as happy as June days are long  
 How I pity you married men, dull and morose,  
 Who can see now where you went wrong,  
 I've had narrow escapes too myself, in my time,  
 And my gratitude, now I express  
 In sincerity if not in artistic rhyme  
 to the dear girls who wouldn't say yes.

Katie, Jamie, Mollie, Lillie, Gertrude, Bell, Fanny, Florence. May, Jessie, Josie, Halley, Nell, and Rosa all caught the young man's eye and were worthy of poetic note later in this lengthy poem. It appears that rejection prompted the following entry:

#### Woman

Away, away, you're all the same  
 A flirting, scheming, jilting throng  
 Oh, by my soul, I blush with shame  
 To think I've been your slave so long.

Lon remained in the San Antonio region through mid-1892 and then headed for West Texas, where he joined Ranger John R. Hughes. Corporal Hughes

was eight years older than Oden and though a native of Cambridge, Illinois, he had drifted into the Indian Territory while still in his teens. He had arrived in Texas in 1878 and was soon raising horses at Liberty Hill, in Travis County, north of Austin. His plans to devote his life to ranching were disrupted when, in 1886, a group of horse rustlers came through Liberty Hill and stole a number of the horses belonging to Hughes and his neighbors. Undaunted, Hughes determined to track down the rustlers. One year and thirteen hundred miles later, he succeeded. In the process, he joined the Texas Rangers. Hughes enlisted in Company D at Georgetown on August 10, 1887, and joined the Frontier Battalion, then stationed at Camp Wood, near Uvalde.



-John R. Hughes

Rangers Hughes and Oden went to Shafter, a silver-mining town in the Chinati Mountains of southwestern Presidio County. The gang of Antonio Carrasco and his brothers, active both in Texas and in Mexico, had been repeatedly helping themselves to the silver ore of the Fronteriza Mining Company of Shafter. Hughes devised a scheme whereby former Texas Ranger Ernest "Diamond Dick" St. Leon, an employee of the mining company, would infiltrate the gang and report its intended movements. Based upon St. Leon's report, on the appropriate night, Hughes and Oden secluded themselves near the entrance to an abandoned mine shaft where stolen silver ore had been hidden to await transport into Mexico. Cold and cramping, the Rangers waited several hours before St. Leon and three of the ore thieves appeared. As the thieves were moving a pack train toward the mine's entrance, they were ordered to surrender. Ignoring the command, the thieves proceeded to fire. Oden and Hughes, joined by St. Leon, returned fire. All three outlaws were killed, including Matilde Carrasco, brother of the gang leader Antonio. Oden's journal later reflected:

Men who lie and steal and cheat--men who murder--men who are so weak--men we hunt--men we shoot. Seems like this world is made up of two sets of men--each fighting the other. Can the weak ever grow strong, or the strong ever reach an understanding of weakness?

Oden traveled on to El Paso, and his visit there was heralded by a trip to the city's most renowned sporting house. He made the acquaintance of Tillie Howard, El Paso's famed madam and owner of the elegant brothel. Born Mathilde Weiler, Tillie had arrived in El Paso in 1890 and promptly acquired the bordello located at 307 South Utah Street from Alice Abbott. Lon fell under Tillie's spell and devoted pages of his journal to his good friend. He wrote that she

*. . . makes the place different. She is tall, and I imagine she doesn't need these artificial bosoms the ladies are using now; hers look natural enough--I'll ask her when I know her better. She seems to take a shine to me. She has the blackest hair, and she is one of the most beautiful women I've ever seen.*

Following a long conversation with Tillie, who was pleased to discuss any topic except herself, Lon asked if she had considered that she might someday be punished for the business which she maintained. Gazing blankly for a few

minutes, she turned to Oden and remarked, "Punished? Alonzo Oden, I know Hell." Oden left her establishment and later wrote that as he walked down the street, he kept hearing her voice saying, "I know Hell." He further wrote, "I think I know the scarlet sister Christ forgave. I can hear his voice cry: 'Let him without sin cast the first stone.'"

Oden had little time to ponder the fate of the world's Tillie Howards. Back home in McMullen County, there was another lady who had captured Oden's heart: Laura Erwin. Lon and Laura had been in love "off and on" for a long time, but had never gotten around to setting the date. One suspects that the handsome Ranger was reluctant to be reformed and confined. On one visit to see his aunts in Tilden, he wrote, "Laura wasn't as glad to see me as I hoped. I'll be damned if I'll become a monk. Maybe I wasn't so glad to see her, either." But, the relationship persisted.

### To L G E

If death doth overtake me  
Err I heard your last Godspeed  
If friends should all forsake me  
In the darkest hours of need  
I hope you will never chide me  
I hope you will never blame  
Let other tongues deride me  
Think kindly of my name.

Oden also formed a close friendship with Ranger Baz "Bass" Outlaw, born in Georgia about 1855. Outlaw had enlisted in Company E of the Frontier Battalion at Toyah, Texas, on August 11, 1885, and transferred to Company D in the spring of 1887. When he and Oden met, Bass was serving as a corporal. According to Oden:

*Bass had one weakness that-at last-proved to be stronger than all his virtues. Bass couldn't leave liquor alone, and when Bass was drunk, Bass was a maniac; none of us could handle him, none of us could reason with him, we just stayed with him until he sobered up.*

Years later, concurring with her husband's assessment, Mrs. Laura Carr Oden wrote:

*Outlaw, was a true Southern gentleman, soft spoken, well-educated and courteous. We loved to talk to him and to have in our home but several drinks made a beast of him. When word got out that Bass was drinking, doors were locked, children brought in off the street and all of us kept silence and hoped for the best.*

Outlaw's drinking resulted in his honorable discharge from the Rangers on September 18, 1892. However, Captain Frank Jones sponsored him as a Special Ranger in the Frontier Battalion, and Outlaw again took the oath on February 10, 1893.

About that time, the bandit Desidario Duran raided the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio railroad siding at Chispa, in Jeff Davis County. Oden, John Hughes, and Jim Putnam traveled to San Antonio Colony, a small settlement on the Texas side of the Rio Grande, to arrest Duran. After the arrest, they were returning home when they stopped for supplies at Jim Wyndam's store on the border and spotted three men attempting to get a

fourth man, who was drunk, on his horse. Recognizing one of the men as the outlaw Florencio Carrasco, another of the notorious brothers wanted on multiple charges - including murder - Oden and Hughes left Putnam with Duran and galloped off in chase. Carrasco killed Lon's horse from under him, but Oden leaped clear and began firing. Carrasco refused to be captured, and he fired simultaneously. Oden and Hughes together killed the second of the Carrasco brothers. Oden would later express a certain remorse:

*I feel so inadequate when we've finished a battle, and I look on the bodies of dead men--men who were bad as the world see, but men who had been born into this world for a purpose--who are we to end that purpose?*

On June 30, 1893, Ranger Captain Frank B. Jones was killed by a band of border desperadoes, led by Jesus Maria Olguin. The slaying occurred at Tres Jacales, on Pirate Island, a small unclaimed strip of land lying between the United States and Mexico. The popular captain's death was felt throughout the force, and Ranger Oden eulogized Jones in his growing journal:

#### To An Old Ranger Friend

There are businesses of all sorts,  
In this world of ours,  
Fetters of Friendship and ties of flowers,  
And true lovers knots, I resist,  
But there never was a bond, old friend, like this,  
We have drunk from the same canteen.

We have shared our blankets and tents,  
And have scouted and fought in all kinds of weather,  
And hungry and full have been,  
Had days of riding and days of rest,

But the memory I cling to and love the best,  
We have drunk from the same canteen.

Ranger Sergeant John Hughes assumed the captaincy of Company D upon Jones's death, and Lon was transferred from Alpine to Ysleta, on the Rio Grande and located at a station of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio railway.

Sometime in 1893, Lon learned of the engagement of Laura Erwin to Jonathan W. Preston, an Atascosa County attorney. Their engagement and subsequent marriage on November 19 depressed Lon. His thoughts and writings became increasingly morose. In 1894, he met another Laura: Laura Carr Hay, a young widow with three children and Ysleta's postmistress. Slowly, Lon's thoughts began to turn toward life after the Rangers. A Ranger's life was not one of comfort.

*We crawl through underbrush, until our bodies are cut and bleeding; nights when we freeze, sitting so quietly waiting for a raid to take place; hours in the broiling sun, slowly walking our horses down mountainous inclines.*

Then word reached Ysleta of the killing of Bass Outlaw.

On April 5, 1894, Outlaw, then a deputy United States marshal in Alpine, Texas, was in El Paso as a court witness. He was furious because United States Marshal Dick Ware was costing him fees by allowing Deputy Marshal

Bueff Cline to service papers in his area. Outlaw got progressively intoxicated as he drank his way up Utah Street, eventually meeting Frank Collison and Constable John Selman. After Outlaw announced his intention to kill Ware, Collison and Selman tried to get him to return to his room, but Outlaw insisted upon visiting his girlfriend Ruby at Tillie Howard's sporting house.

At Tillie's, Collison and Selman conversed in the parlor. Outlaw, meanwhile, proceeded to the back entrance, where he fired a shot. Tillie came running out of her house, blowing a police whistle. Ranger Joe McKidric, also in town to testify as a court witness, responded. When asked why he had fired the shot, the intoxicated Outlaw turned and fired twice at McKidric, killing the Ranger. Outlaw then turned his gun on Selman, fired, and missed, though the powder obscured Selman's vision and burned his face. Selman returned the fire, mortally wounding Outlaw.

The dying Outlaw fired twice more, striking Selman in the upper right leg with both shots. Retreating, Outlaw staggered around the house to Utah Street, where he surrendered to Ranger Frank McMahan. Taken to the Barnum Show Saloon, Outlaw died about four hours later. Oden wrote this tribute:

*Bass, my friend is gone. Maybe all of us knew something like this would come to Bass-Bass, who was so brave and kind; who could laugh louder, ride longer, and cuss harder than the rest of us; and who could be more sympathetic, more tender, more patient than all of us when necessary.*

Possibly despondent over the death of his close friend, Lon Oden left the Ranger service on May 18, 1894. On August 10, he entered in his journal what may have been his thoughts after the shooting of Outlaw:

In men whom men condemn as ill  
I find so much of goodness still.

In men whom men pronounce divine,  
I find so much of sin and blot,  
I hesitate to draw a line,  
Between the two, when God has not.

For the next two and a half years, Oden courted postmistress Laura Carr Hay. On January 17, 1897, they married at El Paso, and Lon settled into a comfortable life as a family man. He became a prosperous merchant in Sierra Blanca and later operated the Chispa ranch near Marfa, Texas. Lon Oden died at Marfa on August 11, 1910, of a lung ailment of undetermined origin.

**A Final Note:** Oden's diary and scrapbook, edited by his daughter Annie Laura Jensen was published in 1936 by Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Texas, in honor of Texas's centennial celebration. A number of poems and letters that alluded to his numerous love affairs were excluded so as not to offend the sensibilities of Mrs. Alonzo Van Oden, who was still living. Fortunately, the scrapbook survives, and through the efforts of its owner, Lon's grandson George L. "Jack" Richards, the complete scrapbook and diary has since been made available to members of the family.

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