



The

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A Legend In His Own Time, Part II

R. M. "Red" Arnold

by Bob Arnold, his son

Part II

Author's note: It has been very gratifying to receive the responses from many of you about the earlier article on my dad found in the previous edition of The Dispatch.

Many of Dad's friends enjoyed reading about him. Equally gratifying has been seeing the apparent influence that Dad had on many lives. Several people became law officers because of my dad, and they have emulated the example that he left behind for them to follow. I hope that this article is as enjoyable as the first.

The Early Years

A friend of Red Arnold once asked a waitress at a restaurant if she could guess what Red did. Not having seen him before and unable to see his badge and gun, she said, "Oh, that's easy. He looks like a Texas Ranger." Red was not a large man by any means. He was barely six feet tall in his stocking feet and weighed about 185 pounds, but he looked much larger with his boots and Stetson hat. He seemed to fill up a room the minute that he entered.

Robert M. "Red" Arnold was raised on a farm near Longview, the third of six sons of Jim and Bessie Arnold. The Arnolds raised cotton, watermelon, cantaloupe, sugar cane, and peaches. Work on the farm was hard: mules and

human energy did all of the plowing, cultivating, and harvesting of the crops. Red and his brothers were expected to help with the farm work before and after school as well as the days when school was out.

Jim Arnold kept Red and his brothers busy, but the boys also had time to get into occasional mischief. One of those mischievous times occurred when Red was about fifteen, and it involved a couple of railroad mules. Mules were often used to assist section crews repairing railroad tracks. The mules carried railroad ties, supplies, gravel, and other materials. After the workday ended, the mules were set loose to graze in the area around where the crews had been working.

One day, a couple of the railroad mules wandered onto the Arnold farm and found their way to grain that was used to feed the cows. The grain was better than the grass they had been eating. The boys couldn't get rid of the mules; they kept coming back to eat the grain.

Out of frustration, Red and two of his brothers, J.E. and Carroll, decided to take action. They backed the mules into a corral so the animals' tails could be placed through the wooden slats of the corral fence. Red tied a thin rope to the tail of one of the mules and then made a hoop of heavy wire. Younger brother Carroll brought tin cans to J.E. and Red, and they knocked holes in the bottoms and strung them through the wire hoop. Red tied the hoop to the mules' tail in a way that the cans would touch the ground but not the mule's feet while walking.

Red and J.E. led the two mules out of the barnyard to a path leading down to the road that ran in front of their house. A hard slap to mules' rear ends got them running down the hill to the road. The faster they ran, the louder the cans became. They went so fast that the mules had to take a wide turn into the farm across the road from the Arnold farm.

The boys' father was driving a wagon loaded with supplies he was bringing from town. As he neared the farm, the frightened railroad mules passed in front of him. Mr. Arnold had a tough time holding his own team of mules in check. He tried to keep from getting run over and also to keep his team from turning around in the opposite direction to run with the railroad mules. The railroad mules got onto the road to town and ran through Longview with their tails "a clanging," never to be seen on the Arnold farm again. Mr. Arnold recognized that the boys were just trying to keep the railroad mules from eating up their grain, so he only gave Red and his brothers a stern "talking-to." They, in turn, learned a valuable lesson in animal behavior.

§

After graduating from Longview High School, Red joined the Marines in New Orleans in December 1933. He completed his basic training at Parris Island and followed that with sea-duty training in Virginia. He became a military policeman, serving shore duty at ports of call in the Caribbean and several South American countries. Following his discharge from the Marines in November 1937, he worked briefly for J. C. Pegues Motors in Longview.

The seed of police work that Red had experienced in the Marines was planted, however. He decided to make an application to become a Texas Highway Patrolman. He took the oral and written exam in Tyler in February 1938. He was selected as a student recruit and asked to report on April 18, 1938, to the Department of Public Safety Training School at Camp Mabry.

Camp Mabry was located northwest of Austin and had been used as a military training base during WWI. Training to be a Highway Patrolman was similar to the training given the military. The cadets were placed into four companies of about twenty-five men each. Red was made the acting 1st Sergeant of Company A, not only because of his previous military experience but also because of the results of his entrance examination and oral interview, conducted prior to the beginning of the school.

The training lasted for six weeks. The cadets were not only schooled in law enforcement but also were given rigorous physical exercise, close order drill, and weapons training. They marched in formation to class, their meals, and other activities. Red and three of his other classmates were recognized at the conclusion of the training for their conduct and duty throughout the entire six weeks. Red's company won the Governor's Cup, the award given to the company showing the best in proficiency, neatness and bearing, attention to duty, and general all-around merit.

Upon the conclusion of the training, Red's first assignment as a Highway Patrolman was in Corpus Christi, Texas. A year later, Red brought his bride Aline from California to Texas to begin their life together.

Top

The War Years

When World War II broke out three years later, Red was working as a fingerprinting expert for the Department of Public Safety in Austin. He volunteered for active duty as a Marine so that he could rejoin his Marine buddies. However, the close and detailed work of fingerprint analysis had caused Red's eyes to become so bad that he could not pass the eye exam required for entrance. Not to be deterred, Red requested reassignment back to the Highway Patrol. His request was approved in May 1942, and Red and Aline moved from Austin to Lampasas.

A need to rejoin his Marine buddies and serve his country during this wartime crisis was too great. After four months of regular Highway Patrol duty, Red again took the entrance exam to reactivate as a Marine. This time, he passed! He requested a leave of absence from the Highway Patrol and it was granted in October 1942. Red re-enlisted and moved Aline and their newborn son to Longview to live with his parents for the duration of the war.



Sergeant R. M. "Red" Arnold was put in charge of thirty new Marines. On November 2, 1944, they boarded a troop train in Dallas, bound for San Diego. Upon arriving at Camp Pendleton, California, Red was assigned to the 12th Replacement Battalion and began training at Camp Elliott.

Situated northwest of San Diego, Camp Elliott was a rugged tableland of sand, rock, sagebrush, and hills that were bordered by the ocean on one side. It was being used as a training base to provide schooled replacements for Marine units already in the field as well as personnel for new outfits. Basic training was given in physical stamina, discipline, weapons, and small-unit tactics necessary to becoming a "Fighting Leatherneck." The ocean beaches

that bordered the training facility were used for amphibious warfare training. After several months of intense training, Sergeant Arnold and approximately 900 other Marines in his battalion shoved off to fight for their country in the islands of the Pacific.

With the increasing complexity of the Pacific War and the need to take advantage of victories in late 1943 and early 1944, several operations were planned for simultaneous action. One of the objectives was to secure the Palau Island group so that General MacArthur's eastern flank was protected. A large amphibious operation was planned for the conquest of Peleiu and Angaur, the two southernmost islands of the Palau Island chain.

The 1st Marine Division was given the responsibility for taking Peleiu. Veterans of Guadalcanal, the 1st Marines had been recuperating in the Solomon Islands. In June, they began training there for the amphibious attack. On September 4, 1944, the main elements of the Naval and Marine convoy took off for a journey of 2,100 miles through the Solomons to Peleiu and Angaur.



Peleiu was a very small island approximately six miles in length, protected by reefs and having favorable landing areas primarily on the southern tip. A ridge called the Umurbrogol ran northeast to southwest for several miles down the middle of the island. It was connected by intersecting valleys and filled with many natural and Japanese-made caves. An airfield at the southern end of the island was an obvious first objective. The invasion was to be made by the three brigades of the 1st Marine Division.

Colonel Chesty Puller was commander of the 1st Brigade, which had the toughest assignment of the three brigades: the responsibility for landing on the western section of the beach, driving inland, and then turning to secure the nose of the Umurbrogol Ridge. On the eve of the landing, Colonel Puller was optimistically advised by his commanding officer that he should have no problem with the operation, and he was expected for dinner the following evening. Colonel Puller knew better!

Red was a gunnery sergeant in the 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade. He and his outfit hit the beach at about 0830 hours on September 15. Going from the security of the landing craft to the beach was filled with terror, mortar fire, machine guns, and exploding shells all around them. The naval and air bombardment of the island defenses had not inflicted the damage intended. The Japanese were firmly entrenched in their heavily fortified defensive positions of concrete pillboxes, coral spider holes, and caves.

Marine casualties the first day were over 500, and this number rose at alarming rates day after day. Progress was exceedingly slow as the Japanese held tenaciously to every inch of the island. The 1st Marine losses mounted as they attacked and counterattacked the Japanese on the slopes of the Umurbrogol Ridge, or "Bloody Nose" Ridge as it later became known. Six days after landing on the beaches of Peleiu, Red was wounded by a Japanese grenade. Two days later, the 1st Marines were relieved by the 81st Infantry Division because there were not enough men remaining to effectively continue toward the objective. On October 1, Red and the remainder of the battered and weary 1st Marines boarded two hospital ships and set sail for Pavuvu in the Solomon Islands for much needed rest and recuperation. It was

not until November that the island was officially secure.

Red's brigade suffered a casualty rate of 56 percent, the highest regimental losses in the history of the Marines; his battalion had a 71 percent loss. Red didn't talk much about the experience, but one time he was asked how many of his outfit that had landed on Pelieu made it out. He replied that he was only one of three Marines in his outfit that came out safely. He knew that God must have been watching over him during those three years in the Pacific, particularly the six harrowing days in September. A few days after the 1st Brigade had been replaced, Colonel Puller said, "May God rest the souls of our dead and make life less bitter for our maimed and crippled. The officers and men of this regiment were splendid and never hesitated to attack, regardless of enemy opposition."

Red recovered from his wounds and, less than a year later, the war was over. First Sergeant Red Arnold volunteered to assist in discharging Marines back to civilian life. Shortly after returning to California in October 1945, Red found his own papers and started processing himself out of the service. Before this was complete, however, Red was asked to remain in Marines and apply for Officer Candidate School. While he loved the Marine Corps, however, he felt an even greater calling to return to Texas and rejoin the Highway Patrol. Aline met him in California and they returned to Texas to begin their life together again.

The Ranger Years

In 1954, after eight years of Highway Patrol service in Corsicana and Greenville, Red was promoted to the Texas Rangers. He was initially assigned to Comanche, Texas, and reported to Captain Clint Peoples at Headquarters Company in Austin.

The sheriff of Comanche County was Wayne "Red" Swindle. He and Red often worked closely together and, when seen together, were often mistaken for brothers because they both had red hair, ruddy complexions, and similar statures.

The theft of a cutting torch and acetylene drums in nearby Ranger, Texas in April 1955 caused Red and the Sheriff Swindle to consider the possibility that a bank heist in the area was being planned. A car reported stolen from Brownwood also aroused their suspicions that something was up. Red, the sheriff, and Deputy Sheriff Dale Shoemaker left in separate cars around ten o'clock at night for a sweep of several of the towns around Comanche.

After meeting back in Comanche about 3:00 a.m. the three men had a hunch to drive to a small community called Blanket to continue their nighttime surveillance. They all got in the sheriff's car and proceeded to the city limits. To avoid driving in the darkness, they parked the car near the outskirts of town and walked down the highway toward the local bank. When they got near the building, a light came on and a figure appeared at the door. Red walked out on the street where he could be seen and identified himself as a police officer. As the figure disappeared back into the bank and turned off the lights, the sheriff ran around the back to prevent an escape.

Red heard several shots, and he and the deputy quickly ran to the back of the bank. Sheriff Swindle told them that he had emptied his gun and that the suspect had jumped a fence and disappeared. Red went back into the bank and found that the man had tried to open the bank vault with the cutting torch. They had prevented the theft because the bank vault was still intact.

A manhunt was begun with additional officers, who were assisted by several bloodhounds. The stolen car was found in an alley near the bank. It was presumably to be used for the getaway. After a search of several hours, the suspect was found hiding in some underbrush on a farm outside of the town. He was arrested and brought back to Comanche where he was placed in jail.

A year later, Red transferred to Mount Pleasant. He and Jim Ray, who was stationed in Tyler, shared responsibility for the northeast corner of Texas—about twenty counties—from Texarkana to Carthage. They patrolled this huge area until Glenn Elliott joined the Ranger service in 1961 and was assigned to patrol a large part of the region.

In May 1964, a Democratic primary election for county commissioner in DeKalb, Bowie County, Texas, was being contested. Citizens of the DeKalb community had suspicions of irregularities because of the outcome of the election. A group of concerned citizens canvassed several hundred citizens of the community that had voted in the election. Their canvas revealed that in that section alone, more people claimed to have voted for the loser than was officially reported by the election judge. The Texas Rangers of Company B were called in to investigate. Red and Ranger Frank Kemp, who was stationed in Paris, Texas, began interrogating the election officials.

Based on Red and Frank's analysis of the election tally sheets as well as their interrogation of election officials and workers, the concerned citizens were able to conclude that two individuals had miscalled ballots. One of these individuals confessed his involvement in the voting irregularities to Red and Frank and said that he had purposely miscalled approximately 100 votes.

On top of that crime, the election judge admitted to a conspiracy with one of the candidates to change a large number of votes. The "declared winner" of the election and the judge had panicked when they heard rumors that the election was to be contested. They had hurried to a fishing cabin near the Bowie-Cass County line and physically marked the ballots to correspond with the called results of election night.

Justice was served. The two individuals who miscalled the ballots, the election judge, and the "declared winner" were all indicted by the Bowie County Grand Jury for election fraud, perjury, and illegal voting.

§

A simple house burglary early one morning netted a television, a radio, and a few pieces of jewelry for a certain thief as the owners of the home were at work. As the thief was leaving, he apparently stopped long enough to look into the refrigerator to see what there was to eat. His eyes spied an uncovered block of cheese, so he took it out to eat, along with a box of crackers that he also found. After getting his fill, he left the remainder of the cheese on the table and went out through the broken back door.

The burglary might have gone unsolved except that a telltale piece of evidence had been left—that unfinished block of cheese. The thief had left distinguishing teeth marks that revealed an overbite and a crooked front tooth. When Red was called in to assist in the investigation, he recognized that the evidence left in the cheese was important because the teeth marks could be linked directly to the thief.

Red was called in several weeks later to interrogate a man that had been arrested for another burglary. The man had a crooked front tooth and an overbite that was similar to the distinguishing tooth imprint found during the previous burglary. When confronted with evidence, the man admitted to Red that he had committed the earlier crime. This proves once again that your mother was right—it is important to clean your plate when you eat!

§

Two seemingly unrelated murders of service station operators in the Northeast Texas towns of Pittsburg and Hooks in December 1975 had one thing in common: Red Arnold was involved in the investigation of both slayings. During his investigation, Red learned that slugs taken from the bodies of both young men were fired from the same gun, a .38 Armerius pistol that is not commonly seen in the Northeast Texas area. However, trying to find the purchasers of that type of gun and then linking them to the murders would not be an easy task.

Red received a break, however, when he got a call from the Camp County sheriff in Pittsburg. A local resident had complained that someone had been using his shed for target practice. Slugs found at the shed by the sheriff were .38s, the same caliber as those taken at the scene of the other killing. Red took the slugs to the DPS laboratory and was able to confirm that the bullets had identical markings to those taken from the victim in the Pittsburg murder.

Red also learned that a Mount Pleasant man had recently purchased a .38 Armerius pistol from a local gun store. The Mount Pleasant chief of police was able to get this man to admit that he had an old gun that had been left at the home of another local resident. The police chief obtained the weapon from the second man's home and immediately took the gun to Red. Red, in turn, took to the firearm to the DPS lab in Dallas for ballistic tests. The tests confirmed that the pistol was used in both murders.

Red and Max Womack, a fellow Texas Ranger stationed in Atlanta, arrested the two men in their homes. During their interrogations of the men, Red and Max were able to get statements that implicated both men to the two murders. A jury found the men guilty of murder and sentenced them both to die.

Jim Ray, retired chief of Criminal Law Enforcement, once said, "Red was probably the most qualified Ranger I ever knew—a unique combination of interrogation skill, investigative technique, and courage. His interrogation skill was unsurpassed."

§

In October 1960, a massive statewide manhunt was launched for an ex-convict who had been accused of murdering another ex-con near Texarkana. It ended when the criminal was captured by the Texas Highway Patrol near Laredo in November. The ex-con was Curtis Lee Jones, and he was accused of the gangland-style killing of Doyle Jackson, a well-known police character and an ex-convict as well. Jones had been paroled from Arkansas earlier that year after serving a life sentence for murder. A relative of Jackson said, "Doyle just got in his car and disappeared." His body was found nearly two weeks later stripped of all identification, and his car was missing.

In a furtive attempt to avoid capture, Jones traveled a circuitous route from

Texas to Louisiana to California and Nevada before returning to Texas. He kidnapped and raped a woman in Fort Worth and left her boyfriend for dead. Jones then kidnapped a woman and her child in Parker County (west of Fort Worth) and drove to San Antonio before releasing them both unharmed. He kidnapped another woman in San Antonio and drove to the Mexican border where he hoped he could escape from the law, which was in hot pursuit. He released her before being captured in Laredo by the Highway Patrol just before he crossed into Mexico. Jones was one of the most dangerous and despicable men that you could find anywhere, hardened by years in the penitentiary. With Jones' capture in Laredo, Red and the Bowie County sheriff were contacted to bring Jones from the border city back to Northeast Texas for questioning.

Jones finally broke during the interrogation by Red, admitting to the murder of Doyle Jackson and the location of Jackson's abandoned car. When asked later how he obtained the confession from the hardened criminal, Red replied, "Oh, I just showed him the errors of his ways." The errors that the ex-con had made included several irrefutable facts that Red had obtained during the investigation. These included Jones' use of Jackson's identity and social security number for a three-day job in the Midland area--several days after Jackson had been found dead.

§

Not all cases involved hardened killers. One night, a kid about eighteen or nineteen years old drove west of Mount Pleasant to buy some marijuana. He had gotten directions from a friend, and not being familiar with the location for the "buy," missed the turnoff and unknowingly got on the wrong country road. Thinking that he was at the right house, he sauntered up and knocked loudly on the outside of the door—the door of the house belonging to Red Arnold! Red answered the door, and the kid asked him if he had any "weed" for sale. Red focused his steely, blue eyes on the scruffy-haired kid and told him, "Son, I am the Texas Ranger around here, and I think you are at the wrong house."

The kid stammered and hurriedly retreated to his car, not able to get away fast enough. With tires churning and gravel flying, he got his automobile onto the country road and hightailed it back to town. He probably did not make his "buy" that night because he didn't want to chance running into Red again. That was the effect that Red often had on people—they wouldn't do something illegal because they didn't want to have to deal with Red if they were later caught.

§

As many of his fellow Rangers can attest to, it's a good thing Red could take a joke, because he was good at passing them out.

The bond between brothers is quite strong, forged by common experiences, teachings, occasional scuffles, and disagreements. The bond between Rangers, particularly those assigned to the same company, is not unlike those between blood brothers. Rangers often help each other on difficult and complex cases, give each other advice and assistance when needed, and occasionally provide backup and support for each other during dangerous situations. They do this without regard to their own physical harm and are willing to give their own lives for the other if necessary. The bond between Red and his fellow Company B Rangers—Bob Mitchell, Glenn Elliott, Jim Ray, and Max Womack was this strong.

These Rangers also shared many laughs over the years, and one of those was at Red's expense. The Rangers of Company B had built a cabin on Lake of the Pines in the early 1970s. All the Rangers had a hand in its building, but Red, Glenn Elliott, Max Womack, and Bob Mitchell did much of the work. The cabin is used for official company meetings and gatherings as well as a getaway place for the Rangers and their families. One or two poker games have also been known to occur there.

On one official occasion at the cabin, Red was presented with a gift, attractively tied with a big red bow. Red unwrapped it and found a one-pound can of Spam inside.

Now, Spam was the meat staple of many meals eaten by Marines serving during World War II in the Pacific. After three years of eating it almost every day, Red now hated even the sight of it. He vowed never to eat it again, and even refused to let Aline bring it into their house.

After opening the package and without saying a word, Red quickly trounced out the backdoor down to the water's edge. With his fellow Rangers standing at the back of the cabin, laughing at their little joke, Red hurled the can of Spam into the lake as far as he could throw it.



§

Bob Arnold

Bob Arnold is a retired polymer chemist who worked at the Dow Chemical Company in Texas City, Texas, for over 35 years. He graduated from Texas Tech and also served as an officer in the United States Army. Bob began his career with Union Carbide in 1967 and has had a variety of laboratory and manufacturing assignments during his career in the chemical industry. Most recently, Bob was involved with implementing information technology systems for the Union Carbide Corporation and, after the merger of the two companies, with the Dow Chemical Company.

Bob and his wife Bejie both grew up in Mount Pleasant, Texas, and they have been married for thirty-three years. Bejie teaches at the University of Houston, Clear Lake. The Arnolds have two children: Jennifer, who is a speech pathologist at Clear Creek Independent School District; and Thomas, who is a flight


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The Stone Houses Fight November 10, 1837

by Stephen L Moore

The year 1837 was a tough one for the Texas Rangers.

Sergeant George Erath lost two men, killed in his Indian fight on Elm Creek in January. That same month, three East Texas Rangers were killed and a fourth was wounded in an Indian encounter along the Trinity River. Twice in April, the Indians managed to stampede the Rangers' horses near their frontier outposts. In May, a five-man wagon party of Captain Daniel Monroe's Ranger company was slaughtered by Indians near Post Oak Springs in present Milam County. In late May, another Ranger of Captain Tommy Barron's company was killed near Fort Milam at the falls of the Brazos River.

The hostile Indians of Texas had become more aggressive in 1837. By mid-year, President Sam Houston furloughed most of the Texas army, leaving only a small group of cavalrymen and a battalion of Texas Rangers to protect the entire Republic of Texas. In September 1836, the Rangers numbered more than 450. By early October, there were fewer than 200 employed.

Major William H. Smith, a veteran cavalryman from San Jacinto, commanded the remaining units of Texas Rangers. Captain Lee Smith's Company E, having fulfilled its enlistment requirements, was discharged on October 1, 1837, by Major Smith. Captain Micah Andrews' Company C was also effectively out of service by this date, although Andrews would continue to be paid through year's end as a Ranger captain.

Many other frontier Rangers were leaving the service individually as their service terms expired. Despite his dwindling numbers, Major Smith was motivated to organize an offensive campaign against the hostile Indians in October 1837. The mission was to retrieve horses stolen by Indians from the Colorado River settlements.

Several units of men, under the direction of Smith, rendezvoused at the previously abandoned Fort Smith on the Little River, located in present Bell County near the junction of the Leon and Lampasas Rivers with Little River. A detachment of Captain John M. Bowyer's mounted gunmen from Houston arrived at Fort Smith to join this expedition. Bowyer's Ranger detachment was commanded by First Lieutenant A. B. Vanbenthuisen and Second Lieutenant Alfred Miles. The senior officers from Major Smith's battalion were Captain William Mosby Eastland, who would take command of the men, and First Lieutenant John L. Lynch. The pension papers of Private George Green of Company D show that this expedition was referred to by some of the Rangers as the Eastland Campaign.

Various accounts give the number of Rangers participating in Captain Eastland's Campaign to be between sixty-three and sixty-eight. Expedition member George Erath said the total party comprised sixty-six men under Captain Eastland, and they "made a campaign of nearly two months time." Erath stated that the men "penetrated the Indian country between the Brazos and Colorado, further than the same number of men had done before or since." Eastland's men subsisted entirely on the game they killed, without even salt to use.

The expedition did not find any Indians by the end of the month. At this time, some sort of disagreement arose near the Colorado River on November 1 among the officers in command of the party. This conflict occurred when the expedition was near the head of Pecan Bayou, a tributary to the Colorado River. This site would be in present Callahan County, just southeast of present Abilene.

Captain Eastland and Lieutenant Lynch led the majority of their men back down Pecan Bayou for the Colorado River and, ultimately, back to Fort Colorado on Walnut Creek. In his report, First Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen simply stated that he "parted company with Captain Eastland."

Eastland's Rangers headed back for the Colorado River. Somewhere along the way, Eastland and twenty-four of his men fought a battle with what was estimated to be two hundred Indians. The site of the battle was on Ruan Bayou, and the fight continued for two hours. None of the Texans were killed. Another party of the returning Rangers from Eastland's campaign was "closely chased" but escaped without casualties. One of the small parties, of which volunteer George Erath was a member, included eight men from the Brazos. Erath wrote that he and his fellow men "succeeded in taking seven horses and mules from another party of Indians on our way homeward and arrived safely at home."

Captain Eastland's Rangers were back at Fort Houston on the Colorado by mid-November. He signed the discharge papers of Addison Litton on November 20 at this post.

While all of these small bands of Rangers succeeded in making it back to their posts without loss, the eighteen-man group under Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen was much less lucky. After parting ways with Captain Eastland, Vanbenthuisen and Second Lieutenant Alfred Miles continued on

with sixteen Rangers. Most of these men were originally from Vanbenthuisen's detachment, but his remaining party did include some of Captain Eastland's men who had decided not to end the expedition. They pursued the trail of stolen horses in an east-northeast direction toward the Brazos River until meeting a party of Cherokees on November 3 near the Forks of the Brazos. The site was likely in present Stonewall County. Vanbenthuisen wrote of his party's encounter with the Cherokees:

They were a going to the Comanche Indians with powder and lead for the purpose of exchanging it for horses and mules. This party of Cherokees was piloted by a party of seven Keechi Indians. When first discovered, one of the Keechis was [a] half mile in advance of his party. Our men surrounded him and tried to make him surrender, but he would not be friendly with us.

This Kichai raised his rifle to shoot Lieutenant Miles but was shot dead by one of the Rangers. Felix McCluskey, a wild-natured Irishman, was the Ranger credited with killing this Indian. Afterwards, he is said to have scalped the warrior and gone through his pockets. Some of the riflemen were critical of him for this harsh act. McCluskey, however, ruthlessly displayed a chunk of tobacco he had lifted from the dead Indian's pocket and swore that he "would kill any Injun for that much tobacco."

By this time, the Cherokees came up and informed Vanbenthuisen that the Keechis were acting as their guides. They also explained that Jesse Watkins, who had been appointed an Indian agent by President Houston in September, had made a partial treaty with them.

Watkins would not live long in his appointment. He and his interpreter Lewis Sanchez worked largely with the Kichai, Caddo, and Tawakoni Indians near present Dallas County. According to Sanchez, Watkins was captured by the Cherokee Indians of Chief Bowles and killed. It is possible that the very Indians Vanbenthuisen's Rangers encountered were those who killed Watkins.

"I immediately called off my men from the pursuit," wrote Vanbenthuisen, "but told the Cherokees that they could not furnish the hostile Indians with powder and lead to murder the inhabitants on the frontier."

The Indians were informed that if they attempted to go onward, the Rangers would take their goods away from them. The Cherokees promised that they would return home and apparently did so. Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen's Rangers crossed the forks of the Brazos River on November 4. They were troubled because they continued to find horseshoe tracks going in a northeasterly direction. Shod tracks indicated horses stolen from the white men, as the Indians did not shoe their horses.

By November 10, the eighteen-man Ranger party had reached a rock



formation in the hills near the headwaters of the West Fork of the Trinity River, known to the Indians as the Stone Houses. This stone formation, standing out above the surrounding scrub brush and cactus, was thought to resemble early houses or tepees from a distance. The Stone Houses formation is located about ten miles south of Windthorst on Highway 61 in present Archer County. A historical marker is located just south of the West Fork of the Trinity River.

The formation is actually 1.5 miles south of U.S. 61 down Prideaux Road, a gravel country lane.

Vanbenthuisen's report continues:

I fell in with a large body of Indians in a moving position towards the southwest. I first supposed them to be Keechis, but was afterwards informed that they were Toweash, Wacos and a few Keechis and Caddos. I got this information from the Shawnees and Delawares. I judged the Indians to be about one hundred and fifty strong. About fifty or sixty of them were armed with rifles and the balance had bows and arrows.

When they first spotted the Indians, the Texans noticed that they had a large *caballada* [*cabalgata*] of horses with them "and were accompanied by many women and children." Vanbenthuisen climbed atop the high Stone Houses rock mound "until I saw about one hundred and fifty mount their horses and come towards us." He immediately rushed down and stationed his men in a point of timber with a deep ravine for protection.

About three o'clock, the Indians made a charge upon us and completely surrounded our position. When they commenced firing from their rifles upon us, they had fired eight or ten shots before we returned their fire. There was a continual firing kept up on both sides until about half past four.

The Texans made their defensive stand in a deep ravine, and the Indians took position about seventy yards in front of the gorge. At one point, Nicholson, who understood some of the Indian language, was sent out to try and make peace talk. He climbed a tree and opened conversation with the enemy.

Reportedly, the Indians first demanded the surrender of Felix McCluskey, who had killed the Kichai Indian one week prior. When this was refused, the battle ensued. Vanbenthuisen recorded that the skirmish, later known as the Stone Houses Fight, was fought on November 10 at 33.5 degrees north latitude.

The Indians remained on horseback and fired at the Texans. The leading chief of this band rode his horse rapidly up and down the ravine in order to cause the Texans to waste their ammunition firing at him. He boldly held his shield up between him and the Rangers. One of the veteran Indian fighters among the Texan group was not fazed by this shield. He took good aim, fired, and killed the chief.

In his battle report, Vanbenthuisen stated that his men were no more than a pistol's shot apart from their enemies during this exchange. He also noted that his men had "the good fortune to kill their [the Indians'] principal chief" during this exchange.

When the chief fell from his horse, the other braves rushed forward to retrieve his body. The Texans poured a volley into their midst as the savages tied a rope around the chief's body and galloped off out of range. After depositing the body, they returned on foot in fifteen minutes and took position within sixty yards of the ravine occupied by the Rangers.

The gun battle now became intense as the Indians tried to avenge their fallen leader. The Indians had the better position in thick timber that was adorned with underbrush and tall grass. The Texans were forced to fire by

sneaking a peak over the top of the ravine to spot an Indian and then quickly shooting. Each of their shots drew a volley from the enemy.

During the fight, the Rangers would pull off their hats, place them on the end of their ramrods, and raise them above the walls of the ravine. The Indians, mistaking the empty hats for hats with heads in them, would fire at them, sometimes putting as many as half a dozen balls through one hat. The Rangers would then immediately rise, take aim, and fire at the Indians.

After an hour and a half, the firing died off about 4:30 p.m. The Indians withdrew, having suffered a number of casualties in the heated exchange. Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen's men had done surprisingly well against their numerically superior foe. They had, however, lost four Rangers and six horses killed.

Those killed had been Joseph Cooper, Alexander Bostwick, Dr. William Sanders, and William Nicholson. Dr. Sanders had enrolled in Captain James Price's Kentucky Volunteers on June 1, 1836, for six months and had subsequently joined the Ranger battalion under Major Smith. Bostwick, an atheist, had argued to his fellow soldier James Ogden Rice on several occasions that he did not believe in the existence of God. Rice had prophetically chastised the man: "I may yet see you die on this trip."

Vanbenthuisen gave praise to his men for fighting valiantly during the early gun battle:

Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon those brave men who fell. All of them received their death shots and died in a few minutes after being shot. Their cry was, "Fight on! Fight on! You can whip the Indians!" Mr. Bostwick, after being shot through the body, loaded and fired his rifle three times and had the fourth load in his gun when he expired in the act of drawing his ramrod from his rifle. Young Cooper insisted that we should help him up and let him fight after securing a death shot.

After a fifteen-minute hiatus, the Indians again advanced on the fourteen surviving Texans. The tall, dry grass and brush of the woods on three sides of them were set ablaze. A strong wind blew thick, blinding smoke over the Rangers. The Indians took defensive positions at either end of the ravine to prevent the Texans from escaping. "We discovered a smoke rising around us," wrote Vanbenthuisen. "The Indians had made a ring [of] fire completely around our position, [and] the fire was advancing rapidly." As the flames rose, Vanbenthuisen realized that the only escape for his men lay on the fourth side, an open prairie where Indian horsemen with bows and arrows were stationed.

The only option left for the hapless Rangers was to brave a charge through the rifle-armed Indians. These natives were considered preferable to those equipped with bows and arrows and able to reload quicker and discharge more shots at them. When the horses would not move through the flames, the men were forced to leave them and proceed on foot. According to veteran Ranger Oliver Buckman, the dense smoke helped hide the Texans until they made their final charge from it.

The surviving Rangers now attacked approximately fifty armed Indians and drove them ahead. Finding the ravine heavily populated with Indians on horseback, the men ultimately decided to race up the hill and across the open prairie for the thicket beyond.

Leading the charge was Private James Rice, a young man of about twenty-two years who had served in one of the early Texas Ranger companies under Captain John Jackson Tumlinson Jr. during the Texas Revolution. Rice was nearly killed when he met an Indian with a raised gun. As he sprinted, he raised his own gun, leaped to a stop, and fired a chance shot at his adversary. Good aim or pure luck was with Rice this day, for his shot hit the brave squarely and dropped him dead on his face.

While making this most desperate charge from the ring of fire, six of Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen's men were not as lucky as Rice. Lieutenant Alfred Miles, Lewis F. Sheuster, James Joslen, James Christian, Jesse Blair, and Westley Nicholson were shot and killed while trying to escape the burning field.

James Christian was one of the original enlistees into Colonel Robert Coleman's 1836 Ranger battalion, having previously served in Captain Alfred Walden's infantry company. Lieutenant Miles was a San Jacinto veteran who had been involved in the capture of Santa Anna. On Saturday, December 16, 1837, *The Telegraph and Texas Register* announced that Miles was originally from Richmond, Virginia, and that he left behind a sister and mother in Texas.

In the end, only eight of eighteen Rangers escaped the deadly Indian encounter at Stone Houses. Three of these men--John Zekel, Robert Fletcher, and Samuel Blisk--were wounded in the process. Five men escaped without bullet or arrow wounds: Vanbenthuisen, James Rice, Felix McCluskey, Oliver Buckman and John Hobson.

The survivors had broken through the Indians and commenced their retreat on foot. They had just crossed the skirt of timber when they again came in sight of the Indians. This time, the braves did not pursue the Texans but merely stood and watched. "They had enough of the fight," thought Vanbenthuisen, "for we had killed about fifty of their warriors."

Lieut. Vanbenthuisen's Stone Houses Fight: November 10, 1837

First Lieutenant: A. B. Vanbenthuisen

Second Lieutenant: Alfred H. Miles (K)

Privates:

Jesse Blair (K)

Samuel K. Blisk (W)

Alexander Bostwick (K)

Oliver Buckman

James Christian (K)

Joseph Cooper (K)

Robert Fletcher (W)

John Hobson

James Joslen (K)

Felix McCluskey

Westley Nicholson (K)

William Nicholson (K)

James O. Rice

Dr. William Sanders (K)

Lewis P. Scheuster (K)

John Zekel (W)

K = Killed by Indians.

W = Wounded in battle.

Unfortunately for the ragged survivors of the ill-fated Ranger expedition, escaping from the Indians would not end their ordeals while returning to safety. All of the men had lost their horses and their provisions in escaping the battleground. In the ten days following the Stone Houses Fight, Vanbenthuisen's men roughed it on foot through the wilderness as they cautiously followed the West Fork of the Trinity River in an east-southeasterly fashion through present Fort Worth. They had nothing to eat for the first four days until the men managed to kill some buffalo and save themselves from starvation. The wounds of the three injured Rangers were bound up and greased with buffalo tallow.

By November 20, Vanbenthuisen's men were fortunate enough to find a friendly Indian camp in present northwest Dallas. The camp was located near the junction of the West and Elm Forks of the Trinity River. Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen wrote:

We first discovered an Indian on the prairie. We followed him to his village. When we arrived there, we found the warriors drawn up to receive us in a hostile manner. They were all armed with rifles and the squaws had bows and arrows. I expected nothing else but we should have to fight them, but after a good deal of parleying they said that our little party might stay there that night. We then dressed the wounds of the men and camped in the midst of the hostile camp.

On November 21, the Rangers crossed the Trinity River at the Three Forks. That evening, they arrived at a Kickapoo village, where the Indians were friendly and treated them with "the utmost hospitality." The Kickapoos gave them food to eat, and the next morning, two of the young braves led the Texans to a trail. They were told that it would lead them to the Neches Saline near the Neches River.

Vanbenthuisen's report noted the beauty of the East Texas area:

The country on the waters of the Trinity is handsomely situated, well watered,

plenty of timber of large growth consisting of hickory, oak and cedar. The prairies abound in game of every kind: the game is chiefly bear, deer antelopes and buffalo. I have seen the prairies black with immense herds of buffalo, as far as the eye could extend. I think that this country is the garden of America, and will in time be the most valuable part of Texas.

They reached the saline in Cherokee Nation and proceeded on to Martin Lacy's trading post on the old San Antonio road. On November 27, Vanbenthuisen's men reached their first white settlement since the battle. This made seventeen days and one night that they had retreated through hostile Indian territory--on foot, without horses or blankets or provisions!

Lieutenant Vanbenthuisen left the wounded men in the white settlement, and on November 28, he started for Houston in company with Rangers Rice and McCluskey. They eventually arrived on December 8, 1837, after an absence from that town of six months.

Today, a Texas historical marker marks the site of the Stone Houses and mentions the battle these riflemen survived. It is located in Archer County on FM 61, ten miles south of Windthorst.

The Battle of Stone Houses was a tough loss in the early history of the Texas Rangers. Of the survivors, John Hobson settled in Harris County and Oliver Buckman moved near Bastrop. Vanbenthuisen never held a significant command again in Texas. James Rice continued in the frontier service and his name would become well known for commanding Rangers in a fight on the San Gabriel in 1839. Felix McCluskey, whose killing of the Indian in early November ultimately led to the attack at Stone Houses, was later killed in a drunken brawl.

Condensed from Stephen L. Moore's *Savage Frontier. Volume 1: 1835-1837. Rangers, Riflemen, and Indian Wars in Texas*. Plano, Tex: Republic of Texas Press, 2002.)

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Stephen L. Moore, a sixth-generation Texan, manages a creative department for the nation's largest direct seller of home décor products. He is a descendant of a number of Texas Rangers who served during the years of the Republic of Texas. He, his wife Cindy, and daughters Kristen and Emily make their home north of Dallas in Lantana, Texas.



A graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University, Steve was a featured author at the 2002 Texas Book Festival in Austin. Steve has written three books and will have two more published in 2003. One is Volume II of *Savage Frontier*, which will focus on the years 1838-1839. The other book is a detailed history of the San Jacinto campaign of 1836.

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Captain Sam Walker



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In the 180-year history of the Texas Rangers, there have been many shining stars, but none glowed any brighter than Samuel Hamilton Walker.

Walker's years of life were few. He was born in Prince George County, Maryland, in 1815 and was killed in Mexico on October 8, 1847. During those brief 32 years, he packed in 132 years of adventures. Wars, Indian battles, filibusters, and honors were all a part of his life. To top it off, he had one of the most famous pistols in history named after him.

Very little is known about Walker's early life. From surviving letters and reports, it appears that he was well educated. In 1832, while still a teenager, Walker ended up in Washington, DC. Four years later, in May 1836, he joined the army.

Over the next two years, he had two tours of duty in the Florida swamps fighting Chief Osceola's Seminoles. For "exceptional courage" shown in the Battle of Hacheeluski in January 1837, he was promoted to corporal. This may seem a small honor today, but in those early years of army history, it was the norm that promotions could, and usually did, take years.

Walker did his duty until he was mustered out of the Army in 1838. Single and still seeking adventure, he headed back to Florida, where he had a job waiting for him. An old Army buddy, George Gordon Meade of Gettysburg fame, had also left the service and was supervising the construction of the Alabama, Florida, and Georgia Railway. Walker remained in Florida until 1841, when he departed for Texas to become a legend.

Records indicate that Walker arrived in San Antonio in January 1842. He soon he joined the company of the man most would agree was the greatest Ranger of the pre-Civil War era, Captain John Coffee "Jack" Hays.

By 1842, the Texas Revolution was six years into history, but the wounds on

both Texas and Mexico were still bare and festering. Several Mexican invasions of Texas had occurred, most notably that by Raphael Vasquez in early March 1842. After plundering and looting San Antonio for two days, Vasquez had retreated to Mexico. Only President Sam Houston's calm hand prevented a war, but he could not alleviate the ever-growing hatred felt by both sides.

In September of the same year, not even Houston could keep a lid on the situation when the Frenchman Adrian Woll led a Mexican army into Texas and again captured San Antonio. For ten days, Woll infested the city. Houston placed Alexander Somervell at the head of the Texas Army, with two sets of orders to either (1) show restraint or (2) invade Mexico.

Sam Walker was not about to miss a fight, and he quickly signed on as a scout for Captain Jesse Billingsley. Billingsley's force joined up with Matthew "Old Paint" Caldwell, where Walker served with Jack Hays and Henry McCulloch. As Woll retreated back to Mexico, the Texans only had a few minor skirmishes with the invaders. The Rangers returned to San Antonio. For the next two months, they reorganized in what would become known as the [Alexander] Somervell Expedition. When they moved, they headed toward Mexico and peacefully reoccupied Laredo. The Texans stayed in Laredo only a short time before moving on down the Rio Grande to the town of Guerrero to resupply.

On December 18, 1842, General Somervell declared the expedition ended and ordered his 498 men back to San Antonio. One hundred eighty-nine of them refused to quit. They elected William Fisher their commander and continued with the invasion of Mexico. Jack Hays did not join them. He warned his comrades to abandon their foolish ideas, but they did not listen. Two of those who disregarded Hays' request were Sam Walker and W. A. A. "Big Foot" Wallace.

On December 23, the Texans invaded Mier, just south of the Rio Grande. They were unopposed. After demanding and receiving supplies, they returned to the north side of the border. On Christmas Day, some of Fisher's spies reported that 700 Mexican soldiers were in Mier. This was a fight worthy of the Texans. They re-crossed the river and attacked.

The Rangers were good, but even they couldn't handle the overwhelming force of this enemy. On the next day, December 26, they were forced to surrender.

Unfortunately, Sam Walker was not one of the Texans who surrendered. He had been the first Texan captured in the ill-fated expedition. The day before, he and fellow scout Patrick Lusk had been on a scouting expedition. Walker had come upon some Mexican soldiers and fired. He was attempting to crawl under a fence when a Mexican soldier grabbed him by his foot and held him tight until reinforcements arrived.

What followed would enrage Texans as nothing had since the Alamo and the Fannin Massacre during the Texas Revolution. It was the Lottery of Death. The Texans were marched to prison in Saltillo. On March 1, 1843, Santa Anna ordered all 176 prisoners lined up against a wall and shot. Fortunately, Governor Francisco Mexia refused to commit such an atrocity.

The prisoners were then ordered to San Luis Potosi. By March 25, when they arrived at Rancho Salado, another order had arrived from Santa Anna. He ordered that every tenth man must be shot. This time, there would be no

Governor Mexia to stop the murders.

Who would die? One hundred fifty-nine white beans and seventeen black beans were placed in a jar. Each man dug his hand into the jar and brought out a bean. Anyone unfortunate enough to withdraw a black bean died. Walker and Big Foot Wallace both brought out a white bean and were spared. The leader of the Texans, William Fisher, also drew a white bean. However, Santa Anna would not hear of the Texas commander being spared, and he was shot.

For months, Walker and his fellow Texans were summarily beaten and worked, in some cases to death. On July 30, 1843, Walker escaped and managed to get on a ship headed for New Orleans. He arrived there in September.

Walker didn't stay long in the Crescent City. He wanted to get back to Texas and start settling scores south of the border. He repeated his vows of vengeance so often to his friends that he earned a new nickname, "Mad" Walker.

Walker would have to wait, however, before he could start extracting his vengeance. He rejoined Jack Hays and rode for the next two years, fighting Indians. It was during this time that he started down the road that would lead to his name being associated with one of the most famous handguns ever made—the Walker Colt.

Walker almost missed making that association. During one fight, a Comanche ran a lance through him. Though critically wounded, he recovered after several months and soon rejoined the Rangers. He was again wounded, though not as seriously. In fact, he was wounded so many times that his compadres soon hung another nickname on him: "Unlucky" Walker.

While Hays and his men rode out against the Comanches, they were armed with the five-shot Paterson Colt. Until Samuel Colt invented the revolver, the Rangers were at a decided disadvantage against the Indians. Ranger weapons were single-shot. While a Ranger was reloading, a well-trained Comanche could have five or six arrows in the air toward him.

The Paterson revolver was first used in the pivotal battle of Walker's Creek [not named after Sam Walker] on June 8, 1844. Walker participated, again under Jack Hays' command. This minor battle of Texas Rangers vs. Comanches may have been nothing but a little skirmish, but it was significant because of the new weapon. After this, war the world over would never be the same again. The Paterson changed warfare: now the pendulum swung in favor of the Rangers.

Of course, "Unlucky" Walker was wounded yet again in this battle, though not seriously. After recovering, he continued fighting Indians. On March 28, 1846, his Indian fighting days were over, however, and he was discharged from the Texas Rangers.

But his days as a Texas Ranger were far from over. In 1846, the United States and Mexico again went to war. Walker rode to Rio Grande to join General Zachary Taylor's army. Taylor was impressed enough with Walker that he authorized him to raise a company of Texas Rangers to serve in the federal forces as scouts for his army.

In the following months, Samuel Walker's deeds of daring made him a

household word throughout America. The people of New Orleans were so impressed with the dashing Texas Ranger that they raised enough money to present Walker a magnificent horse named Tornado.

Walker gained his great fame doing what Texas Ranger commanders have done for 180 years—he led from the front. Sam Walker would be found where the fighting was the heaviest. His actions and those of his fellow Rangers, from the far South Texas battlefield of Palo Alto to the Mexican town of Monterrey, were so spectacular that all the Rangers covered themselves in glory. Walker himself rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. It was during the Mexican War that the rest of the world learned what Texas already knew: there were no fighting men in the world better than the Texas Rangers.

On October 2, 1846, Walker's days as an official Texas Ranger finally came to an end. The Ranger enlistments were completed and he left Mexico with Jack Hays. After arriving in San Antonio, the duo traveled to Galveston, where they were treated to a gala ball and a dinner in their honor. Shortly thereafter, they sailed for New Orleans, where their arrival "created a sensation throughout the city."

In New Orleans, the two future Texas Ranger Hall of Famers separated. Hays went to Mississippi and Walker headed for Washington, DC. Back on June 30, 1846, Walker had been appointed a captain of Mounted Riflemen in the United States Army. However, he was permitted to remain a Texas Ranger until his enlistment was completed on October 2.

With his appointment in the Army, Walker had to recruit, equip, and train his command. In pursuit of this goal, he spent the next six months in the east, raising money to buy arms and equipment for his men.

By the end of November, Walker was in New York City. Sam Colt, the bankrupt developer of the Colt Paterson revolver, heard that Walker was in the city looking to buy arms. Colt, never one to stand on principal if a dollar was to be made, contacted Walker. He found an enthusiastic potential buyer. Walker and Colt became fast friends.

But as great a revolution as the Paterson revolver was, it had many shortcomings. Chief among them were being fragile and very cumbersome to reload. Walker had several suggestions to improve Colt's pistol. However, the two men had a major problem—they didn't have a Paterson to look at. Colt had gone bankrupt, and he had not saved a single weapon. Walker had not brought a pistol with him.

Colt was anxious to adopt whatever suggestions Walker wanted. He knew that Walker's prestige with the Rangers and the Army could very well put him back in business in a big way. Colt agreed to modify his pistol with Walker's suggestions, and Walker would try and get the government to buy them. Both men kept their ends of the bargain.

What the two men brought to life was the legendary Walker Colt, the most powerful handgun in the world until the introduction of the 44-Magnum deep in the 20th century. The Walker was a magnificent piece of work. Fully loaded, the monster pistol weighed almost five pounds. Unlike the Paterson, which fired five shots, the Walker would fire six times.

Walker returned to Washington and secured an appointment with President James Polk. Hearing Walker explain the new pistol that Colt could produce,

the President and Walker went to the office of William Marcy, the Secretary of War. President Polk ordered him to purchase the weapons. Marcy passed the purchase order for 1,000 Walkers at twenty-five dollars each to Lieutenant Colonel George Talcott, the Ordnance Chief.

While Colt was producing the pistols, Walker raised his company of men, gave them some training, and departed for Mexico. He arrived at Vera Cruz, Mexico, on May 10, 1847. On June 26, the first batch of revolvers was sent to Walker at Vera Cruz. However, it took a long time for shipments to travel from the northeast United States to Vera Cruz, Mexico, and it would be months before the weapons arrived.

After a month at Vera Cruz, Walker and his men moved inland to Perote Castle. Perote Castle held no fond memories for Sam Walker. It was here that he and his comrades were imprisoned during the ill-fated Mier Expedition. It was also from here that Walker and some of his fellow prisoners had tunneled out of the prison and made their escapes.

A legend, possibly a myth, has been passed down from this era. The story goes that Walker and his fellow Mier prisoners were forced by their captives to erect a flagpole. According to the legend, Walker swore that one day a Texas flag would fly from this same pole. Other stories say it was an American flag, but since this was a Texas expedition manned by Texans, it would seem strange that Walker would vow to raise an American flag. Either way, the story continues that when Walker had planted the pole, he placed an American coin--a dime--under the flagpole's base. The first thing Walker did when he arrived at Perote was retrieve the coin.

Whether the story is true or not, Walker had no trouble remembering his vow of vengeance when he looked at his former prison. It was a vow that would have to wait, however. For the next four months, Walker and his men worked overtime keeping General Winfield Scott's supply line open, lest the American army starve. The men never went hungry.

Walker and his men operated as Texas Rangers against the Mexican guerrillas, who were working to keep the American army's supply line severed. Even though they were officially listed in the United States Army, that was as far as it went. Walker, his men, and their contemporaries always referred to themselves Texas Rangers.

Throughout these months, Walker and his men fought without the great pistol named after him. On October 4, only four days before his death, Walker finally received two of the soon legendary pistols.

General Joseph Lane was moving his command to Puebla, where Santa Anna waited with 4,000 men. Lane stopped in Perote. He conferred with Walker and decided to attack the Mexican forces. Walker and his Rangers would lead the assault. The Rangers would have it no other way. Later, many of those who knew him best said that Walker was obsessed with capturing the Mexican dictator.

Even though instructed by Lane to stay within support distance of his force about three miles from Puebla, Walker ordered his men to draw sabers and charge. Walker's men hit the Mexican Army a full forty-five minutes before Lane's main force could join the battle. But by then it really didn't matter. The enemy was beaten.

But Texas Ranger Sam Walker never knew. He was dead by the time the battle was over. His life ended as he was moving through a churchyard and a bullet snuffed out his life. There are conflicting reports as to the fatal wound. One says that he was shot through the head and another claims he was shot in the back, with the bullet passing through the left shoulder and passing above the heart. Either way, his death was immediate.

Walker's body was returned to San Antonio for burial. Twenty years later, on April 21, 1856, San Jacinto Day, his body was exhumed and reinterred in the Odd Fellow Cemetery beside another great Texas Ranger, Richard Gillespie.

At the time of his death, Walker's fame was nationwide. His passing was news in every major newspaper in America. In 1846, there was even a Broadway play, *The Campaign on the Rio Grande, or, Triumphs in Mexico*, whose main character was Sam Walker.

In 1846, the Texas legislature formed Walker County. It was named for Robert J. Walker of Mississippi, not Sam Walker. When the Civil War started, however, there was a major problem: Robert J. Walker was a Unionist. This would never do in a Confederate Texas. In 1863, the Texas legislature decreed that the name of the county "should be named to honor the memory of Captain Samuel H. Walker, of the Texas Ranger Service."

Late in his life, Walker traveled to Washington and New York City. He kept his date with destiny and Sam Colt as an officer of the United States Army. He may have been a member of the United States Army at his death, but he and his peers considered this shining star a Texas Ranger.

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Captain Bob Mitchell

Editor's Note:

Our 21st-century shining star for this issue of The Dispatch, Captain Jim Miller, is extremely proud to have been a "Mitchell's Ranger" when he was a field Ranger stationed in Georgetown. Once when Miller and I were having dinner in Houston, I made the statement that Ed Gooding, another member of Mitchell's Rangers, said that as far as he was concerned, Bob Mitchell could walk on water. Looking me straight in the eye, Miller said, "He can." Such is the respect for this Texas Ranger captain that many who served with and under him consider him a "captain's captain."



Robert Kenneth Mitchell was born in Troup, Texas, on May 17, 1934. He is the son of E. D. and Ruth Mitchell. He has two brothers, Darwin and Wayne, and a sister, Wanda. His youngest brother Jimmy passed away many years ago.

When Bob was a freshman in high school, his parents moved to Palestine, Texas. He attended nearby Elkhart High School, where he graduated in 1952. He then entered Henderson County Junior College on a football scholarship. He was a linebacker on defense and a center on offense. At the time, the United States was in the midst of the Korean War, and after one year at Henderson, Bob left college and entered the Army.

By the time Bob got to Korea, the war was over. The 8th Army had a football team, and Bob was fortunate enough to be chosen. He thoroughly enjoyed his tour playing football all over the Far East.

In 1955, Bob's tour in Korea was over, and he was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. After he returned to the states, he also married Jerry Busby of Waxahachie. A year later, 1956, Bob had satisfied his military obligation and was discharged. He and Jerry set up housekeeping in Austin, and Bob enrolled at the University of Texas. By this time, Bob and Jerry had a daughter named Carol and another one, Karen, was on the way. A few years later their son Bobby was born. Fortunately for the Texas Rangers and the people of Texas, Bob couldn't afford to go to school and also support a wife and two children on the GI Bill.

Several retired Rangers have said that they were only looking for a job when they got into law enforcement. Not Bob Mitchell. He wanted to be a lawman. On April 1, 1958, he became a member of the Department of Public Safety's Highway Patrol. When asked who had been a major influence for his desire to be a law officer, he said:

It was an old trooper stationed in Palestine named Lane Fuller. I had visited him several times and he kind of recruited me. I thought that was the neatest, keenest, job that a man could ever have, and I still feel that way. I served ten great years on the Highway Patrol and loved every day of it. [This author has never found a Texas Ranger who isn't as proud of his Highway Patrol days as he is of his Ranger days.]

Bob's only duty station as a Highway Patrolman was in New Braunfels. His only captain was N. R. Smith, a man for whom Bob has nothing but the greatest respect. Speaking of Captain Smith, Bob says:

[Captain Smith was] one of the greatest men I ever worked for. [He] was the type guy that if you did your job, you could do no wrong in his eyes. He expected you to work, but you knew you had his total support at all times. I admired him as a man and as a leader.

As with all Rangers, a whole book could be written of the Highway Patrol days, but this is a Texas Ranger magazine. On December 1, 1967, Bob Mitchell was one of the last Rangers to have the fabled Texas Ranger *cinco peso* badge pinned on him by Colonel Homer Garrison, the legendary director of the Texas Department of Public Safety and chief of the Texas Rangers. Colonel Garrison died shortly thereafter.

Bob's first day as a Ranger was quite memorable. Though his duty station would be Tyler, on the first day he reported in Dallas to the captain of Company B, Bob Crowder, the future Hall of Famer. Bob walked into the office at 7:30 a.m. Captain Crowder ordered him and veteran Ranger Ernest Daniel to go to the small community of Groveton in Trinity County and arrest the town's only doctor.

It seems that the doctor was an ex-convict from Tennessee. While in the penitentiary, he had worked in the prison hospital and picked up a little medical knowledge. When he got out of prison, the first thing he did was burglarize a doctor's office, steal all his credentials, and hit the road. He was passing through Groveton one day and happened to be in the local drugstore when someone brought in a child who had a bad cut on his back. The would-be physician told them he was a doctor and could stitch the cut. Several of the people in the drugstore began talking to him and expressed how much they needed a doctor in the area. He agreed to stay and open a practice. Ironically, he once treated one of Captain Mitchell's uncles, who had severely cut his hand in a farming accident.

Arriving in Groveton, the county seat, Bob and Ernest went to the sheriff's office and said they had a warrant for the doctor. "Oh no," said the sheriff. "We just had a town meeting this morning. We are so proud of him, we voted to build him a new clinic." He then proceeded to relate to Bob and Ernest the "miracle" healings the doctor had done and how he would sit up all night with the really sick in their homes.

To say that the doctor was beloved by the people in the area would be an understatement. Not only did he have a large practice, but he had also met and married a local woman and built a fine home. The sheriff added, "If ya'll go over there and arrest that man, as much as the people like him, you're going to have to shoot your way out of town." Fortunately, the sheriff overstated his opinion.

When the Rangers arrived at the doctor's office, it was full. The doctor was seeing a patient when they walked in. They called the doctor by his real name,

arrested him, walked him across the street to the courthouse, arraigned him, and carried him back to Kaufman County, just outside Dallas.

Welcome to the Texas Rangers

This was just the start of one of the greatest careers in the history of this glorious organization. In the early 1970s, the president of Tyler Pipe approached Bob about a serious problem they were having at his plant. He suspected that the facility was being shorted on the scrap metal they were buying.

Tyler Pipe was purchasing its scrap from a company near Fort Worth and, naturally, the people there became the number-one suspects. Bob set up surveillance on trucks entering and leaving the plant.

He found it strange that several of the drivers would gather near the truck scales about four o'clock in the morning even though they couldn't check in for several hours. It didn't take him but a short time to figure out their scheme. When the trucks pulled onto the scales, one man who knew how to manipulate the weights would be sent into the hole below the scale ramp. He would double or more the weigh tickets. When the last truck finished, he would move a manhole cover and climb into a secret compartment that was rigged under the trailer of the last truck to leave.

Getting paid two and three times for the scrap they actually sold, it's easy to see why the president of Tyler Pipe said, "It's going to break this company if we don't get something done about it." Under Bob's leadership, something was done. With the assistance of fellow Rangers Red Arnold, Glenn Elliott, Lester Robertson, and Max Womack, a dozen of the thieves were arrested. It turned out the criminals had been doing the same thing at foundries in San Angelo, Texas, and Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, Alabama. They'd hit one company and then move on to another.

Bob Mitchell and Glenn Elliott did the major investigations of the deadly Lone Star Steel Strike in 1968 and 1969. Little could Bob imagine what lay ahead of him when he got the call from Captain Bob Crowder one morning. "There's going to be a little ole strike at Lone Star Steel in the morning. Get you some clothes so you can stay up there three or four days. Go up there and meet Red Arnold in the morning." Bob and Glenn checked into a motel in nearby Daingerfield. Instead of staying for three or four days, it was seven months and three days before they checked out of that motel.

A Dallas newspaper article described it best: "A Strike Gone Mad." During those months, Bob and Glenn investigated bombings, beating, threats, shootings, and the murder of Smitty Blackburn. This was one of the most disappointing cases Bob ever worked. Bob describes the case:

Smitty Blackburn was a good, little ole hard-working country family man that needed to work to feed his family. He had built a new home, and he had house payments and a new baby. He simply couldn't afford to go on strike, and he continued to work. His house was shot into at least once; [if] I recall, and I believe I'm right, three or four times. But I recall one incident because a high-powered rifle [bullet] had gone into the window, across the baby's crib, and through the wall. And then just a few nights later, Blackburn was shot and killed as he drove to work on a back road not far from the plant. Very frustrating. Glenn and I put hundreds of hours into it, [but] didn't solve it.

Captain Mitchell's stories as a Ranger could fill more than one book. During his years as a field Ranger, he worked every case imaginable. His days in the field were numbered, however. In 1971, he promoted to sergeant and was stationed in Austin. He stayed there for three years. On September 1, 1974, he promoted again, this time to the captaincy of Company "F" in Waco.

Like his days as a field Ranger, his career as the captain of Company "F" could also fill a book. Not having the space to list all his accomplishments as a captain, the best way to describe those years is to mention the men he trained who became captains themselves. The list is long: (alphabetically) N. W. "Dub" Clark, Ray Coffman, Jack Dean, Jim Miller, Charlie Moore, Bob Prince, Wallace Spillar, Joe Wilie, and James Wright.

As with all things, Bob Mitchell's career came to an end. On June 30, 1992, the captain's captain retired.

However, after a career that would have been the envy of almost any Ranger, Bob was called back to duty in 2000. The Sheriff of McLennan County (Waco) had died and there was only one man to fill the office until the upcoming election—Bob Mitchell. To no one's surprise, he more than answered the call.

Captain Mitchell is extremely proud of the Texas Rangers and his years with the elite organization. He is just as confident of where they are going:

I've never known a Ranger that wasn't proud of our history and heritage. But I'm firmly convinced that the Rangers are making history today, just like they did 180 years ago. I'm extremely proud of the sharp, young Rangers we have today. I think they're the best-trained, best-equipped Rangers in our history.

Texas Ranger

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by Robert Nieman

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Captain Jim Miller

The new captain of Company "C" in Lubbock is truly a credit to the Texas Rangers. Captain James Miller-- Jim to his friends --was born September 7, 1952, in Beaumont, Texas. He is the only child of Bill and the late Mary Miller.

While Jim was still a youngster, his family moved to Woodville. After graduating from the local Kirby High School in 1971, Jim attended Sam Houston State University in Huntsville. In December 1974, he received his bachelor of science degree in criminology.

It was at Sam Houston State that Jim developed an interest in criminal investigative work. Prior to graduation, he sought employment information from state police agencies in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. He made applications in Oregon and Washington and flew there to complete testing and personal interview processes. Both of those states were wise enough to accept a man that they believed would be a good officer.

However, there was a problem. Neither Oregon nor Washington had a school that started before the autumn of 1975. Jim was graduating in December 1974, and he couldn't wait that long for a job. Texas, however, had a school beginning in February 1975, so Jim applied for employment with the Department of Public Safety there. Thankfully, those in charge were as wise as their counterparts in Oregon and Washington: the DPS accepted his application. For eighteen weeks, Jim Miller attended school number A-75 at the DPS Training Academy in Austin.

In June 1975, Jim was assigned to the Driver's License Service in Houston, where he stayed until January 1977. He then transferred to the Highway Patrol and was stationed twenty-five miles north of Houston in Cleveland. In December 1978, the opportunity arose to transfer to his hometown of Woodville, and Jim took it.

On April 16, 1977, Jim married Cindy Fertitta. He describes their relationship:

She has truly been a blessing in my life. For many years while our children were young, Cindy stayed home to care for them. As the children began school, Cindy obtained a job as a teacher's aide so she could keep the same hours as the kids. While we were in Georgetown, Cindy went back to college and attended the University of Mary Hardin Baylor in Belton, Texas. She did all this while working full-time and caring for her family. In 1997, Cindy graduated from UMHB with a teaching degree. At the age of 40, I watched her walk across the stage to receive her diploma. She was proud, and so were Stacey, Micah [their son and daughter], and myself. Cindy currently teaches fifth-grade science and math at Lowery Elementary School in the Cy-Fair School District in Houston.

Only one thing would ever entice Jim to leave Woodville again—the Texas Rangers. He later said that if he had not become a Ranger, “I’d still be a happy Highway Patrolman in Woodville, Texas.” All the time Jim was in the Highway Patrol, his interest in investigative work never waned. At the time, the DPS had four investigative services: the Rangers, Motor Vehicle Theft, Narcotics, and Criminal Intelligence. There was no doubt which he wanted—the Texas Rangers. In 1986, he made application to join this elite group, and the Texas Rangers got what would soon be one their brightest stars.

On January 1, 1987, Jim took his new duty station in Georgetown, with the counties of Bastrop, Caldwell, Lee, and Williamson as his assigned areas. He would remain there until he promoted to lieutenant ten years later.

During those ten years in Georgetown, Jim says he was fortunate to have worked for Bob Mitchell, Bob Prince (see *The Meridian Hostage Crisis* in this issue), Joe Willie, and Kirby Dendy. Jim says, “I could not have had better leadership.” It is this guidance that he is still putting to good use today.

While working as a field Ranger in Georgetown, Jim worked numerous cases. Unfortunately, space only allows to briefly overview three of them.

In the Line of Duty - Texas Ranger Stan Guffey

On January 22, 1987, three weeks after becoming a Ranger, Jim was involved in a Ranger's worst nightmare—the death of a fellow Ranger.



Captain Mitchell had sent Jim to Marble Falls to assist in a kidnapping case being conducted by Rangers Johnny Waldrip, Johnny Aycock, and Stan Guffey. Kara Lee Whitehead, two years old, had been kidnapped by a man named Brent Beeler, who demanded a ransom of \$30,000 and a getaway car.

An exchange was arranged. The getaway car used was a Lincoln Town Car that belonged to the local district attorney. Unknown to Beeler, Rangers Aycock and Guffey were hiding under a blanket where the backseat had been removed. After Beeler received the briefcase with the money, he took the little girl and went to the Town Car. Beeler opened the

front door, put the child inside, and tossed the case into the backseat.

Just before getting into the car himself, Beeler spotted the Rangers. Guffey identified himself. Beeler whirled and fired his 44-Magnum through the back side window. His shot hit Ranger Guffey in the head and killed him, but not before the Ranger got off a shot. Unfortunately, it was ineffective. Ranger Aycock had also come up firing. While he was returning Beeler's fire, he reached over the front seat and lifted the little girl up and over the seat to a position of safety behind his own body. When he stopped firing, the kidnapper was dead.

For a new Ranger, Jim Miller learned several things: a Ranger's work is serious and dangerous; a day is not done until the job is complete; and, most importantly, life is precious.

For their heroic efforts that day, Rangers Stan Guffey and Johnny Aycock were awarded the Medal of Valor, the highest honor Texas can bestow. Since the Texas Rangers became part of the newly formed Department of Public Safety in 1935, only five Rangers have been awarded this high honor.

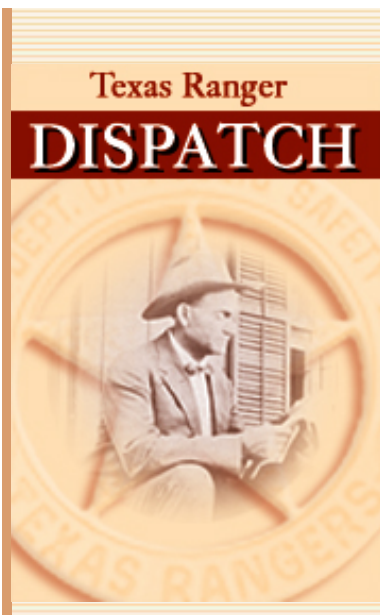
Walburg State Bank Theft

In May 1991, the Walburg State Bank in Georgetown was swindled by a former Williamson County deputy constable, used car salesman, and part-time preacher. This man had obtained a line of credit from the bank to purchase vehicles at one of the automobile auctions around the area. After securing the high bids, he paid for the vehicles with bank drafts charged against his line of credit. He then furnished the bank with the original titles to the vehicles as collateral and forged signatures on the necessary papers in order to be able to illegally obtain duplicate titles. To increase the value of the vehicles, he rolled back the odometers. He had buyers waiting in Las Vegas, Nevada. All that the bank had to show for the money they had advanced for the purchases was a handful of original titles. With help from Nevada authorities, Jim was able to gather enough evidence to secure a guilty plea to the Walburg State Bank theft from the former deputy constable, used-car salesman, and part-time preacher.

The Branch Davidian Investigation

In 1993, Jim Miller and approximately thirty other Rangers participated in the Branch Davidian investigation in Waco. The Rangers were responsible for the capital murder investigation of the four ATF Agents killed during the initial raid on the Branch Davidian compound. Jim was assigned the tasks of writing the overall report and receiving custody of the thousands of pieces of evidentiary items seized. Joined by Rangers Ray Coffman, George Turner, and Ronnie Griffith, Jim drove a truck containing approximately 24,000 pounds of evidence to the FBI laboratory in Washington D.C. to be examined and evaluated. At that time, no local, state, or federal agency had undertaken an investigation of that magnitude. A difficult job was successfully completed due to the dedication of Rangers, individuals, and local, state, and federal law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies.

Our twentieth-century shining star in this issue, Captain Bob Mitchell, remembered the day Jim and his wife stopped by his office in Waco. Jim was still a Highway Patrolman, but he told Mitchell that he wanted to be a Ranger and would happily accept assignment anywhere in the state. Mitchell told him that he told everyone who wanted to be a Ranger: "Work hard and hang in there."



Jim followed Captain Mitchell's advice. When the time was right, he applied for the Rangers and was accepted on January 1, 1987. Bob Mitchell had an opening in Georgetown, and he had first choice of the newly accepted candidates to fill that vacancy. One of Captain Mitchell's best traits as a leader is his ability to judge men. He said, "There was no question who I wanted—I wanted Jim Miller." Obviously, Captain Mitchell's instincts once again served him well.

On May 1, 1997, Jim promoted to lieutenant of Company "A" and once again found himself stationed in Houston. On September 1, 2002, he promoted again, this time as the captain of Company "C" in Lubbock.

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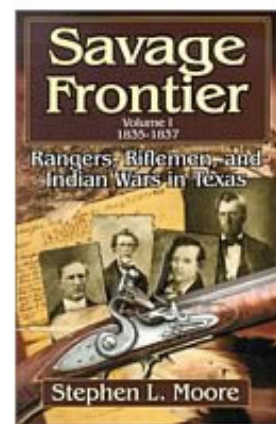

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Book Review:

Savage Frontier: Rangers, Riflemen and Indian Wars in Texas

Republic of Texas Press. 2320 Los Rios Blvd., Plano, Texas 75074. Telephone: 972-423-0090. xvi + 336 pages. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Soft cover only. ISBN 1-55622-928-3. 36 illustrations and maps. \$19.95.

Today, it is difficult to conceive just how savage the Texas frontier was in the early days before the Alamo, the Civil War, and to a lesser degree, the 1880s. In *Savage Frontier*, Stephen L. Moore thoroughly discusses that brutal time during the 1835-37 period, when hardy pioneers had both Indians and Mexicans to fear and fight.

The conflicts began as early as 1821, when a party of white settlers clashed with some Karankawas along the coast. The discord steadily increased as settlers continued to pour in. Austin's "Old Three Hundred" established colonies on land along the Brazos and the Colorado Rivers. To provide some protection, John J. Tumlinson and Robert Kuykendall wrote to Governor Jose Trespalacios and asked permission to raise fifteen men to build blockhouses and small boats to fight on land and sea. Moses Morrison raised a nine-man Ranger unit, which is considered the origin of the Texas Rangers.

The Ranger unit and other small squads of men patrolled the frontier, protecting homes from all threats, pursuing raiders to recover stolen goods, and punishing wrongdoers. Moore's study describes dozens of deadly exchanges between Texans, Indians, and Mexicans: the battle on the Rio Blanco in April 1835, Coleman's attack on the Tawakonis in July 1835, the Bexar siege of December 1835, the Alamo, the Runaway Scrape, and the Battle of San Jacinto, to name but a few examples.

There were many battles and skirmishes that are nearly forgotten today,

including the May 1837 Post Oak Springs Ranger massacre and the McLean-Sheridan-Barnes slayings of May 1837. Moore has researched all available documents and provided new information about these engagements.

Along with the details of these many encounters, Moore provides rosters that have not been published before. Some reprint names from forgotten documents, and others are created from using numerous primary sources such as the memoirs of Noah Smithwick and the audited military claims of the Republic of Texas. From these sources, which are not readily available, important information has been gleaned which clarifies our state's history.

Moore maintains his focus throughout, guiding the reader through the maze of administrative problems of a fledging nation in almost constant conflict. Extensive primary records and accounts document the organization of early Ranger units. It is a must read for all who appreciate the struggles of early Texas.



- Chuck Parsons

Stephen L. Moore, a sixth-generation Texan, manages a creative department for the nation's largest direct seller of home décor products. He is a descendant of a number of Texas Rangers who served during the years of the Republic of Texas. He, his wife Cindy, and daughters Kristen and Emily make their home north of Dallas in Lantana, Texas.

A graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University, Steve was a featured author at the 2002 Texas Book Festival in Austin. Steve has written three books and will have two more published in 2003. One is Volume II of *Savage Frontier*, which will focus on the years 1838-1839. The other book is a detailed history of the San Jacinto campaign of 1836.

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Guns of the Texas Rangers: Colt's Single Action Army

by David Stroud

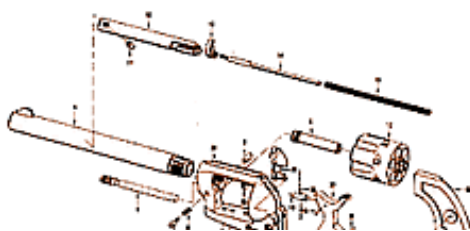


Horace Smith and Daniel Wesson created their first partnership in 1852 for the sole purpose of manufacturing the Frame Volcanics. After a production of 1,000 pistols, they sold their company to Volcanic Repeating Arms Company in mid-1855. They formed a second partnership a year later to develop a self-contained metallic-cartridge handgun. Their efforts not only produced the first of many weapons with the famed Smith & Wesson name but also the small .22 caliber known simply as S & W Model 1 First Issue Revolver, which quickly revolutionized the firearms industry.

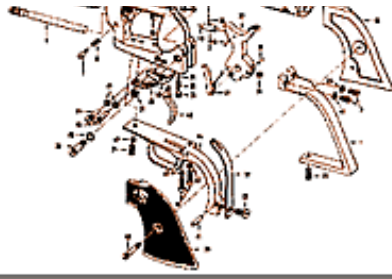
Colt Firearms was forced to wait until the S & W patent expired before they could offer their firearms in larger caliber. Once cleared, they converted weapons designed as “cap and ball” revolvers to fire cartridges. These unique Colts are known to collectors as “conversions,” and they were produced in comparably small numbers. There were 72,000 of nine models made over a short period of time compared to the 1860 Army (250,500), the 1851 Navy (215,348), and the 1849 Pocket (325,000).

Colt's initial non-converted handgun (Model 1871-1872 Open Top) appears to be a conversion, but it was actually Colt's first revolver specifically manufactured to fire a cartridge. There were 7,000 produced. Regardless of the fascination conversions possess, they pale in historical comparison to the New Model Army Metallic Cartridge Revolving Pistol, or Model P, introduced in 1873.

The Colt factory had begun work on the Single 100 rounds. The only difficulty was having one defective cartridge fail to fire. Major J. B. Benton laid the weapon in the snow, poured water over it, and left it for three days and nights. When officers retrieved the Colt, they found it had rusted considerably “but worked perfectly” as they shot another 200 rounds. Only two cartridges failed to fire. The weapon was tested for accuracy by firing ten shots at a target at fifty yards distance. The Colt's mean absolute deviation was only 3.11 inches. Although the board tested a Smith & Wesson, as well as other revolvers, Colt's new revolver outperformed the others so well that the Army ordered 8,000 of them for its cavalry the following year.



The sturdy handgun was a single action (the hammer had to be pulled back and cocked before it could be fired), and this movement produced four distinctive clicks that, the legend



manufactured.

goes, spelled C-O-L-T. It was a six-shot, .45-caliber revolver with a 7 ½-inch barrel and a pinched frame (constriction of the top strap to form the rear sight). On serial numbers 1-24,000, *COLT'S PT.F.A. MFG. CO. HARTFORD, CT. U.S.A.* was engraved in italics and slanted on the first 100

The grips were one-piece walnut, and the 1871 and 1872 patent dates appeared in two lines on the left front of the case-hardened frame through the first 34,000. After that, the two dates were put on a single line with the 1875 date added on line below. The rampant colt trademark was stamped next to these dates at the beginning of the 130,000 serial number range and was continued with only slight variation.

Contrary to popular belief, neither the cartridge nor Colt's new single-revolver action caused an immediate switch from cap-and-ball firearms. It took nearly two years for Colt to complete the Army contract and offer the new gun to the public. Men familiar with cap-and-ball weapons were reluctant to place their lives in the unproven capability of a cartridge. However, as more of Colt's single actions were made available, the guns quickly earned the confidence of those who depended on a reliable weapon, and the .45 caliber "Peacemaker" was on its way to becoming the most famous sidearm of the American West.

In 1874, Colt offered its new revolver to the public. No changes were made until 1875, when it was offered with a 7 ½-inch or 5 ½-inch barrel as well the Single Action Colt Frontier Six-Shooter in .44/.40. Colt continued to meet public demands and, in 1875, offered a 5 ½-inch barrel for the first time. Eventually, there were thirty different calibers to choose from.

The Colt Factory offered another variety of their fast-selling Single Action Revolver in 1882 with the Sheriff's or Storekeeper's Model. This weapon came without an ejector in various calibers and barrel lengths from 2 ½ to 7 ½ inches. Six years later, the Flattop Target model came in calibers from .22 to .476 Eley. In 1894, the Bisley Single Action Army and the Flattop Target were introduced to the public in calibers similar to the Flattop. Its most common barrel lengths were 4 ¾, 5 ½, and 7 ½.

During 1893, along with different models, Colt also changed from one-piece wood grips to two-piece hard rubber ones with the Colt logo, an eagle, and shield. The hard-rubber eagle grips were discontinued during 1896 and replaced with two-piece hard-rubber grips with a rampant colt within an oval circle. As always, plain or carved ivory grips were available as well as nickel-plated finishing or hand engraving.



The Colt Single Action was the handgun of the Old West, and Texas Rangers, soldiers, sheriffs, civilians, and outlaws turned the workhorse into an American legend. Over the years, the revolver was given nicknames such



as "Equalizer," "thumb-buster," "plow handle," "hog-leg," and "Peacemaker." Longer slogans were offered when an admirer had more time to speak, and many an ear listened as an old-timer repeated, "Fear no man regardless of his size . . . pull me, and I will equalize," or "Judge Colt and his jury of six."



The term "Peacemaker" was first used by Captain Samuel Walker to address Sam Colt in an 1847 letter from Mexico. Although the "Peacemaker" model was a Single Action in .45 caliber only, many have used the term for all Colt Single Actions Revolvers.

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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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In Their Own Words: Beady Eyes by Capt. John Wood, Ret.

Editor's Note: *Captain John Wood had a long and very distinguished career as a Texas Ranger in mainly South and West Texas. Not surprisingly, he had more than one humorous incident occur during dangerous situations. The one described below is just an example.*

Part of the following story originally appeared in Captain Wood's book, Texas Ranger In the Oil Patch, and is reprinted here with his permission.

The Permian Basin is one of the largest oil fields in the United States, and Midland sits right in the middle of it. Naturally, oil-field theft (and is) a major problem. At the time of this story, Captain John Wood was stationed in Midland as a Texas Ranger sergeant with Company "E".

John received information from one of his informants that two thieves were going to steal a load of drill pipe in broad daylight. The way the criminals figured it, no one would think anything about a load of drill pipe moving during the daytime.

John carried keys to all the gates of every oil site in his ten-county area. Just before daylight, he drove near the site where he suspected the theft would take place. Parking his car in the cover of mesquite trees, he started walking.

I got down on my stomach and commenced crawling through the brush real careful so as not to let the thieves see me if they were already close to the pipe. I began to get real nervous 'cause once before, when I had been out at that location, I'd killed a big rattlesnake. I carried a very sharp hunting knife on my belt behind my pistol, and I decided to keep the knife in my hand. Maybe I could kill any rattlesnake I come up on before he could bite me.

About this time, I raised my head up over a clump of dead grass and was hoping that I could see if the thieves had arrived yet. As I raised up a little, I was looking at a pretty black tail with white stripes on it, a sharp pointy nose, and two little beady eyes looking at me over the left shoulder of the biggest skunk I thought I had ever seen.

It didn't take but a split second for me to realize I was in for trouble. As I ducked, the pretty tail went up, and I got sprayed with the most foulest perfume I had ever smelt. If I hadn't ducked when I did, I would have got a real good face full of the horrible perfume. As it was, the awful stuff hit me on top of the head and down my back.



That was all of hunting thieves for me that day. I jumped up and headed for the car as fast as I could, but when I got to the car, I didn't smell any better. I guess that kind of perfume smells louder with age.



I got to the car and opened the trunk and took off all my clothes, except my underpinnings and boots, and put the clothes in the car and slammed the trunk lid down. Just then, I remembered that I had put my car keys back in my pocket, and now I stood there nearly naked with my keys locked in the trunk.

I looked through the window at the ignition and saw my extra keys in there. I felt pretty relieved about that time and started to open the car door. I found that I had locked all doors on the car, as was my habit. Talk about trouble and smell, I was the world's worst.

'Bout that time, I looked up and saw a couple of scrawny old buzzards circling over my head. Didn't bother me. I figured I stunk so bad even buzzards wouldn't have wanted me.



I worked on all the door windows and finally got one to lower a little bit -- down far enough for me to reach my long skinny arm in to unlock the door. 'Course, being out as much as I was, I always carried a change of clothes with me in the car. But I wasn't about to ruin clean clothes and have 'em smell as bad as the ones I threw in the trunk.

I started to drive off. I saw the thieves driving up, and they waved at me and then went on down the road. Guess they didn't want to get arrested that day by a nearly naked Texas Ranger who smelled to high heaven.

I called our radio station and told them to notify my office that I was on a stakeout and wouldn't be in till after dark. I couldn't go home, and the way I smelled, I couldn't stand to be in the car with myself. So I got out and found some sand and kept rubbing it through my hair and on my neck and any place I could reach, and finally got some of the foul perfume off me.

As soon as I thought it was dark enough, I drove home, jumped in the stock tank [pond], and took a bath as best I could with buttermilk and canned tomato juice and ever other home remedy for skunk spray I could think of.

I didn't have much hide left on me, and my hair was some thinner than it was early that morning--and probably grayer. I burned my clothes in a barrel behind the house. About midnight, I smelled a little better, but some things just seem to leave a lasting impression.

The next morning, my secretary asked if I had any luck the day before, and I told her, "Yes, bad luck." I never told a living soul about this incident nor the lost day's work till just now.

I still believe it would have been easier to have skinned a live rattlesnake than to come face-to-face with that skunk looking over its left shoulder at me in the oil patch.

For more of Captain Wood's stories, go to the museum's online gift shop to purchase his book, *Texas Ranger In the Oil Patch*.


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"Go When You Get Ready"

by Sgt. Lee Young, Texas Rangers

There have been many interesting stories told about Captain Manuel Trazazas "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas. A favorite of mine is a story I heard in 1988 from Bob Ross in Brownwood, Texas. Bob told me he had known Captain Gonzauillas, and that the captain had once told him this story.

Gonzauillas was working in the Kilgore area when he received information that a character he had an arrest warrant for was in a nearby saloon. Not wasting any time, he went in search of the wanted man. Entering the saloon, he saw the suspect standing at the bar.

Gonzauillas walked up to the bar and established eye contact with the fugitive. He quietly informed the man that he was there to take him into custody. In the back of his mind, he suspected that the man had no intention of surrendering peaceably.

Gonzauillas almost always carried two 1911 Colt .45s, one on each hip, resting comfortably in their holsters. He lifted one of the big .45s, placed the pistol on the bar, and slid it in front of the criminal.

Gonzauillas told the wannabe guy, "I've got the other one here (indicating the other .45 still in its holster). You can go for that one (on the bar) when you get ready."

The bad man hesitated and stared at the pistol in front of him. He then slowly shifted his stare to Gonzauillas. He wisely decided not to take up a gunfight with the Ranger and surrendered without incident.

Ross concluded the story by saying that Gonzauillas told him "it was a damn good thing he didn't made a play for that Colt .45. I unloaded it before I walked into the bar!"

§



Sgt. Lee Young grew up in the Brackettville-Del Rio area. Descending from Black Seminole Indians, he is a great grandson of Black Seminole Chief John Kibbetts and Seminole Indian Scout Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant John Ward.



Lee was a Park Ranger in the Amistad National Recreation Area, Del Rio, Texas, in 1971- 1973. He joined the Texas Department of Public Safety in 1973, where his first duty assignment was as a Highway Patrol Trooper. He then served in the Criminal Intelligence Service as an investigator and promoted to Texas Ranger in September 1988.

Lee is married to Mary Sanchez of Brackettville, Texas. He is the father of 16-year-old daughter Kristen Marie Young and 23-year-old son Anthony Lee Young.

(For more extensive biographical information on Lee Young, go to the article, "One-Armed Miller," in the Fall 2002 issue of *The Dispatch*.)

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