



The

Issue 12, Winter 2003

# Texas Ranger Dispatch™

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## Issue 12, Winter 2003



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*Lt. Robert Favor, Ret.*

*Part 2 of 3:*

*The Capture of David Myers  
Lieutenant Robert Favor  
Texas Rangers, Retired*

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Lt. Robert Favor spent many years chasing David Myers, a criminal who continuously escaped from prisons and evaded authorities. In 1973, Myers was once again captured. He pled guilty to a charge of burglary and was given an eight-year sentence in the state penitentiary. His pregnant wife, Sandra, found the court to be more lenient with her: she was given a two-year probated term. Sheriff Luke Vogel and Ranger Favor transported Myers to Huntsville to start serving his sentence.

After observing the manner in which the guards at the maximum-security Ellis Farm in Huntsville operated the towers at night, Myers became well acquainted with their procedures. He also discovered that on the same night each week, one guard tower was unattended. It was on this night that he would make his escape.



David Myers

After the guard made the bed check on August 27, 1973, the nearly impossible happened: Myers managed to escape. He made a dummy for his bed out of a blanket; he had already blackened his underwear with shoe polish. The underwear was the only article of clothing he would wear in his escape.

Myers had manufactured three keys from plastic (he never revealed how he obtained the key patterns), and he let himself out of his cell with one of them. Suddenly he found himself in the prison yard. The only thing between him and freedom was a double chain-link fence. The two rows of fence were ten feet tall and ten feet apart. Barbed wire was on top.

Myers approached the first fence, climbed slowly to the top, twisted through the roll of barbed wire, and let himself to the ground. He repeated the ordeal at the second fence. As he told me later, he expected to be shot dead the whole time and then be hung up in the fence.

Myers ran to the officers' housing area and stole a small bicycle, which he carried nearly a mile to the highway. He wanted the dogs to follow him to the road until he got on the bicycle. The animals would lose his scent, and this would lead the prison personnel to think he had been picked up. Once on the pavement, Myers rode the bicycle to Huntsville, some eleven miles away.

Several times, Myers lay down in the grassy ditch to allow traffic to pass. As he approached a trailer park on the edge of Huntsville, he discovered a 1973 Chevrolet pickup with the keys inside. It belonged to Jimmy Oliver.

Myers took the car and drove to his cousin's house in Houston. Sandra had visited Myers in prison the previous day, so he knew she would still be there. I'm sure she was expecting him.

Myers and Sandra immediately drove to McCulloch County (Brady). On the morning of August 29, the Brady Butane Company reported a burglary. Numerous camping items had been stolen. Also missing was Smokey, the German shepherd guard dog that had been on a wire run at the rear of the store.

Myers told me later that he had walked up on the dog as he was approaching the store from the rear. After he and the animal both got over their initial fright, Myers determined the length of the dog's chain, distracted the animal with one hand, and caught him by the neck with the other. He threw the dog to the ground and lay on him for a while. He told me that while he was holding the dog down, he whispered in his ear. I asked him what he said, and he replied,

"Dog, from now on, I'm the boss." Myers then unhooked the animal from the run and took him inside. He kept the dog for several days.

This was the third time Myers had burglarized Brady Butane, including the instance in 1968 when he made his first trip to prison. He certainly did not use much imagination when he kept breaking into the same place. But, for that matter, Mr. Gene Williams didn't use much imagination either. Myers had found the safe combination on the wall next to the safe in 1968, and it was still there for his benefit this time.

Once again, Myers wasted little time in becoming a nightly nuisance to the area business places. The very next night, he broke into the Colonial Grocery Store in Brady and stole a large amount of groceries and dog food—and the safe. An electric drill stolen the night before the butane company was found at the scene.

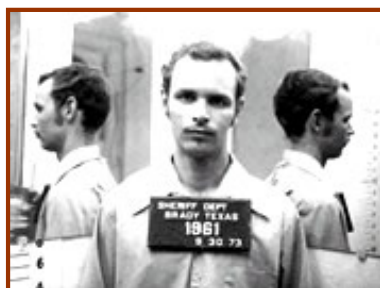
Myers discarded the safe without opening it. However, he had a habit of listening to KNEL, the local radio station in Brady. Bill Strickland, who was the

chief of police at this time, gave a summary of Myers' activity each morning at 10:00. This was how Myers learned that the safe contained some \$1,100. He also learned that the dog he had stolen was named Smokey. Myers recovered the safe and took it to a friend of his in Houston who owned a machine shop. There they used a power hacksaw to cut it open and get the money.

It was about this time that a warrant was issued for Sandra on a revocation of probation, primarily due to her having stopped reporting to her probation officer. Burglary charges would come later. On the night of August 31, Myers revisited Golden Motors in San Saba and stole a 1972 Ford Torino. The pickup he had stolen in Huntsville was recovered a block away. The Torino was recovered in Houston the next day. Inside was the Colonial safe, cut in half. Naturally, the money was gone.

With \$1,100 in his pocket, Myers saw fit to give us a reprieve until September 4, 1973. On that night, Campbell Motors would be the business to have the honor of a visit from Myers. After getting inside the auto dealership, Myers had to move several cars around in order to get the auto of his choice: a new, red and white, Pontiac Grand Prix. Certain evidence found at this break-in tied it to Myers. After investigating so many of his burglaries, it didn't take long to tell whether or not it was one of his jobs.

About the time we were investigating this burglary, Jess Askey, a Highway Patrolman from San Saba, located a disabled 1968 Chevrolet station wagon abandoned in the open-range country south of Richland Springs. By checking the vehicle identification number, we learned that this vehicle should have a license tag with the number RWK-307. It was registered to Robert L. Regian, of Houston. Regian was a first cousin to Myers.



Robert Regian

We also located an old truck parked near Campbell Motors that had been stolen during the night in Richland Springs. We assumed at this point that Myers had acquired a new member to his group.

When J.R.B. Grocery Store manager Joe Elliot opened for business on the morning of September 6, he discovered that someone had broken in during the night. The thieves had beaten on the safe but were unsuccessful in opening it. However, they had found the store's receipts in the office—Mr. Elliott had forgotten to put them in the vault. The burglars took \$7,056.16, of which \$2,443.88 was cash. They also grabbed groceries and dog food. Indications were that three people had been in the store. From the various pieces of evidence, we assumed it was Myers and company who were responsible for this burglary.

As it happened, the burglars had barely escaped getting caught. On that particular night, there were several additional officers in Brady, including Wallace Spillar, a Ranger from Austin, who was riding with me. When I pulled into the store's parking lot to have a look, I had remarked, "They are probably inside this place now." Sandra later told me she was serving as lookout and saw Spillar and me drive up, get out, and look inside. Due to the location of the safe, we hadn't seen that anything was amiss.

Myers also told me later that Sandra had cased the store earlier, at his request, and had reported that there was a "cracker box" safe. Apparently,



this was a term she had heard Myers use, for it certainly did not accurately describe the safe, which was an enormous Cannonball. Myers laughed when he actually saw it and, feeling that it would be good experience for Regian, let his cousin beat on it for an hour.

Myers and Regian had gained entry into the grocery store by getting into an abandoned creamery located across the alley, hand-walking a pipe across the alley between the two buildings, and then entering the store through an air conditioner on the roof. All this time, Myers was armed with a sawed-off 12-gauge shotgun, and Regian had a .45 pistol. Later, Myers showed me the vacant house two blocks away where they parked the stolen Grand Prix.

The Myers trio had been staying in the small, south Central Texas town of Smithville at this time. When they completed the J.R.B. Grocery burglary, they started back there with all their loot. En route, they threw the stolen checks away, but Regian kept Mr. Elliot's gold wristwatch.

As the trio drove through Llano, the dog Smokey answered a call to nature in the rear seat of the Grand Prix. Myers became infuriated and wanted to kill the dog. Sandra told me later that she was able to settle Myers down, and they just dumped the dog.

(Smokey was later found in Llano by a Mr. Tubblefield, who had been the sheriff of that town at one time. After several months, he became attached to the dog, and it took a lot of persuasion before Tubblefield agreed to release the animal. Smokey was eventually recovered and spent several more uneventful years on the wire run before succumbing to old age.)

A few days after the burglary, Huntsville Texas Ranger Wesley Styles, who had been keeping an eye on the Houston-based relatives of Myers and Regian, called to say he had arrested Regian. He had also recovered several items from Regian's mobile home that had come from J.R.B.'s, including Mr. Elliot's watch.

Sheriff Luke Vogel and I met the Huntsville Ranger and his prisoner in Smithville at the mobile home in which Regian had been arrested. The mobile home had been purchased with the J.R.B. money. A few days later, Regian signed a release of his home to 198th District Attorney Murray Jordan to be turned over to the grocery firm.

The mobile home was not all that Regian had acquired with the J.R.B. money. We also learned that he had bought a 1965 Mustang in Austin under the name of David Lee Eickmann. The license-plate number was entered in N.C.I.C.

With the proceeds from the Colonial Grocery Store, Regian had bought Myers a Colt .45 pistol and himself a 12-gauge, double-barrel shotgun. They had immediately sawed off the barrels of the shotgun and returned to the motel in Houston where Sandra was. Myers had loaded the gun with #4 buckshot, and as he snapped it shut, both barrels went off, blowing a large hole in the bed beside Sandra. Myers did some repair work on the shotgun and corrected this problem. One can only imagine what the maid thought the next morning when she made the bed in that room!

Myers told me later that if Sandra had been killed or injured by this faulty gun, he would have taken it back to the Sears store in Houston where it had been purchased. He would have located the salesman, showed him how it misfired, and then killed him.

Regian said that after acquiring them, Myers and Sandra carried these weapons with them on all their jobs. They intended to engage the law in a gunfight if cornered. Regian also said that the couple was moving to the hills of northern Arkansas to lay low for a while.

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The sound of my phone ringing awakened me around 1:00 a.m. on September 22, 1973, five days after Regian was arrested. The voice on the other end said, "I'm John Brooks, sheriff in Shelby, Montana. What's the deal on this 1965 Mustang you have entered in N.C.I.C.?"

I gave him a quick rundown on the Myers couple. Sheriff Brooks told me the car was parked beside a grocery store in Shelby. I informed him that his grocery store was most likely being burglarized at that time and he should get some help. I told him that Myers had a .45 and a shotgun, and he should expect some gunplay when the fugitive came out of the store.

I went back to sleep, only to be awakened once again around 4:30 a.m. It was the Montana sheriff again. He told me I was right on all counts. The officers had challenged Myers and Sandra as they came out of the store, and Myers had immediately begun firing. He escaped in a hail of gunfire, but the sheriff was able to arrest Sandra.

At this point, I suggested that the sheriff place an armed guard at the jail because Myers would steal a car and most likely be back the next night. He would enter the jail at gunpoint to rescue Sandra or else take a hostage to exchange for her. I said that Sheriff Vogel and I would be in Shelby as soon as we could drive up there.

Sheriff Vogel and I pulled out of Brady at 6:00 a.m. and ate dinner in Casper, Wyoming, at 10:00 p.m. We had put 1,100 miles of the trip behind us but still had 750 more to go.

Early the following morning, I called Sheriff Brooks and learned that Myers had been arrested around 3:00 a.m. Sheriff Vogel and I arrived in Shelby the middle of the afternoon.

Shelby, Montana, is a railroad and wheat-farming community of some 5,000 residents. Its only other claim to fame is being the location where Jack Dempsey fought someone in a heavyweight title fight in 1925.

I shall never forget the sight that afternoon in the hospital in Shelby. Myers was lying on his back. He wore handcuffs on each wrist, which were secured to either side of the bed. He also had on leg irons that were threaded through the footboard. A deputy sheriff was stationed at the foot of his bed, armed with a shotgun.

When Myers saw me, he grinned and said, "Boy, am I glad to see you! I need to scratch my nose, but I'm afraid to move." I told him he had best not even try to move or the deputy might shoot him.

Myers told me he had crashed a stolen car into a creek bank a few hours earlier and was paralyzed from the waist down. He had a small gash between his eyes and a notch cut out on his left ear, the result of a bullet that had struck him the night before when Sandra was arrested.

I told Myers that we were leaving the next day with Sandra, and if he could walk, he could go with us. Otherwise, we were going to leave him. He grinned at me and said, "I think I'm already getting some feeling back."

Sheriff Vogel and I went to the courthouse to see Sheriff Brooks. He told us about the capture of Sandra and Myers.

When Sandra had been put in jail, under guard, the officers seized the Mustang that Myers had parked beside the grocery store. Myers, in the meantime, slipped back into town, broke into the Chevrolet agency, and stole a new Chevrolet. He fled west to the Rocky Mountains and remained there the rest of the night and most of the day.

Sometime after dark, Myers had driven into Brady, Montana, a small town south of Shelby in Pondera County. He was in the process of abandoning the stolen Chevrolet when two deputies drove up. Gunfire erupted, but Myers escaped across a wheat field in the darkness.

The Pondera County officers called for help, and a large number of officers responded. Myers was pleased to see so many officers show up at the shooting scene.

Myers made his way to a farmhouse, where he found a late-model Pontiac Firebird with the keys in it. In Shelby, Sheriff Brooks knew not to be caught up in all the turmoil. He had one police car remain in Shelby and kept the guard at the jail.

Myers drove through Shelby to see if any lawmen were in town. He failed to see the police car, but the officer in the car was very alert. He got the license number of the Firebird because he was suspicious as to why a citizen of a neighboring county would be driving slowly through Shelby at 3:00 a.m. A registration inquiry furnished him with the owner's name. He requested the Pondera County Sheriff's office to call this citizen to see if he knew where his car was.

Meanwhile, Myers had turned around and was approaching Shelby from the north. He was set to make his raid on the jail to free Sandra. Prior to abandoning the Chevrolet, he had been in Shelby and stole a motorcycle, parking it near the jail. The plan was for Sandra and he to ride cross-country through the wheat fields into Canada, just thirty-five miles away.

This was not to be. All of the officers in the Brady area were arriving in Shelby just as Myers was. Myers panicked at the sight of so many police, turned down beside the railroad tracks, and sped away. By now, the officers were throwing a good bit of lead in Myers' direction and pierced his car numerous times. When the car was recovered, it had more than 100 buckshot and bullet holes in it.

Things were going fairly well until the road played out at a dry creek. Myers had enough speed to barely get across, but he crashed head on into the far bank. He was thrown clear of the car and his guns, and he jumped up and ran nearly a mile before the injury to his spine from the wreck immobilized him.

The officers in the chase soon reached Myers. They were accompanied by a local reporter, who just happened to have a tape recorder. He interviewed Myers as he lay on the ground. Myers said very little except to cry and beg for



mercy, as he thought he was dying.

The citizens of Shelby had become alarmed after learning they had a desperado in their town. After hearing a noise in his house, one citizen armed himself with a .44 magnum and proceeded to shoot himself in the foot.

Sheriff Vogel and I interviewed Sandra in her jail cell. She gave us a statement concerning her activities with Myers, beginning the night he fled the Ellis prison farm.

Myers was placed in the hospital in Shelby. The day after Sandra gave her statement, Myers did the same thing.

I was in Myers' hospital room taking his statement when District Judge Phillips entered with his staff to proceed with the extradition hearing. Judge Phillips became infuriated because Myers was giving me a statement. He remarked that Myers was crazy to ever talk to any officer because all they were interested in was sending him to prison. I attempted to explain my position when Judge Phillips flew into me. I told him I thought his views were peculiar and added that the Rangers always had a good relationship with the Texas judges. Judge Phillips was not impressed. At any rate, I got my extradition papers signed. The judge left, and I continued with Myers' statement. As he had told Judge Phillips, "The Ranger is the only lawyer I need."

Later, both Sandra and Myers waived extradition and agreed to return to Texas. They both were arraigned in Montana before the Toole County justice of the peace on burglary and theft charges in Shelby.

Sheriff Vogel sold Myers' Mustang to a local car dealer. The money was later paid to the J.R.B. Grocery, as it was the money from that robbery that Myers had used to purchase the car.

Just prior to noon, as we were preparing to return with our prisoners to Texas, we were confronted by two Montana Highway Patrolmen and one Pondera County deputy. They said they had been ordered by Sheriff W. L. Hammermeister to take custody of Myers and return him to Conrad, the county seat of Pondera County.

I told the officers that since we were going through there, we would be glad to stop and let them arraign Myers on their charges, one of car theft and one of assault with a deadly weapon. The officers wanted Myers in their car, but since the district judge had released him to me, I felt like keeping him.

We proceeded to Conrad and met with Sheriff Hammermeister. He wanted a letter that he had prepared to be signed by Judge Phillips, the district judge who had released Myers to me. The letter stated that the sheriff was not giving up the right to return Myers at a later date for trial in Montana. Judge Phillips was nowhere to be found. Neither was the justice of the peace, for that matter.

Feelings were getting on the edgy side when Hammermeister announced he had to go to Helena on business. He left, and that put the chief deputy in charge. Finally, the justice of the peace arrived, took care of Myers' arraignment, and we loaded up Myers and took off. I really felt bad about the jam this was placing the chief deputy in. I called him after I arrived back in Brady. He told me that the sheriff had really flown into a fit of rage when he returned and learned what had happened.

As we drove out of Conrad, I gave Myers a road map. I wanted him to plot us a route out of Montana that would keep us on the same road that Sheriff Hammermeister would be using on his return from Helena.

During our return trip to Texas, Myers related to us how he had planned to rescue Sandra from custody. His first step had been what he actually attempted. That, of course, had resulted in his arrest. His second plan had been what we figured: he meant to take a hostage and simply exchange the victim for Sandra. Another idea he entertained was to waylay Sheriff Vogel and me along the way back to Brady, Texas, in the event we took Sandra with us.

Myers was simply full of possibilities. As we drove down the road, he shared yet another method of rescue with us. He said he had thought he could beat us back to Texas, kidnap Mrs. Vogel, a family member of Mr. Murray Jordan (the district attorney in Brady), or one of my children. He felt that he would have brought us to our knees if he had used this angle. At this point in the conversation, I told Myers that all of our business up to this point had been strictly about the law, but if he ever mentioned my family again, I'd kill him where he stood.

With that, the conversation changed to a lighter tone.

About midnight, in the Crow Indian Reservation south of Billings, Montana, and some five or six miles north of the Wyoming line, we were confronted with numerous red flashing lights. I simply turned on my red lights and proceeded down the road. I was driving a Ford with a 500-horsepower engine. I kicked it up to 140 miles per hour, and we arrived in Sheridan, Wyoming, where we spent the night. The Sheridan Police Department was a gracious host and kept our two prisoners secure while we slept. The next night, we were in Brownfield, Texas; then home.

Some two or three days after we returned to Brady, Myers agreed to lead Sheriff Vogel and me to a remote area near Smithy where he had hidden the new Pontiac Grand Prix he had stolen from Campbell Motors a month earlier. This car had the license tags on it that belonged to Regian's old Chevrolet station wagon. Myers had pulled into heavy brush and covered it with dead limbs. Had he not elected to show us where it was hidden, there is no telling when it would have been discovered.

Myers was the type of person who would not respond to normal interrogation. I had studied him long and hard, however. I learned that a few words of praise about how well he either did or might have done something usually led to a boyish grin and a few minutes of cat-and-mouse play. Then he would be ready to tell the truth in its entirety. It was in this manner that we were to learn about all of Myers' business.

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We all breathed easier for a few days. Then Sheriff Vogel called me early on the morning of October 14, 1973. I thought he was going to cry. He simply said, "They're gone." No other explanation was necessary. I hurriedly dressed and went to the jail to see how it had happened.

I learned that Regian had been put in a single cell, but Sheriff Vogel, being a man of compassion, had let Myers and Sandra share a cell together. Sandra

was pregnant again and spent most of her time sleeping or resting. Myers, on the other hand, spent most of his time planning and preparing for one more escape. Unknown to Sheriff Vogel, the pair had saved all their butter patties and plastic spoons.

A few years back, the jail had gotten all its locks replaced. One key now fit every cell as well as the two outside doors. Myers had pulled the key from the keyhole while Sheriff Vogel was attending the cell. He quickly pressed it against a slice of bread to make a pattern and then replaced it.

When Myers felt he had enough material—spoons, combs, and toothbrush handles—he placed it all in a cup. Using Brute aftershave lotion for fuel, he melted the plastic and shaped it into a key. He then cut the grooves and ridges with a razor blade.

On the 13th, Sandra was ill and had been taken to the doctor that afternoon. She did not want to go, but Myers had insisted. She was soon returned to the jail.

After supper, Myers lubricated his arm with the butter, squeezed it through the bars, and used the makeshift key to unlock the cell door. He then let Regian out. They sat in the runaround for several hours, watching the police station.

Around midnight, Myers, Sandra, and Regian made their way downstairs and let themselves out. They went to a used car lot nearby, and Myers selected a 1968 Buick. After obtaining the keys from inside the building, they immediately went to Myers' grandparents' rural home. There they were given gasoline and thirty dollars. (We learned this later from Sandra because the grandparents denied having seen them.)

After leaving the older Myers' home, the three fugitives proceeded to Corpus Christi. They were nearly there by the time they were missed in Brady.

The following day, Myers and company went to George West and pulled several burglaries. They abandoned the Buick and stole a brown Ford. On October 18, the trio returned to Mason County. There they started a crime spree that led us on a long and merry chase that lasted until November 9.

The first place burglarized was Faubin Chevrolet in Mason. The only thing missing was a .25 caliber pistol and a new Chevrolet pickup.

Several other places were also burglarized in Mason that night. The new Chevrolet pickup was later found, drained of gasoline and abandoned in the city cemetery. Apparently Myers had used the pickup to transport the various stolen items to the car.

On October 21, Brady Sporting Goods was burglarized. We could tell at a glance this was Myers' handiwork. Our suspicions were proven correct when we matched one of Myers' fingerprints on a plastic gun sleeve left lying on the floor and on a loaded shotgun lying on the counter. Myers and Regian had loaded two shotguns and laid them on the counter for easy access should they need them.

Besides three sleeping bags and related camping gear, Myers and Regian took a large amount of ammunition for the various stolen weapons, including several boxes of .25 pistol shells. The following guns and ammunition were

stolen: one .30-06 rifle, 30 boxes of shells; one .243 rifle, 25 boxes of shells; one .22 rifle, several boxes of shells; and a .20-gauge pump shotgun with ammunition. It appeared now that Myers and company were getting tough.

Four nights later, McBee Grocery Store in Brady was burglarized. A large stock of groceries were stolen, very little being perishable goods. Although a passing motorist observed this crime occurring at 4:15 a.m., he elected not to mention it until the following day.

In the next few days, several thefts occurred in Mason. Among the stolen items were a small motorcycle, a canoe, various guns, and fishing tackle.

On the morning of November 4, 1973, the Ford that was stolen in George West was found abandoned southwest of Mason on a ranch near White's Crossing on the Llano River. An intensive manhunt was then launched, as motorcycle tracks were discovered leading from this car toward the river crossing. Officers from the surrounding counties began pouring in, roadblocks were established, and area was sealed off. The overall operation was under the leadership of Sheriff Don Keller of Mason. Sergeant James England of the Kerrville Highway Patrol organized the roadblocks.

Due to the rugged terrain, aircraft help was requested and supplied. Joe Butler, an FBI agent from Fredericksburg, obtained the services of an aircraft from the Pedernales Electric Co-op. Butler flew with the pilot, and they scoured the rugged river country for several miles. We would learn later that it was this action that flushed the trio of thieves from the security of their cave home overlooking the river.

As Myers, Sandra, and Regian lay in the mouth of their cave, resting and reflecting on the past and most likely the future, the small airplane flew by slowly at about the same level as the entrance to the cave. Alarm turned to panic when it flew back by in a few minutes. Myers immediately made plans to flee the area. He knew about a car across the river at a ranch house.

After paddling the stolen canoe across the river shortly after midnight, the three escapees crept up to the ranch house. They pushed the car away from the house before starting the engine. The owner had left the keys in his 1973 Chrysler.

Myers and his companions drove into Mason from the south, passed through town, and headed west on US 377-29. Five miles out, at the fork of the two roads, they approached a roadblock. Myers slowed as though he were stopping but then sped through. He abandoned the car at a short distance and in a hail of bullets. Left behind was a 12-gauge shotgun and the .30-06 from Brady Sporting Goods.

I immediately advised Sheriff Keller that I was calling Warden Bob Cousins of the Ellis Prison Farm to send his dogs to us. Warden Cousins had told me earlier that if we needed them, they were available. This call went out around 1:30 a.m. Warden Cousins arrived in Mason around 10:00 a.m. with Captain Ramsey, a dog sergeant, one convict dog handler, and some twenty dogs.

I must take the time to tell about these hounds. They were the meanest-looking, most ill-tempered animals one could imagine. They were a mixture of Redbone, Bluetick, Walker, and a trace of Bloodhound, and they weighed from seventy to ninety pounds each. Any ideas about their inability to trail a human being were soon dispelled.

The dog sergeant was furnished a saddle horse, as were Sheriff Keller, Ranger A. Y. Allee, Jr., Trooper Ben Walker, and myself. The sergeant released about eight or ten of his hounds in the area where the Myers trio had fled some nine hours earlier. After casting about for approximately five minutes, the lead dog "Mississippi" bugled, and the chase was on. One thing we had failed to take into consideration was the grass burrs. They nearly put us out of commission before we got started. Several of the dogs simply quit the chase because of them.

After trailing the trio for several minutes across the pastures, we lost the trail at a county road. The sergeant said the trio had walked down this road rather than crossing it. The traffic and the lapse of time had destroyed the scent. From the direction of travel, it appeared they were heading back to the rugged river country. We rode out several false leads the remainder of the day.

Warden Cousins had gotten the local boot maker to outfit his hounds with buckskin boots. That was a comical sight watching the reactions of the dogs to their newly acquired footwear. Most of the animals readily adapted to the boots, however, and that proved to be a great help the following day.

I must mention at this time that we had located several caves along the river that Myers had stocked with food. One such cave in particular was well supplied and appeared to have been much used. Sheriff Keller and I decided to have someone set up camp in that cave in the event the group tried to get back to it. This cave was located just above the waterline, with a bushy willow tree in front of it. You had to wade out into the river to get to its entrance.

I shall always have a warm spot for the four game wardens who agreed to take on this task of waiting in the cave. We would have no radio communications with them: they would be on their own. My only request was that they set up a guard so that, in the event Myers should return, he would not catch them all sleeping. These men responded well. Actually, the game wardens were a tremendous asset to us in many aspects of this search because they knew the country so well.

Captain Butch Albers, my captain at the time, arrived later on in the evening. He took one look at Ranger Henry Ligon and myself and told us to get some rest. This was Thursday evening, and the hunt had begun on Monday. I guess we were a dirty, rotten-looking pair. Captain Albers relieved us at 8:00 p.m., but he told us to be back at midnight. Henry went to the motel in Mason; I drove to Brady, took a hot shower, and changed clothes before I returned to Mason. I found Ranger Ligon at the motel, ready to go. We were in the James River country when we heard on the radio that Myers and his running mates had just been shot out of a pickup near Streeter on US 377. It was 4:45 a.m.

Ervin Geistweidt of Streeter had awakened at 4:40 a.m. to see his 1968 International pickup being driven away. He called the Mason Sheriff's Office, which relayed the information to the roadblocks. At that time, Myers was stopping for the roadblock just west of Streeter that was manned by members of the Fredericksburg Police Department and their chief, Milton Jung.

These officers challenged the truck's occupants, who elected to speed away. Several shots were fired, the tires were deflated, and the pickup crashed out of control through the fence, dumping its occupants into the darkness. In their haste to escape, they left behind the .20-gauge shotgun that was stolen from Brady Sporting Goods.



Werner Schmidt and his son Gary, who ranched in the area, were serving as our wranglers. Sheriff Keller dispatched an officer to their ranch to bring the horses to us. The motel was also called to advise the warden of the latest developments. In a short time, the prison personnel arrived with the dogs and the Schmidts brought the saddle horses.

A few minutes past 5:00 a.m., we were on horseback. We elected to allow Gary Schmidt to go with us, as he was familiar with the country. With the dog sergeant in the lead, the rest of us followed: Sheriff Keller, Ben Walker, Ranger Allee, a Burnet County deputy, Gary Schmidt, and myself.

We lit out in hot pursuit. That was some ride, going at a fast gallop in a heavily mesquite-wooded pasture and not knowing if you were going to get brained any minute by a low-hanging limb. One thing I recall is watching the sparks from the shoes of the horses striking the granite rocks.

Daylight finally broke. We put up the slow dogs and turned Mississippi and the rest of the pack loose. With the fresh trail, they really got with it. We had to give our horses their heads in order to stay within earshot of the hounds.

We broke out on top of a rim rock. As we were looking for a way off, we got the first glimpse of our quarry. We saw the three of them in a valley about a mile away. We could tell that one of them was carrying a long gun.

The dogs had little trouble in getting off the rim. We horsebackers finally found a crack that allowed us to follow, and we put the spurs to our mounts, trying to overtake the dogs.

It was about this time that Myers decided to slow things down a bit: he began laying false trails. He would send Regian ahead to a tree and then have him backtrack to the fence where he and Sandra were waiting. The three would then walk the bottom wire for a couple hundred yards. This confused the dogs for several minutes and allowed time to give the criminals a little more distance. This fence deception was repeated several times.

The last trick Myers used was wading a creek. Mississippi was up to the challenge, though. After a few minutes of casting, he bugled once again and the chase was resumed. The dog sergeant told us we would catch them before they could lay another false trail.

We spurred our horses as though we were in a race. Although the dog sergeant had told us not to get between him and his dogs, we could sense the catch was imminent. It was every man for himself.

Gary Schmidt was riding a classy black horse that showed all of us his rump. Behind him was Ben Walker on his tough Appaloosa that had been ridden all week. The rest of us were bunched. As we approached the Allen Terrell ranch house, we realized we were too late. We saw a large number of people milling around the house and corrals.

Two game wardens, Gus Kiderka and Bennie Schriver, had been checking the ranch houses in the area for vehicles with keys in them. They had driven up to the house and come face to face with Myers. He was trying to hot-wire a dune buggy and was armed with a .243 Savage lever action rifle. Fortunately, it was jammed with mud and would not fire, although he gave it a try as the wardens were getting out of their car.

When Kiderka approached with his .270 rifle, Myers quickly shucked the disabled .243. Regian and Sandra were lying in the grass nearby, and Regian had the good sense to realize his .25-caliber pistol was no match for Kiderka's long gun. He quickly dropped it, and Sandra and he both surrendered.

Gary Schmidt's wife Jimmie, although a stalwart ranch woman, had harbored no desire to stay alone in her ranch home, knowing it lay in the path of the fleeing desperados. When the wardens had come by her house a little earlier, she loaded up with them. It was her frantic voice over the wardens' radio that had brought the other officers to the ranch house.

As we rode in, seven minutes behind the capture by the wardens, everyone was standing around like fence posts. They had been told by Captain Ramsey to stand still and the dogs would not attack. I rode up to Regian, and he was standing in shackles. He gave me a feeble grin and said, "Good morning, Mr. Favor." When I reached Warden Cousins' car, I saw Sandra and Myers in the backseat in chains. Nothing was said; we just looked at each other.

The three fugitives were suffering from poison ivy all over their bodies, and their feet were solid, bleeding blisters. They had also had very little to eat or drink for three days. Despite this, I am sure that if Myers had put Sandra up in a tree safely out of the reach of the dogs, we would have still had a chase on our hands. As of that morning, we had run them approximately nine miles. They were captured around 9:00 a.m., and this chase had lasted approximately four hours.

We all returned to the Mason County Courthouse. It seemed as though everyone in the county was there. Many parents brought their children in to see the trio of thieves, and numerous school-age children made their way to town when word spread of the capture. For a while, the place took on a circus atmosphere.

The prison personnel left right away with Myers. Sandra and Regian were locked up in the Mason County Jail after both gave me signed statements.

The search had begun on Monday and was concluded with the trio's capture on Friday morning. Approximately 250 officers were involved, some coming from as far away as San Antonio, San Angelo, and Ozona.

The Hill Country Inn in Mason had set aside several rooms for the officers to sleep in shifts, and a local restaurant carried the tab for meals. Many of the officers refused this courtesy extended by Mason County but, even so, the food bill was in excess of \$1,200. The Mason County Commissioners had to send fence-building crews in behind us to repair the many fences we had cut while on horseback following the dogs.

I would like to mention two sheriffs in particular whose continuous presence throughout the entire search served as an inspiration. Some of the younger officers had become restless and wanted to pull off. Sheriffs Billy Joe Haney of Menard and John Lockett of Junction will always be remembered as a stalwart team that insisted that the blocks remain intact. They told us the fugitives would be forced to the surface if we maintained a tight security on the area.

The following day, Robert Regian led several of us to White's Crossing, below Mason. He directed us to a particular drift. As he began to pull it apart, the stolen motorcycle appeared.



### Motorcycle Hidden in Drift

The following day, a Saturday, I was somewhat rested. I had slept Friday night for the first time since I had gotten up on Monday morning.

Several of us made our way down the river to the Lee Roy Schmidt Ranch. Regian showed us the stolen canoe the three had used to travel up, down, and across the river. We then used

that canoe to cross the river to where the home-base cave was.

As we approached the bluff on the opposite side, we spotted an oblong opening about twenty feet up the face of the bluff. This opening was about thirty-five feet long, starting at a point on one end and rising to nearly six feet on the other end. The high-end opening was covered with a wagon sheet, wedged in a crevice just above the top of the opening and disguised with vines. A handmade ladder made from tree limbs was leaning up to the opening.

As I climbed the ladder to the cave entrance, I faced a sight that really did outdoorsman Myers justice. He had stolen a bale of Coastal Bermuda hay, spread it out, and then covered it with a blanket. On this were three sleeping bags. A large store of canned goods and other nonperishable groceries were neatly stacked around. Several weapons with ammunition were nearby, as was fishing equipment. Myers had even fashioned a cook stove with a nice supply of firewood. Regretfully, I had left my camera in the car when we paddled across the river in the canoe, so I have no photographic record of the cave.

A large number of .30-06 shells had been pulled apart. Myers had put the powder in a small metal container, trying to make a hand grenade. I doubt it would have worked, but at any rate, I wouldn't have wanted to come up against it.

Regian explained that when they were in this cave, they would pull the ladder up and lay it in the long, narrow part of the cave. The wagon sheet was large enough to provide privacy and wind protection as well as a shield to keep the cooking fire from being seen. Had Myers not panicked when the airplane flew by that day, it is possible they would not have been discovered. The entrance to this cave was accessible only by boat. We removed all the groceries, guns, and other articles from this cave.

In Mason and in Brady, Robert Regian and Sandra Myers pled guilty a few days later. They each got forty-eight years, to run concurrent on a twelve-year sentence. In addition, Sandra had her two years' probation revoked, which gave her a total of fifty years. Robert and Sandra received a grand total of ninety-eight years between them.

This story will be concluded in issue 13 of the Dispatch – April 2004.

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## 19th Century Shining Star:

### Texas Ranger William A. A. "Bigfoot" Wallace (1817 - 1899) by Steve Moore

**V**engeance sought, vengeance found. William Alexander Anderson Wallace came to Texas to settle a score. He accomplished his mission while serving with the Texas Rangers, fighting both Mexican soldiers and frontier Indians. Never married, he became something of a folk hero and was known throughout Texas as "Bigfoot."

Born April 3, 1817, in Lexington, Virginia, Wallace was a large and powerful man. During the prime of his life, he weighed 240 pounds and stood 6 feet, 2 inches tall—a towering giant for those days. One story later claimed that Mexican soldiers gave him the sobriquet "Bigfoot" because they could not find shoes big enough to fit their large prisoner. Wallace denied this folk story, saying that although he was a large man, his feet actually fit comfortably in a size-10 shoe.

Another version of the origin of Wallace's nickname comes from the story he told one of his biographers, A. J. Sowell. Wallace hunted and worked odd jobs, including hauling cedar down the Colorado River to the settlements. According to his story, he earned the name "Bigfoot" during 1839 while working his logging business near Austin. A certain Waco Indian had a small band of eight Indians who often raided settlements near Austin, killing settlers and stealing horses. The leader of this small Waco bunch was known to the settlers as "Bigfoot," as he weighed 300 pounds and stood a reported 6 feet, 7 inches tall.

William Wallace and the Waco named Bigfoot both wore moccasins. Following a depredation, large moccasin footprints were found around the victim's home. The settler alleged that the tracks must belong to Wallace. Wallace settled the accusation by placing his foot into one of the tracks and proving that his own foot size was actually smaller. After that, the locals began referring to both the troublesome Indian and Wallace as "Bigfoot." The nickname would stick with Wallace for life, and various other stories would surface as to the origination of the name.

Some of William Wallace's relatives, including his brother Samuel, went to Texas in 1835 to fight in the revolution. When Lieutenant Colonel James



Fannin's men were executed by General Santa Anna's Mexican soldiers at Goliad in the famous massacre, three Wallace relatives were among those killed. One was William's cousin and another was his older brother, Samuel P. Wallace. William swore that he would go to Texas and avenge the loss of his brother and cousin by killing Mexicans. He reached Galveston in October 1837 and drifted about the Colorado River settlements during the next few years. He lived alone, and spent a great deal of time hunting in the woods. During 1838, he killed his first Indian while pursuing a band that had raided settlers near La Grange.

In 1840, Wallace moved up on the Medina River beyond San Antonio, where he resumed his hunting and camping. Despite previous accounts that state otherwise, Wallace did not claim to his biographer Sowell to have directly fought at either the 1839 Brushy Creek battle or the 1840 Plum Creek battle. He was with a group of about twenty volunteers who narrowly missed Brushy Creek.

Wallace first joined Captain Jack Hays' Texas Ranger company in San Antonio on March 10, 1842. Hays' men were active throughout the year, chasing Mexican horse thieves and clashing with the Comanches. Wallace later recalled one such 1842 Indian expedition from his Ranger days:

We collected by agreement at my ranch, organized a company of forty men and the next time the Indians came down from the mountains we took the trail, determined to follow it as long as our horses could hold out. The trail led us up toward the head waters of the Llano, and on the third day out I discovered a great many signal smokes rising up a long distance off in the direction we were traveling. Before dark, a campfire was seen some three miles ahead.

Wallace received permission from his captain to scout out the Indian camp during the early morning hours. In the darkness, he ran into a husky Indian scout, and the duo engaged in a free-for-all, hand-to-hand battle for life or death. Wallace finally managed to plunge his Bowie knife into the Indian's chest and survive the contest.

Although Hays' company protected the settlements from hostile Indians, the greatest menace the communities faced in 1842 was of the Mexican soldier variety. Rumors surfaced in late August that General Adrian Woll planned to invade Texas, so Jack Hays and Antonio Menchaca were authorized to raise new Ranger companies.

In the absence of government money, Hays had to send Bigfoot Wallace and Nathan Mallon to Austin to secure munitions with private funds. Wallace had just been given a payment voucher of \$127.50 from Captain Hays, affirming his service for five months and twenty days' service spanning the period of March 10 to September 1, 1842.

The new invasion by Woll kept Wallace active with Hays' Rangers beyond his original tour of duty. General Woll managed to slip into San Antonio with 1,300 troops and take the city on September 11, 1842, after a short fight.

Wallace returned from his munitions trip to Austin to find Captain Hays gathering Texas volunteer companies at Seguin. Noted Ranger Mathew Caldwell took overall command of the troops, which included companies under Captains James Bird, Ewen Cameron, Daniel Friar, Jack Hays, and Adam Zumwalt. The Texans engaged General Woll at Salado Creek and won a solid victory. Bigfoot Wallace had a close call from a rifle shot that grazed his



nose, and his mule was wounded during one of the charges.

The Mexican force retreated. They had with them some Texas prisoners and more than 200 of their own soldiers who were wounded. At the Hondo Creek crossing of the Medina River, Jack Hays' Rangers, including Bigfoot, made a daring charge to overtake Woll's cannon. Hays' men rode into the midst of the Mexican army's camp and killed the cannon gunners, but the balance of the Texan infantry failed to follow through on their charge.

President Sam Houston called for an expedition to avenge Woll's invasion of Texas. Shortly after his first service with Hays' Rangers, Wallace signed up again under Captain Hays for the expedition into Mexico led by Brigadier General Alexander Somervell. Bringing his own horse and firearms, Wallace enlisted on October 17, 1842. Fellow soldiers Gilbert R. Brush and James A. Glascock later certified in June 1850 that they and Wallace "were mustered in as members of the campaign of 1842 to proceed to the Rio Grande."



After guiding the expedition to the vicinity of the Mexican town of Mier, Captain Hays tried to convince the leaders to give up their attack plan and return to San Antonio. He had been warned that a large force under General Pedro Ampudia had been sent out to repel the Texan invaders. Hays, Ben McCullough, and some others departed. However, William S. Fisher, elected to command, was determined to lead the assault on Mier. He would soon find that General Ampudia had indeed reinforced Mier with an additional 700 soldiers.

During the battle of Mier, Bigfoot Wallace claims to have loaded and fired his rifle fifteen times, with deadly result to Mexican soldiers. Nevertheless, the Texans were ultimately outnumbered and forced to surrender to General Ampudia. Wallace was one of the last to quit fighting. The Texas soldiers were captured on December 26, 1842, and were conveyed to Perote, where they were held.

Following an escape attempt by the Texas prisoners, President Santa Anna ordered that some of the Texans be executed as punishment. The prisoners were forced to draw lots for their own execution. Into a large container were placed 159 white beans and 17 smaller black ones. Anyone drawing a black bean would face the firing squad. When Bigfoot Wallace's turn came to draw, he grabbed a handful of beans and sorted them in his hand, feeling them until he found one large bean and one small. Believing the white beans to be smaller, he kept it and dropped the larger one. He was right. Seventeen of Wallace's comrades drew the fatal black bean and were put to death before the Mexican firing squad.

Wallace remained a prisoner until September 16, 1844, almost two years exactly after he had first enlisted for the campaign into Mexico. He had lost everything. Upon landing in New Orleans from his Mexican prison, he spent some time there claiming bounties by capturing runaway slaves. Bigfoot returned to Texas in 1845, settling in his old hunting cabin on the Median River.

On December 17, 1845, Wallace enlisted lawyer and Ranger buddy R. A. Gillespie to file a claim for the losses he incurred while a prisoner of Mexico,

including his lost horse and personal equipment. By this time, he had returned to service with the Texas Rangers. Wallace was first sergeant of Captain Robert Addison Gillespie's Texas Mounted Rangers, who were mustered into federal service on September 28, 1845. Recruited primarily from San Antonio, the company served through March 28, 1846.

The company's second tour of service began on that closing date, and Gillespie's men were discharged from service on June 28, 1846. Captain Gillespie's company was mustered back into service on August 30, 1846, at San Antonio. By now, Bigfoot Wallace was serving as the first lieutenant. Gillespie's unit served as Company I of Colonel Jack Hays' First Regiment, Texas Mounted Riflemen, through September 29, 1846.

Wallace was among those who stormed and captured the Bishop's Palace in Monterey in 1848. His senior officer, Captain Gillespie, was mortally wounded during this bloody fight.

During 1849, Wallace was in command of his own Ranger company. A group of nearly two dozen Comanches tried to steal his horses on one occasion, but an alert Ranger picked up the sound of their approach. Wallace's men took cover and poured lead into them, killing or wounding four of their number. One Ranger was wounded and one of the Texans' pack mules was killed.

The Indians retreated and prepared for another advance. "We had scarcely reloaded our rifles and six shooters when they rose up all around the little thicket in which we were," recalled Captain Wallace. With Colts blazing, the Rangers withstood several more charges by the Comanches. One other Ranger was wounded.

The Indians stayed in the vicinity of Wallace's camp, and the captain and his men managed to kill four more of them before the day was out. Another forty-odd Comanches arrived shortly as reinforcements, and they challenged Wallace to fight them. Wallace accepted the offer and said that his men would meet the Comanches at a certain springs after they had finished their meal. With only a small company of men, and three of them wounded, Wallace knew that the Indians were stirred up to avenge their own losses. His men instead returned to Fort Clark as fast as they could ride.

In 1850, Bigfoot Wallace took a contract to carry mail from San Antonio to El Paso. He rode with guards and had a number of exciting fights with Comanches during his trips out. On at least one occasion, one of his guards was wounded and several Comanches killed. After quitting the mail service, Wallace was commissioned by Governor Peter Bell to take command of seventy-six Rangers to protect southwest Texas. They were constantly on the scout and fought a number of small skirmishes with Indians.

One of Wallace's hardest fights in the early 1850s was at a place called Black Hills in present La Salle County. As he related to biographer Sowell, his Rangers trailed the Indians for some time. They closed steadily on the Indians and were finally confronted by one lone native who showed himself on a ridge and invited the Rangers to fight.

Wary of an ambush, Wallace scouted ahead and found hundreds of Indians lying in wait. After a number of challenges to attack their main body was refused by Wallace, a group of twenty-five Indians attacked the Rangers. Wallace's men killed several of the enemy, wounded more, and killed and wounded many of their horses. The Indians re-formed, grabbed new horses,

and made their attacks again. The Rangers poured more accurate gunfire into the Indians, again killing and wounding horses and Indians alike. The Indians regrouped, gathered more reserve warriors, and then charged into the Rangers for a third time. "But it was the same old thing," recalled Bigfoot Wallace. "We pitched the rifle bullets into them so rapidly they couldn't stand the racket, and once more retreated toward their camp."

Among those killed during the third charge was the tribe's medicine man, who rode forward "waving a bunch of roots he held in his hands." The spirits brought this man no luck as the Rangers soon put a bullet through his chest. The Indians scrambled to draw his body to safety and regroup. Their chief was seen riding up and down the lines, preparing his men for another charge.

Prior to this fourth and final charge, Captain Wallace yelled to his men to prepare themselves for the worst. "We are going to catch it hot and heavy!" The chief rallied his troops, and this time they charged straight at Wallace's Rangers, not bothering to circle them as before. Wallace called to his men to take out the leader's horse. Waiting until the Indian chief had closed to thirty yards, three Rangers blasted his horse out from under him. As the chief scrambled to his feet, Captain Wallace "fired and shot him in the right hip." The Indian leader fell, yelling, and his followers raced to help him from the battlefield.

Two of Wallace's Rangers had been wounded, and the men were in dire need of water. Taking advantage of the lull as the Indians bore off their wounded chief, Wallace had his parched men mount their horses and fall back to the last Indian camp they had passed through. Captain Wallace knew that some Indians were certainly left behind to guard the camp's water source, so he took ten Rangers on foot and ran, zigzagging through the brush as they approached camp. Wallace and his men came under fire, and they returned it. Wallace, Billy Johnson, and Jim Brown each killed an Indian. The shooting raised another party of Indians from the main body that they had so recently engaged. As more Indians raced toward the camp, Wallace and his men were forced to return to their horses and flee the Indian camp.

Having stirred up a large hornets' nest this day and being badly outnumbered, Captain Wallace decided to leave well enough alone. He waited for the Indians to retreat from the camp that afternoon before moving back in to get water for his horses and men. Aside from water, the Rangers found one other treasure when they finally searched the camp. As Wallace recalled, "The Indian killed by Johnson had two plugs of tobacco in his shot pouch, which was a God-send to us, as we had been without a 'chaw' for several days."

Throughout the day's fighting, Wallace suffered three Rangers wounded. The bodies of twenty-two Indians were found on the ground, and Wallace estimated that his Rangers had wounded at least fifteen others.

Aside from his stories, little specific information remains on Captain Wallace's 1850s Texas Ranger service. It is likely that his muster rolls and other records burned in the 1855 Adjutant General's office fire, which consumed many early Texas military records.

During the Civil War, old veteran William Wallace helped protect the frontiers of Texas by keeping raiding Indian forces at bay while the able men were off fighting the war. While living in Medina County in 1874, Wallace filed a pension claim for any money that he was due for having been a Mier prisoner. At age 81, he was living with W. W. "Doc" Cochran and family some three miles from the community of Bigfoot, which was named in his honor.

A. J. Sowell, himself a Texas Ranger and also a writer, spent several weeks with Wallace in 1898. Wallace was reportedly not happy with some of the stories written about himself in an 1871 biography by John Duval. He hoped to set the record straight, including how he earned his nickname of "Bigfoot."



Wallace died of pneumonia at 10:00 a.m. on January 7, 1899, in Frio County, at his ranch near Devine. The January 8th edition of the San Antonio Daily Express ran his obituary with the headline, "Heroic 'Big Foot' Wallace Dead." His remains were later moved from Medina County to Austin's State Cemetery. The epitaph on his gravestone reads, in part:

#### **BIG FOOT WALLACE**

**Here Lies He Who Spent His Manhood  
Defending the Homes of Texas  
Brave Honest and Faithful Texas Representative**

Representative Tarver, speaking at Bigfoot Wallace's reinterment in the Austin cemetery, said that "his name and fame are indelibly impressed on every page of the earlier history" of Texas. Wallace had avenged his brother's death and had lived a single life, participating in any worthwhile fight he had the opportunity to join. In Tarver's words, Bigfoot Wallace's "whole life was a sacrifice to duty."



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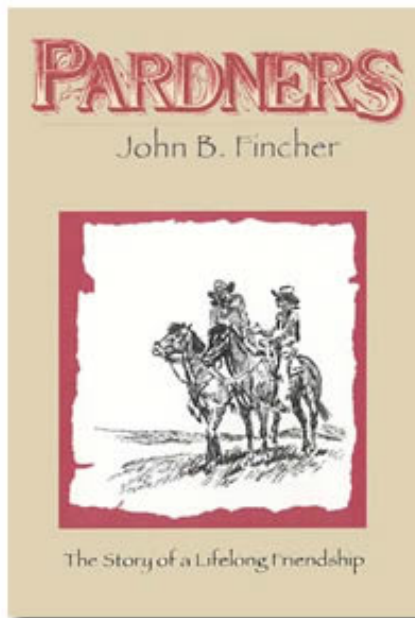
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## Pardners by Robert Nieman

Buffalo Creek Publishing; ISBN Number, 0-9673319-9-4; 151 pages; \$14.95.

Though the *Dispatch* does not normally review non-Texas Ranger books, let alone fiction, this is the exception. *Pardners* is an outstanding book.

If you want sex, violence, or foul language in your book, you have definitely come to the wrong place. You will find none within these pages. What you will find is a deeply moving story about friendship and the cowboy way of life.

John Fincher, a master storyteller and author of numerous short stories, has outdone himself with this book. *Partners* is set during the 1930s and 40s and is the story of a life-long friendship between two men. One goes to Washington, DC and becomes a very successful politician and advisor to presidents and tycoons of business. The other, equally successful in his own way, remains on the ranch owned by his friend. It is where the two boys grew into manhood.

Though the years and chosen professions take the men in completely opposite directions, they have an indestructible connection. Through moments of great joy to times of tragedy, their unbreakable bond is unyielding.

This is a wonderful book and an absolute must-read for anyone who wants to experience a good story.

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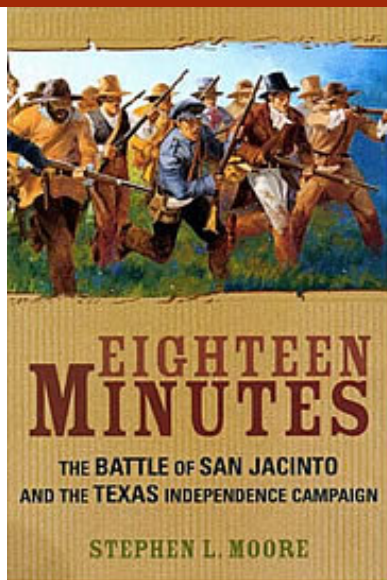

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## **Eighteen Minutes: The Battle of San Jacinto and the Texas Independence Campaign** By Stephen L. Moore

**Eighteen Minutes: The Battle of San Jacinto and the Texas Independence Campaign.** Stephen L. Moore. Republic Of Texas Press; Landam, Md. Distributed by National Book Review. ISBN 1-58907-009-7. January 2004. \$24.95. 500 pages.

Regular *Dispatch* contributor

Stephen Moore's latest work, *Eighteen Minutes: The Battle of San Jacinto and the Texas Independence Campaign*, is the definitive work on the campaign following the Alamo and Goliad. Any work on the War of Texas Independence has to include these two monumental events, and Mr. Moore's does. However, after giving only enough details to better the reader's understanding, he proceeds with a detailed, day-by-day account of the Runaway Scrape and the events leading up to the historic battle.

Clearly, the author has done exhaustive research, as shown by the detailed appendixes and endnotes, and yet the book is very readable. Weaving in testimonies from the ragtag Texas army, Mr. Moore makes you feel like you are with Houston's band of farmers, politicians, soldiers, merchants, and, yes, Texas Rangers, trudging through the mud, bog, and swamps of southeast Texas.

But make no mistake: This is not a Texas hero-worshipping or Texas-bashing book. It is a detailed work of history and, like all history, it is neither black nor white. Mr. Moore points out the contradictions, controversies, and myths that followed Houston and the Texas Army. Was Houston shot by one of his own men during the battle? Was the Yellow Rose of Texas, Emily West (Morgan), real or a myth? If real, was she really entertaining Santa Anna when the Texans attacked? Was the Mexican woman killed—or murdered—by a Texan during the battle? Moore expertly covers these and many more issues.

Unlike most books about the Revolution that merely mention the Rangers in passing, if at all, Mr. Moore gives in-depth insights into their actions throughout the campaign. True, the Rangers



were not involved directly in the Battle of Jacinto, but they did provide Houston valuable information and gave him security from surprise. All of this the author covers in great detail.

In eighteen minutes, following the cry of “Remember the Alamo” and “Remember Goliad,” the Texas Army completely annihilated the Mexican Army of approximately 1,250 men. In that time span, Houston’s army killed 630 of its enemies, including one woman, with a loss of nine Texans.

No book collection of the Texas Rangers, the Battle of San Jacinto, or the Texas Revolution is complete without this fine book.

- Robert Nieman

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Rip Ford Gravesite  
Chuck Parsons Photo

## Visiting Historic Texas Ranger Graves: Honey Grove

with Photos and Notes by Robert  
Nieman

In our last issue of the *Dispatch*, we presented a short tour of graves visited by our editor Robert Nieman and Texas Ranger Senior Captain C. J. Havrda. The response was positive, so we now give our readers a similar tour, this time with three other distinguished Texas Rangers.

Our editor joined retired Rangers Glenn Elliott, Captain Bob Mitchell, and Captain James Wright. They visited the graves of three Rangers buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Honey Grove, Texas: Bob Goss, who was Lone Wolf Gonzallas' partner in the 1920s and 1930s; Captain Charlie Moore, who joined the Rangers the same time as did Glenn Elliott; and Captain Jim Riddles, who is a member of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum.

In our last issue, we stated that because of the overgrown condition of the Confederate Cemetery in San Antonio, Captain Havrda and Mr. Nieman were unable to locate the graves of Ranger Hall of Famers Rip Ford and George Baylor. One of our most faithful readers and a regular contributor, Chuck Parsons, visited the cemetery later. Fortunately, it had been partially cleaned up and Chuck furnished us pictures of the graves of these two great Rangers. Thank you, Chuck.

Editor Robert Nieman and Texas Ranger Senior Captain C. J. Havrda. The response was positive, so we now give our readers a similar tour, this time with three other distinguished Texas Rangers.



Our editor joined retired Texas Rangers Glenn Elliott (Left), Captain Bob Mitchell (Center), and Captain James Wright (Right).

They visited the graves of three Rangers buried in Oakwood Cemetery in





**Honey Grove, Texas: Bob Goss, who was Lone Wolf Gonzaulas' partner in the 1920s and 1930s;**

**Captain Charlie Moore, who joined the Rangers the same time as did Glenn Elliott; and Captain Jim Riddles, who is a Texas Ranger Hall of Fame inductee.**



**Return to San Antonio**

**Photos by Chuck Parsons**

**Due to the overgrown condition of the Confederate Cemetery in San Antonio, Captain Havrda and Mr. Nieman were unable to locate the graves of Ranger Hall of Famers Rip Ford and George Baylor. One of our most faithful readers and a regular contributor, Chuck Parsons, visited the cemetery later. Fortunately, it had been partially cleaned up and Chuck furnished us pictures of the graves of these two great Rangers. Thank you, Chuck.**



**Rip Ford Tombstone**



**George Baylor Gravesite**


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## 20th Century Shining Star:

### **Captain Jack Dean, United States Marshal**

Since the formation of the Texas Rangers in 1823, only six Rangers have also served as United States Marshals — Ben McCulloch, Dick Ware, John Rogers, Bill McDonald, Clint Peoples, and Jack Dean. Only Peoples and Dean have become marshals since the formation of the Department of Public Safety in 1935.

Jack Dean is the eldest child of William Hershel and the late Juanita Day Dean. He was born in the Green Valley community, just north of Denton, Texas, on June 16, 1937. Jack graduated from Fort Worth's Diamond Hall High School and then attended Tyler Junior College in Tyler and TCU in Fort Worth. While a Ranger several years later, he attended Pan American University in Edinburg.

Over the years, Jack has had to make many decisions, but the best one he ever made was marrying Janie Hill forty-eight years ago. Through thick and thin, she has been Jack's most loyal supporter. They have one daughter, Kelly, and two sons, Cody and Kyle. Jack and Kyle are one of the few father-son combinations in Ranger history. Kyle has been in the DPS for twenty-one years—ten as a Highway Patrolman in Crockett and eleven as a Ranger in Denton and Kerrville.

In 1960, Jack applied for and was accepted into the DPS. Like all new recruits, he attended the DPS Academy in Austin. He began on December 7, 1960, and graduated on March 31, 1961. In those days, school was five and a half days a week—and no overtime.



For the next nine and a half years, Jack worked as a Highway Patrolman. He was first stationed in Pecos in West Texas until the opportunity presented itself four and a half year later to get closer to Fort Worth. He transferred to the East Texas city of Tyler. He remained in Tyler until he was accepted into the Rangers in 1964.

Reflecting on his Highway Patrol years, Jack said, "I loved every moment of it." And why not? He was doing a job he loved—serving the people of Texas. As an added bonus, he had four great partners. His first was Charlie Bolinger, a veteran who was a fine teacher for the rookie patrolman. Two other partners, Dale Bryce and Kelly Whitehead, would join Jack in the Texas Rangers. [Tragically both Dale and Kelly died much too young of cancer.] Another partner, Orville Shepherd, is currently the sheriff of Titus County in East Texas.

When Jack transferred to Tyler, the flame to join the Rangers was lit. He recognized that there were some great Rangers in that area: Jim Ray\*, Red Arnold\*, and Glenn Elliott\*.

In 1968, Jim Ray left Tyler to become the Ranger sergeant of Company "E" in Midland. Bob Mitchell\* became the Ranger in Tyler. It didn't take Jack long to realize what anyone who comes into contact with Bob Mitchell knows: he is someone very special. Jack explains, "I always say that he [Mitchell] is my hero. [He] became my mentor but, most of all, he became my friend. Now thirty-five years later, he still is."

There was another man who greatly influenced Jack's career: Ranger Captain Bill Wilson. Wilson and Bob Mitchell encouraged Jack to apply for the Texas Rangers. Fortunately for the Rangers and the citizens of Texas, Jack became the newest Ranger on September 1, 1970. He was stationed along the banks of the Rio Grande in the Deep South Texas city of McAllen.

### The Suspect Who Never Goes Away

When Jack became a Ranger, he inherited the case of a hired killer named Charles Harrelson. When Jack arrived on the scene, Harrelson had been tried in Palacios, Texas, and found not guilty on a murder for hire case in Houston. But Harrelson's troubles were not over. He was transferred to the Hidalgo County Jail in Edinburg, just a few miles north of McAllen. He had been charged in Edinburg for the hired murder of a Hearne grain dealer named Sam Degilia. The case had originally been worked by Rangers Skippy Rundell and Tol Dawson. By the time Jack made Ranger and was stationed in McAllen, Tol had transferred to Pecos, and Skippy had been promoted, so Charles Harrelson became Jack's problem.

For the next four years, Jack spent time gathering evidence, finding and guarding witnesses, and investigating attempted jail breaks by Harrelson. [Jack still has a .25-caliber, automatic pistol that he took from Harrelson's jail cell in a Hidalgo County jail.]

Harrelson hired high-priced, flamboyant, Houston attorney Percy Foreman for his defense. Just when it looked like the case was going to be brought to a successful conclusion, Foreman sprung a surprise witness on the prosecution. A nightclub singer with a questionable background claimed that she had been with Harrelson at the time of the murder. To almost everyone in the courtroom, it was obvious she was lying. Unfortunately, the only opinion that counted was that of the jury. Eleven of them didn't believe her story, but

one did. The trial ended in a hung jury—eleven for conviction, one for acquittal.

Harrelson was retried in 1974 in nearby Brownsville. Jack sat in the courtroom waiting for the nightclub singer. If she showed up, she had a big problem: Jack had a perjury warrant for her in his pocket. Regrettably, she had learned that the Rangers were waiting to arrest her, and she decided she would never have a better reason to relocate. The next time Jack heard of her, she was in Aruba, an island in Caribbean.

Without the help of the singer's testimony, there was no hung jury. Harrelson was found guilty. Incredibly, he was sentenced to only fifteen years in prison. With good time, he was out in five years.

Jack had no more business with Harrelson until 1979. When they crossed paths again, Jack was the captain of Company D in San Antonio, and the case would make national headlines.

Federal Judge John Woods had been assassinated in the parking lot of his San Antonio condo with a shot in the back by a high-powered rifle. The local FBI office asked the Rangers to help. Contrary to what many would think, the FBI, at least at that time, had minimal experience in working homicides. Jack dispatched his sergeant [today this would be a lieutenant] Lefty Block to work with the FBI team. Lefty later became the Senior Ranger Captain.

A few days after the murder, Jack was in his office when he received a strange phone call. Ginny Goss, his secretary, rang through and said there was man on the phone who wanted to talk to him. He wouldn't give his name or what he wanted.

Jack answered the call and a male voice said, "How are doing, Jack?"

"Who is this?"

"You know who this is," the voice replied.

"I don't think so."

"Charles Harrelson was in San Antonio the day Judge Woods was killed."

Jack asked, "Did Charlie kill the judge?"

"Charles Harrelson was in San Antonio the day Judge Woods was killed."

With that, the anonymous caller hung up. Who was the caller? Jack could only guess, but he was never sure.

Jack passed this information on to the FBI. A few days later, he was in Austin when he received a call from the San Antonio FBI office asking him to come by as soon as possible. When he arrived, he met with the SAC (Special Agent in Charge) and an assistant director of the FBI. They wanted to know everything that Jack could provide them about how Harrelson operated. Of course, Jack cooperated in every way possible. In return, he was told that his assistance was no longer needed—or wanted!

Several years later, Jack Lawn was promoted to SAC and came by Jack's

office. He thanked Jack and the Rangers and admitted that Rangers made the case. Lawn also said the same thing to the DPS Director Colonel Pat Spier and his successor, Colonel Jim Adams. [Lawn was not the SAC at the time of Harrelson case.]

Fast forward seventeen years to 1996. Charles Harrelson had been serving a life sentence for the assassination of Judge Woods. Meanwhile, Jack had retired from the Rangers and was the United States Marshal for Western District of Texas. Harrelson's son Woody was a major television star with many dollars. He used a lot of this money to hire high-caliber lawyers in an attempt to get his father's conviction overturned. Jack traveled to Denver, Colorado, twice to appear before two different federal judges in separate hearings. Woody spent no telling how many dollars trying to free his father, but to no avail. Today Charles Harrelson is still sitting in a federal prison serving a life sentence.

Jack has visited several times with Harrelson. Jack says that he is an easy man to talk to and he always got along well with him. During one of their conversations, Harrelson said that he liked Tol Dawson but didn't like Skippy Rundell. After Harrelson's first arrest, Skippy was transporting him back to Texas from Florida by plane. Harrelson liked to talk, and Skippy became irritated. He told Harrelson to shut up or he would throw him out the plane. Ed Gooding\* partnered many times with Skippy. In his book, *Ed Gooding: Soldier, Texas Ranger\**, Ed said that Skippy didn't mind confrontation.

The last contact Jack had with Harrelson was through a note. Harrelson thanked Jack for letting him see his grandkids for the first time.

Jack says, "Charlie is like the battery bunny in my life. He just keeps on coming."



After four years as a field Ranger, Jack's outstanding leadership abilities had been recognized by his superiors, and he was promoted to sergeant [today this would be a lieutenant] on December 1, 1974. The gods that look over Rangers were watching over Jack. He found himself as one of the sergeants of Company F. Company F is the only Ranger company that has two sergeants (lieutenants). One is stationed in Austin, the other at company headquarters in Waco. Jack's station was Waco, and his captain was none other than his hero Bob Mitchell. He worked for Captain Mitchell until November 1, 1978, when he promoted to the captaincy of Company D in San Antonio. He held this position until his retirement on September 1, 1993. Since his retirement, Jack has been the United States Marshal for the Western District of Texas.

Jack says he learned many things from Ranger captains that he tried to pass on to his own men. From John Wood, the man he succeeded as captain of Company D, he learned that when you have a man doing a good job, leave him alone and let him get it done. Unless he asks for your help, don't offer him any. Bob Mitchell taught Jack to take care of his people. From Bill Wilson, Jack learned that if he took care of the little things, the big ones would usually take care of themselves. Good advise for anyone in a leadership position, not just a Ranger captain.

Obviously, Jack learned these lessons well. Three of his former sergeants/lieutenants advanced to the top. Bruce Casteel\*, Lefty Block, and C.J. Havrda\*

became Senior Ranger Captains. A fourth, Gene Powell\*, became the Assistant Senior Ranger Captain.

Not surprisingly, Jack says that he is really proud of the people he worked with during his Ranger years. Reflecting on his years as a Ranger, he says they were the most fun of his life. "The best is being a working [field] Ranger. Those were the happiest four years of my life, but it sure isn't bad being Bob Mitchell's sergeant or being a captain. In twenty-three years, the Rangers gave me a lot of enjoyment, some heartache, and friends that will always be in my heart."

In closing, Jack sums up what he is most proud of: "You get to be a Ranger, then your son (Kyle) becomes a Ranger. It doesn't get any better than that. Just ask Bob Prince, John Dendy, Richard Bennie, or Buster Collins."

Click the names below for articles on Texas Rangers mentioned in this Article

**Jim Ray**

**Red Arnold**

**Glenn Elliott**

**Glenn Elliott: Still a Ranger's Ranger**

**Bob Mitchell**

**Bruce Casteel**

**C.J. Havrda**

**Gene Powell**

**Ed Gooding**

**Ed Gooding: Soldier, Texas Ranger**

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## 21st Century Shining Star:

### Barry Caver

*In 1997, for the people of Texas, Captain Barry Caver commanded the DPS forces against the radical Republic of Texas extremists. Under the leadership of this Texas Ranger, the event had a far different ending than did the Branch Davidian confrontation at Waco a few years earlier. Barry has prepared an article for the Dispatch concerning this deadly encounter. It will appear in Issue 13 (Summer 2004).*

Barry and Tammy, his wife of nineteen years, have two sons in high school, a senior and a freshman. Barry also has an

older daughter from a previous marriage who recently received an associate degree in nursing.

Barry got law enforcement in his blood from his dad, who was a reserve deputy in Angelina County Sheriff's Office. In December of 1976, at the tender age of nineteen, Barry began his career as a peace officer when he went to work in that very same sheriff's office as a jailer-dispatcher.

Barry had just started this assignment when he met his first Texas Ranger, Charlie Neel. From that moment on, he knew that he wanted to wear the cinco peso badge of the Texas Rangers. But before anyone can even apply to become a Ranger, that person must have eight years experience in the Texas Department of Public Safety. Barry began working toward his goal.

In March 1978, this future Ranger Captain was certified as a Texas Peace Officer. He went to work as a patrolman with the Diboll Police Department, just south of Lufkin. He remained in that position until December 1978.

Barry applied for and was accepted into the Texas Department of Public Safety Training Academy. On January 9, 1979, he started Class A-79 for eighteen weeks of training. He graduated on May 11, 1979, and was assigned as a Highway Patrolman in Livingston, about midway between Lufkin and Houston. In 1981, he transferred back to Diboll. He remained there until an opening became available in Lufkin in 1984. On April 1, 1987, he promoted to Highway Patrol Sergeant and was stationed in Weatherford, just west of Fort Worth.

As soon as Barry's eight years of DPS experience was up, he applied for and was accepted into the Texas Rangers. On November 1, 1989, the career of one of the Rangers' brightest stars began. Barry was posted to Company "A" in





Huntsville, just north of Houston.

His superiors soon recognized Barry's outstanding ability, not only as an investigator, but also as a natural leader. On November 1, 1993, after only four years as a field Ranger,\* Barry promoted to Lieutenant of Company "C" in Lubbock. He didn't remain a Lieutenant long either. On November 1, 1996, he became the youngest Texas Ranger Captain in the history of the Texas Department of Public Safety when he took over the reins of Company "E" in Midland.

Fortunate seems to be an over-used word when Texans speak of their Rangers, but it just happens to be a true description in the case of Barry Caver. Texas is fortunate indeed to have him in its service.

\*Our 20th Century Shining Star, Jack Dean, was also promoted after only four years.

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## Ask the Dispatch

When we started the Dispatch in 2000, we never in our wildest dreams thought that it would be the success it has become—50,000 plus readers per month! One of our major goals was not only to create an interest in the Rangers, but also to stir new research.

In that vein, we have received many questions from all over the world. Because of the overwhelming number of requests, we have decided to start a new column, "Ask the Dispatch." In it, we will attempt to share as many questions and answers as possible.

Before any question or request will be considered, the following **MUST** be furnished: name, mailing address, and email address.

We do ask that any of your questions that concern ancestral research be directed to [www.texasranger.org](http://www.texasranger.org). Go to the heading on the top navigation bar marked Family History.

*From  
Mike Whittington  
London, England*

*I have just recently finished re-reading a book written by Chuck Parsons called Pidge, a Texas Ranger From Virginia. I noticed in a lot of the references to Captain McNelly that the original papers quoted his name as "McNally." This makes me think he might have been from northern Irish decent as the Ulster dialect tends to pronounce the "e" as an "a," and it could well have been McNelly himself who, when introducing himself to people, would pronounce his name in that manner.*

*Bearing in mind that he was born and raised in Virginia, this would be a false assumption unless he was brought up among similar-speaking people. Given his knowledge of the English poets, amongst others, might not this pronunciation of his name be a factor?*

*Thank you.*

Dear Mr. Whittington,

Yes, McNelly's name was frequently spelled "McNally," probably because, as you say, that is the way it was pronounced. McNelly was born in

Virginia USA, but his parents and two or three older siblings were born in Ireland. No doubt the "McNally" pronunciation was as if it were spelled that way. No way to determine if that is actual or not. It may be just misspellings!

Chuck Parsons

[Mike contributed "Six Telegrams That Tell A Story: The Arrest of John Wesley Hardin" in the Dispatch, Issue 3. He also has another article, "How Hughes & Aten Solved the Murders of the Williamson Family," which appears in the current issue (Issue 12). Mike is also a Texas Ranger, Company B, reenactor. Check out the website at [www.texasranger.org.uk](http://www.texasranger.org.uk).]



The second most-requested questions are directed to David Stroud's "Guns of the Texas Rangers." Below are a few from the many.

*Lisbon, Portugal – 2 November 2003*

*Dear Sir:*

*My name is Paulo Faria, and I'm a Portuguese professional translator. Right now, I am translating Blood Meridian by Cormac McCarthy, a tale based on historical events that took place on the Texas-Mexico border in the 1850s. The novel contains several detailed references to the guns of this period (revolvers and rifles) and especially to the Whitneyville Colt. In order to do a good job, I need the help of someone with the required knowledge. Do you have the time and the patience to help me? Do you know someone else with the patience to do so? (David Stroud, maybe? -- his article seems excellent).*

*Thank you very much.  
Greetings,  
Paulo Faria*

Dear Paulo,

The Whitneyville Colt is most likely the famous Walker, of which 1,100 were made (1,000 for the military and 100 for presentation). There is also the Whitenyville-Hartford Dragoon, also known as the Transition Walker. About 240 were produced in late 1847. The Transitions were made with leftover Walker parts, thus the name, and are considered separate from the 1st, 2nd, and 3d model Dragoons made from 1848-1861.

David Stroud



I have bought a 1851 Colt Navy .36 Caliber gun. But unfortunately it has damaged parts. I would like refurbish it and put it in the exhibition.

I would like to ask you where I can buy parts or is there any service to refurbish it?

Regards.  
Atila Erdemli  
Antalya, Turkey

Dear Antila,

Although I'm no authority, I have collected antique revolvers for many years and have learned from the real authorities a thing or two I'll be happy to share.

1. Not being sure what you mean by "refurbish," beware that buffing and or bluing the old Colt will virtually destroy any antique value it has. Antique collectors prefer the weapon "as is."

2. If "refurbish" means to restore the Colt to firing condition, then do it. The best source to acquire parts for antique guns is:

Dixie Gun Works, Inc.  
Gunpowder Lane  
PO Box 130  
Union City, Tennessee 38281.  
Telephone (901) 855-0700, orders only (800) 238-6785

They have a very inexpensive catalog you might want to check first.

I know a dealer who sometimes will do this, but you need to give him a call and not take my word for it. However, you need to know a little more before you call him, such as what type Colt it is (1860 Army, 1851 Navy, or Colt Single Action Army, for example). His name is Mack Woods, Shootist Gun & Knife Shop, 4007 S. Broadway, Tyler Texas 75701. (903) 581-4867

Last, but not least, the gun belongs to you, so do any of the above that makes you happy.

Best of luck,  
David Stroud



*Dear Mr. Stroud,*

*I am a M.A. degree candidate at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. I am currently working on my thesis that deals with the development of the Colt .45 automatic and the lore surrounding it. I am looking to address many of the myths about the gun and uncover the reality of its use. I have read your article on the Texas Ranger Dispatch magazine website and would like to speak with you about the pistol.*

*Kevin J. Estela  
Hartford, Connecticut*

Dear Kevin,

I would be happy to help, but you'll probably find you know more about the subject than I do. My interest is the older Colt revolvers. However, I do admire the 1911s, as do many of my "gun friends." Let me know how I can help, and we'll see what happens.

David Stroud



We receive many requests for photos. Unfortunately, we cannot help everyone. Perhaps one of our readers can assist Ms. Black in her research.



*Dear Dispatch,*

*I am researching the origin or identity of this peace pipe. It is a round, cylindrical pipe with several holes for multiple stems. It belonged to my great grandfather Caiaphas Kenard Ham. It has his initials "C. K. H." and the date 1845. In Texas history, that could be a presentation or ceremonial gift for many events. C. K. Ham came to Texas from Louisiana in 1828. His character certificate was from Adolphus Sterne to Stephen F. Austin. As most, he had land grants and donation bounties from the Red River to Austin's 2nd Colony. He came to Texas with Jim & Resin Bowie, and their Louisiana plantations adjoined one another. Among his comrades were Sam Houston and most of the early Texans.*

*Caiaphas also lived with and was adopted by the Comanches. He wrote of his "Indian Mama." He did ride with Jack Hays. He was in several skirmishes and fought in the Battle of Calf Creek, Bandera Pass. He was corresponding with Hays in California during 1880's.*

*Any information would be greatly appreciated.*

*Dorothy Reed Black*





As the following combined letters from Dag in Norway reveal, not everyone considers all Rangers heroes. Nevertheless, if they have merit, we welcome all questions.

*Hi,*

*[I] came across the Texas Ranger website the other day. Regarding Bonnie Parker's involvement. I doubt your account about the Grapevine killings [on] April 1, 1934.*

*The witness, Schieffer, only saw the shootings from distance. Moreover, he was never able to pick out pictures of Bonnie and Clyde from police mug shots. Indeed, Schieffer would eventually identify Floyd Hamilton and Billie Mace, Bonnie Parker's sister, as the killers.*

*Regardless, Shieffer's story as it appears in Frank Hamer's account (I'm Frank Hamer), has Shieffer not only identifying the killers as Bonnie and Clyde, but also crawling up close enough to the murder scene to overhear Bonnie joking about the killing.*

*I can hardly understand why you Texas Rangers possibly can be so proud of Frank Hamer, though! Did he not kill some fifty people in the line of duty?*

*And did he not kill the youngsters, Bonnie and Clyde, in cold blood without any kind of warning?*

*I think you must modify your site.*

*Kind regards  
Dag Storsletten,  
Norway*

[Editor's note: Articles about Bonnie and Clyde will be in the next two issues of the Dispatch.]



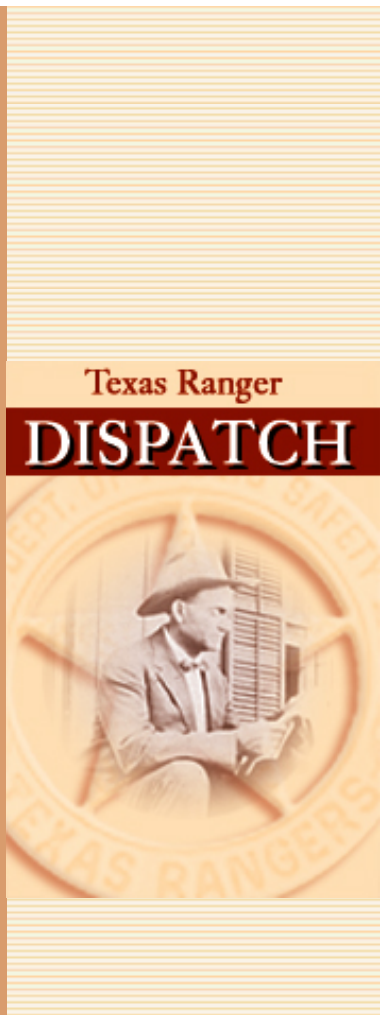
The overwhelming majority of questions are as follows (this is a very small sample):

*Dear Editor,*

*How might I receive back issues as well as a subscription of your publication, the Dispatch? I just discovered it on the internet.*

*I am a member of Western Writers of America and am presently in the midst of a biography for Texas A & M University Press of John James Dix, a prominent officer under John Salmon "Rip" Ford in the Cortina affair and the Cavalry of the West during the Civil War.*

*Sincerely,  
Dan Manning  
Fair Grove, Missouri*



*Dear Sir;*

*Is the Texas Ranger Dispatch Magazine available in print form, or just on the internet? Thanks in advance for your help.*

*Marshall T. Schreve  
San Antonio*

Currently, the Dispatch is available only over the web, but many of our readers clearly want a hard copy or subscription. Hopefully, one day this shall come to pass. As the effort is nonprofit, we welcome any donations which can be sent to:

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The writers and staff of the Dispatch want to thank all of our readers and sponsors who have made our magazine such an overwhelming success.

Robert Nieman  
Managing Editor

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## Simeon North's Model 1816 Flintlock Pistol Article and Photos by David Stroud

Whenever Texas Ranger guns are mentioned, most imagine a Colt Paterson, Walker, Peacemaker, 1911 A1, Smith & Wesson, or "Sig." However, the few men who formed the original Rangers in Austin's colony in 1823 armed themselves with weapons employing the longest firing (400 years) mechanism in history—the flintlock.

The term flintlock was first recorded in 1683 and refers to "any type of gunlock that ignites the charge by means of sparks produced by a spring-actuated cock striking a piece of flint against a vertical, pivoted plate-plate." (1) The earliest known example was made for King Louis XIII of France in 1610. It is displayed in the Renwick Collection in Tucson, Arizona. (2)

Despite a favored myth, the vast majority of the American Army during the Revolutionary War was equipped with smoothbore muskets. The ones used by the soldiers were British and French large-caliber (.69-.78) weapons.

As early as 1728, an extremely accurate weapon made by German craftsmen in Pennsylvania had appeared in the hands of frontiersmen. Daniel Boone was carrying one when he returned from his 1770 adventure in what history calls the "Dark and Bloody Ground." The term "Kentucky rifle" was born. (3)

As the frontier extended west, not all who followed were able to arm themselves with Kentucky rifles and pistols. They carried any weapons available to them before crossing the Mississippi or Sabine River in the 1820s and 1830s. To survey the multitude of flintlocks they brought into the Mexican territory before and during the Texas Revolution would require an extensive volume. Therefore, I have selected the Simeon North Model 1816 Army, a veteran of the Black Hawk, Seminole, and Mexican Wars, to serve as a worthy example.



Simeon North was born July 13, 1765, in Berlin, Connecticut. He manufactured pistols and rifles for the United States government for over fifty years before his death on August 25, 1852. On his sixteenth



birthday in 1781, Simeon decided to celebrate his manhood by shouldering a gun, walking to Saybrook, Connecticut, and enlisting in the American Army. However, he was rejected by the recruiting sergeant because of his young age.

Five years later, Simeon married Lucy Savage. In 1795, he established a scythe-making business in an old mill adjoining his farm. He received his first War Department contract on March 9, 1799. (4) He was to help Elisha Cheney of Berlin produce 2,000 pistols, the first official pistol adopted by the United States. (5) The government was so pleased with Simeon's work that a second contract was awarded him for 3,000 Navy pistols in 1808. Other contracts followed: in 1811, 1813, 1816, 1817, 1819, and his last pistol in 1826. Approximately 51,924 pistols were produced to fulfill the seven contracts, and 19,374 of them were Model 1816s. (6, 7, 8)

In 1807, Reverend Alexander John Forsyth (1768-1843) of Belhelvie, Scotland, received a patent for his invention of a percussion method of igniting gunpowder. He was followed by Frenchman Prelet's patent in 1820 for the copper percussion cap, and the days of the flintlock were numbered—but not immediately. (9)

Like any invention, it would take years for the percussion cap to prove itself and become available to men who relied upon firearms for their very lives. One reason is that they were not as available on the frontier as flint rifles. Therefore, Texans continued using flints during the Texas Revolution. Rangers W. A. "Big Foot" Wallace, R. M. "Three-Legged Willie" Williamson, and other Tejano volunteers used flintlocks to write history in gun smoke from Gonzales through the Alamo to the San Jacinto. There is little doubt the 1816 North was among the weapons used.

As the military adopted improved weapons (1,000 Model 1817s, 20,400 Model 1819s, and 3,000 Model 1826s from North alone), the government sold the outdated flints at surplus prices. Realizing that more than one soldier deserted with his brace of pistols as government souvenirs, there is every reason to believe that North's 1816 found its way to Texas. These weapons were taken by the two companies of New Orleans Grays when they went to Texas in 1835. (10)



The photographed Simeon North, Model 1816 (top of page), is a .54 caliber, 9 1/16" round-barrel smoothbore with a brass, knife-blade, front sight set on the forestrap of the spring-fastened barrel band. The barrel and iron mountings are acid browned, and the overall length of the 3 lb.-2 oz. flintlock is 15 1/4.





### Backstrap

An iron backstrap is inserted into the curved-in, swell-shaped, rounded butt to reinforce it when used as a club during hand-to-hand combat. The flash pan is brass, and it is tilted up at the rear while the frizzen tilts back toward the hammer. The swell-tipped hickory ramrod ends in a slotted, iron ferrule threaded inside to take a bullet screw or a wiper.

There are two styles of marking found on surviving 1816s. Both have S. NORTH over an American eagle, with a U and an S on either side. On the early style, MIDLn CON is inscribed underneath; the later version has MIDLn CONN.



### Barrel and Markings

Original flintlocks have become somewhat rare because original owners often paid gunsmiths to “convert” the weapons to percussion as an inexpensive way of obtaining the “improved” firing device. The number of converts must be large, but I am unable to approximate the exact

figure. (11)

### Brass Butt Cap







During the 20th century, flintlocks became quite collectable. Many an unscrupulous dealer “re-converted” honest percussions back to counterfeit flints. Therefore, caution is urged before purchasing any flintlock. It is the wise collector who makes transactions with reputable dealers only.

### Notes

1. Peterson, pp. 130-131.
2. Peterson, pp. 130-131.
3. Dillin, p. 1.
4. Malone, p. 561.
5. The Model 1799 (\$20,000-\$30,000) is considered such a rare prize that fakes have been produced over the last fifty years. Extreme caution is urged before purchasing.
6. Flayderman, pp. 287-288.
7. It is not known if North or Eli Whitney first produced interchangeable parts, but North insisted that such a provision be included in his 1813 contract. He wrote, “The component parts of pistols are to correspond so exactly that any limb or part of one pistol may be fitted to any other Pistol of the twenty thousand.”
8. See Falyderman’s Guide, pp. 287-288, for photographs of each model.
9. Peterson, pp. 228-230.
10. Hardin, p. 125. An excellent illustration of a New Orleans Grays private making his last stand, armed with a North 1819.
11. Although no Model 1816s were sold to the U.S. Navy, Fredrick Winter estimated that only 140 North 1813 Navy pistols remain from the 1,000 made. That is a 14% survival rate. One hundred and twenty remain unconverted. Only 150 (45 unconverted) North 1826 Navy pistols remain from the original 3,000. That is a survival rate of only 4.6%.

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## Wayne Showers Honored

The Texas Ranger Association Foundation is a major benefactor of the *Dispatch*. One of its Board of Directors, Wayne Showers, was recently honored by Texas A & M University. We at the *Dispatch* also offer our congratulations to a valued friend and associate.

From Texas A&M University:

January 7, 2004

**COLLEGE STATION** - Former Texas A&M University System regent and longtime McAllen produce industry businessman Wayne Showers was honored Wednesday as Distinguished Texan in Agriculture.

The award, given each year by the Texas A&M Agriculture Program, is to recognize and honor outstanding leadership and significant contributions to the state's No. 2 industry.

Dr. Kevin Heinz, Texas A&M department of entomology head, said Showers has shown exceptional vision and leadership to the Texas vegetable industry, the Texas A&M University System and the people of Texas.

"Mr. Showers is recognized for supporting research and (Texas Cooperative) Extension efforts to address major problems facing vegetable producers," Heinz said. "He has worked tirelessly on behalf of producers, packers and shippers to maintain the viability of the vegetable industry.

"He has built alliances with Mexico to strengthen and expand the capacity of this vital industry."

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, in a letter of support, wrote, "I do not know anyone who loves agriculture more than he."

A recognized expert in developing and marketing fruits and vegetables nationally and internationally, Showers was president of Alamo Fruit and Vegetable Co. from 1976 to 1984 and president of Griffin and Brand of McAllen Inc., from 1961 to 1993. He is also a past officer of numerous industry groups, including the Texas Citrus and Vegetable Insurance Exchange, which he co-founded.

In 1991, Showers was named president of the Commission on Food and Food Distribution to Russia by President George Bush. He retired as general manager of Elmore & Stahl Produce of McAllen in September 2003.



From 1987 to 1993, he was vice chairman of the Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System. He was vice chairman of the agriculture task force for the university's Target 2000 committee and has served in numerous other capacities on advisory councils or committees associated with the university. He received the Knapp-Porter Award from Extension in 1985.

Showers and his wife, Reba, also have been supportive of the larger Texas A&M community as well, endowing the Reba and Wayne Showers of '53 Sul Ross Scholarship for students in the Corps of Cadets. He was recognized by The Association of Former Students in 1994 as Distinguished Alumnus and in 1996 as the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Outstanding Alumnus.

He graduated from Mission High School in 1949 and came to Texas A&M where he earned bachelor's degrees in horticulture and entomology in 1953 and 1958, respectively, and also a master's degree in entomology in 1958.

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Texas Ranger John R. Hughes

## Hughes and Aten Solve the Williamson Family Murders

by Mike Whittington

Back in 1889, John R. Hughes was a private in the Texas Rangers. He was working with Sergeant Ira Aten along the Nueces River near Barksdale, some ninety miles from Eagle Pass.

In the spring of that year, Aten got a message from Captain Jones:

*"The authorities seem to feel that we can do something toward clearing up the finding of four murder victims in the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass, so I want you and Hughes to take hold of the matter and stay with it, regardless of time and trouble, just as long as you believe there is hope of accomplishing anything toward identifying the murderer.*

*The message included a description of the victims. There were four corpses, three women and a young man, and they were dressed in typical frontier clothing. The first woman was about fifty, the other about thirty, and the young girl about seventeen. The youth was in his early twenties. They had all been found in the Rio Grande, weighed down with heavy stones tied to them with what seemed to be a new rope similar to the kind used by farmers for plough reins. All their skulls had been crushed by a heavy, blunt instrument. There were no marks on the clothing, and there was nothing in the youth's pockets. The only identifying factors on the thirty-year-old woman were her false teeth and bunions. The youth had teeth which were set wide*

*apart. Nobody in the area could identify the victims even though they were put on display by an undertaker in Eagle Pass. As a result, they had been buried at public expense."*

### Texas Ranger Ira Aten

When Sergeant Aten and Private Hughes arrived in Eagle Pass, they reported to Maverick County Sheriff W. N. Cooke. He had written down a description of each victim and had also kept the rope and stones used to weigh the bodies down. This gave the Rangers something to go on. If they could find where the stones were from, they could possibly find the scene of the murders. Locating the place where the rope was purchased might provide a clue to the murderer. This wasn't much evidence, but the victims had been buried for a while, and nobody seemed to know who they were.



Aten and Hughes decided that the first thing they would do was search the banks of the Rio Grande on the Texas side to see if they could find where the stones came from. This time-consuming job took most of the first day and into the evening.

As they were preparing to rest before continuing their search the next day, Hughes remembered how, several weeks earlier, they had arrested a young cowboy for brandishing a pistol and creating a disturbance in Barksdale. His name was Dick Duncan, and he had been put under a peace bond. Despite his rough and shoddy appearance, he had paid the sum demanded in cash.

### Nueces River

Some time later, Duncan had arrived at the Ranger camp, which was near Barksdale, and spent most of the time there bragging about the gunfighters he had known. This hadn't gone down well with Hughes. When he came across Duncan the following day on a road near the Nueces River, he took note of the man riding with Duncan. He was a cowboy who identified himself as "Picnic" Jones. Jones said they were riding escort for three women riding in a Mitchell wagon driven by a youth. He also mentioned that the wagon was green, looked nearly new, and had "J. S. Clark, San Saba" stamped on it. Hughes got the impression that Duncan and Jones were escorting the family somewhere.



Remembering all this, Sergeant Aten decided to travel up to San Saba and see what he could discover about the wagon, who had sold it, and who purchased it. The following morning, he went to Eagle Pass to get a stagecoach to San Saba while private Hughes continued the arduous task of searching the banks of the river to discover where the stones came from.

When Aten arrived in San Saba, he went to the sheriff's office. He discovered that Duncan had arrived there the night before, asking to stay until the sheriff could give him a clean slate. It seemed that people were accusing him of murder. The sheriff could only guess that he meant the murders of the

**Williamsons near Eagle Pass. The Williamsons were from the San Saba area.**

**This was Sergeant Aten's first break. He could now put names to the murder victims, provided that the details he had matched the descriptions of the Williamson family. The sheriff said that Mrs. Williamson was about fifty; her daughter, Mrs. Levonía Holmes, around thirty; Beulah, sixteen, and young Ben, twenty-one. The ages matched those of the victims. The sheriff then added that Mrs. Holmes had bunions on both feet and wore dentures, and Ben had teeth that were wide apart.**

**When the sheriff mentioned that Duncan had stayed at the Williamson ranch for several months, Aten knew he had something concrete to go on. To top it off, he learned that Duncan had recently purchased Mrs. Williamson's ranch. He had paid her two hundred dollars in cash, a further two hundred dollars in "vendors lien notes," a new Mitchell's wagon bought from J. S. Clark in San Saba, and a team and harness. Word had it that the Williamsons had been planning to move to Mexico, and Duncan and a cowboy named Walter Landers would escort them there.**

**Apparently the family and their escorts had left early one morning, heading for Mexico. About a week or ten days later, Duncan had returned to San Saba and made inquiries about the Williamson family's whereabouts to Tom Hawkins, the local blacksmith. This caused tongues to wag; hence Duncan's reason for asking the sheriff to protect him.**

**Aten recognized the name of Walter Landers as a man he once had under detention as a cattle rustler and who was now going under the alias of "Picnic" Jones. All the facts gathered up to this point led to Duncan or Landers being the murderer, but Aten needed some hard facts to go with the circumstantial evidence.**

**After talking to the local people, Aten discovered that Duncan had the reputation of being a hoodlum. He was a cousin to the Ketchum brothers, Sam and Blackjack Tom, both well known for their outlaw ways. It also seemed that Landers' brother-in-law, living under the name of Thompson, had fled to Mexico to escape charges of rustling.**

**Dr. A. E. Brown, the local dentist, confirmed to Aten that he had made the false teeth that Lavonia Holmes wore, and he also verified that Ben Williamson had gapped teeth. The local blacksmith told Aten the same story he had told the sheriff about Duncan's inquiry as to the whereabouts of the Williamsons. Further questioning in the town confirmed that the storekeeper Clark had sold the wagon and harness to Duncan but not the rope that had been found tied to the victims.**

**Aten decided it was time to have a chat with Duncan himself. When questioned, Duncan said that he had escorted the Williamsons to Mexico and had then returned back to San Saba. He thought that Landers might have been sweet on the Lavonia girl and probably went on into Mexico with the others. When asked if he thought the dead family at Eagle Pass might be the Williamsons, Duncan said that they might have been killed for the money they were carrying. Aten was surprised that he showed no concern for the family as he had lived with them for a considerable time.**

**Meanwhile, Hughes had sent word via the stagecoach that he had found the source of the stones. About twenty miles north of Eagle Pass, there was an abandoned ranch house half a mile back from the river. Similar stones had been found at the riverbank, but Hughes had also discovered some drag**

marks on the bank of the river that led to the old ranch house. Although the marks were no longer fresh, it seemed that some heavy objects had been dragged from the house to the river. It was also only about eight miles from where the first body was found.

Aten left to join Hughes at the ranch house. There they found bloodstains and signs of a struggle. Furniture had been broken and upturned.

Aten instructed the sheriff at San Saba to hold Duncan on a minor charge to insure he stayed in jail. He then got a court order for the exhumation of the Williamson bodies and wired the sheriff to come to Eagle Pass. He told him to bring Dr. Brown and other people that could identify the Williamsons.

At an inquest, the sheriff and some of the Williamsons' friends viewed the corpses. They were sure that these were the bodies of the Williamson family but would not swear to it. Dr. Brown, however, identified Lavonia Holmes' body by her false teeth and said that the young boy's body could only be that of Ben Williamson because of his buck teeth.

The doctor signed some affidavits, which Aten took as evidence, and the bodies were reburied. Aten also got some important evidence from the storekeeper in the small settlement of Spofford, near the old derelict ranch house where the bloodstains were found. The storekeeper's name was George Hobbs, and he remembered selling a length of rope to a man that matched Duncan's description. He said that the man had been carrying a Winchester with a badly bent barrel. When questioned, the man explained that he used it as a tool to quiet a burro that was not behaving.

A rancher heard Aten questioning the storekeeper. He volunteered the fact that he had seen the burro the following day, and it had shown no signs of being beaten with a rifle.

This was enough evidence, circumstantial and factual, to bring a case against Duncan. He was brought before Judge Winchester Kelso in Eagle Pass during the first week of December 1889. At his trial, he was found guilty and sentenced to hang. Duncan fought the decision in the federal and state criminal appeals courts. He even made a plea for clemency to Governor James Hogg. All his attempts to evade the rope were fruitless, however. On September 18, 1891, he finally fell through the gallows' trap door to his death.

Walter Landers was never traced. It was suggested that Duncan may have murdered him as well, but no evidence has been offered to support this.

### Notes



Ira Aten

Ira Aten was born in 1863. He joined the Rangers in 1883 and was instrumental in curtailing the Fence-Cutting War in Navarro County. His career in the Rangers lasted six-and-a-half years. When he resigned from the Rangers, he took up the post of sheriff in Fort Bend County. In 1890, he married and became foreman of the biggest ranch in Texas, the XIT, so named because it covered ten counties in Texas. At the age of





forty-two, he moved his family to California. There he stayed for the rest of his life, although he made frequent trips to Texas. He died on August 5, 1953.

**John R. Hughes**



John Hughes was born on February 11, 1855, and served a total of twenty-eight years in the Texas Rangers, twenty-one of them as Captain of Company D in El Paso. He was known as the "Border Boss."

After finishing the case against Duncan, Hughes returned to a ranch near Realitos to pay his respects to a young lady named Elizabeth Todd whom he had been "sparking" before he had been called to Eagle Pass. Sadly, the ranch owner told him the young lady had suddenly taken ill and died. They had tried to contact him but were unable to get a message through. This was a great shock to John Hughes, who immediately left to visit the graveyard where Elizabeth had been buried in Rockport. This was a journey he was to repeat every year until his death. In later years, he made the trip in a 1924 Ford, a car he took great pride in.

Hughes' health began to fail him as he grew older. In 1946, he took his own life.

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Sgt. Lee Young, Ret.

## No Confusion by Sgt. Lee Young, Texas Ranger, Retired

Folks in the Dallas metro-mess oftentimes mistake Texas Rangers for the baseball team. I recall an incident in the early 1990s when Captain Kirby Dendy (then a field Ranger in Fort Worth) and I were on the trail of a notorious thief. The robber was wanted in Midland County for the theft of several thousand dollars' worth of oil-field equipment.

Dendy and I located an address in an upscale area of Arlington, where the thief had recently purchased a home. When we got to the house, we noted it was easily valued close to a couple hundred thousand dollars. Parked in the circular driveway at the finely manicured lawn was a new-model BMW.

When we rang the doorbell, an attractive female answered and identified herself as the wife. She said her husband was still working at his office and gave us the address. Now, this fellow was no ordinary oil-field equipment thief—he conducted his stealing from behind an executive desk.

Just as Dendy and I were preparing to drive away from the residence, we observed a car coming up the street. The driver entered the circular driveway and parked behind the BMW. The second car was also a new BMW.

It was our lucky day. Who exited this BMW other than our Midland County oil-field-equipment thief! He was dressed in a black, tailored suit and wore a pair of black, Italian shoes.

Exiting our car, Dendy and I approached the man and identified ourselves as Texas Rangers. Immediately, the wanted man started to smile. He extended his hand as if he were greeting a welcoming committee.

We stated that we were there to serve a Midland County arrest warrant for



theft of oil-field equipment. Just about as fast as that smile had appeared, it suddenly disappeared.

The man later explained that he had originally believed we had been sent by the Texas Ranger baseball team to welcome him to his new home in the city of Arlington. He said he realized we were not from the sports organization when he saw “them big pistols” under our coats.

After transferring to McKinney (Collin County) several years later, I was contacted by the Midland County Sheriff’s Office. They had an arrest warrant for an oil-field-equipment thief—none other than the same scoundrel Dendy and I had pursued several years earlier in Tarrant County.

The thief was now living in an upscale area in west Plano, Texas. I quickly surmised that stealing had treated him very well indeed. He was now living in a house valued at three times more than the home in Arlington.

When I went up to the man this time, he had no confusion as to what kind of Ranger I was!

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