



# The Texas Ranger Dispatch™

Issue 23, Summer 2007

Magazine of the official Museum, Hall of Fame, and Repository of the Texas Rangers Law Enforcement Agency

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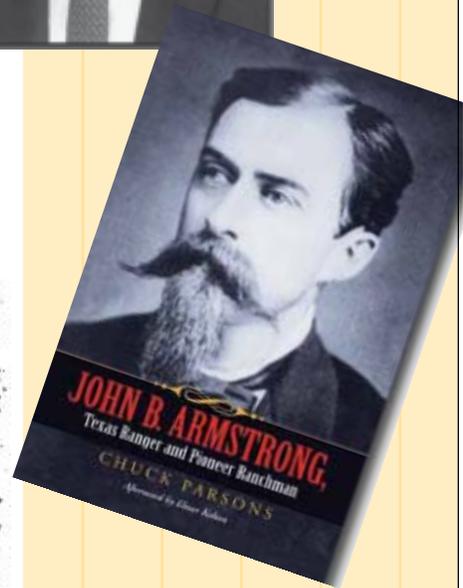
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*Former Gillespie County Courthouse, Fredericksburg, Texas*



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Texas Ranger  
Dispatch

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# Texas Ranger Dispatch

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# Ask the Dispatch



Just looked over the online *Dispatch*. Your organization is a lot more extensive and impressive than I realized.

Walt Frederick  
Chicago, Illinois



The otherwise excellent article by John Dinan, "The Pulp Cowboy," contains one glaring error. Tom Curry did not create *Texas Ranger Magazine*, as the author states. While Curry was one of the various authors who wrote Jim Hatfield stories under the Jackson Cole house name, the Jim Hatfield character was the creation of A. Leslie Scott, another writer (whose name escapes me at the moment), and the editors at Thrilling Publications. Curry's contributions to the magazine were his well-written Hatfield novels, but he had nothing to do with its creation. You can check the files I sent along with my pulps to verify this.

A print of an original painting that will be the cover of my next Jim Blawczyk novel will be on the way shortly.

Please let me know how soon the previous issue of *Texas Ranger Magazine* will be available.

Thanks,  
Jim Griffin



I found your website and have enjoyed reading the article on the 1851 Navy Colts.

I have a question regarding the purchase of the Navy/Navy 1851 Colts by the state of Texas. In the paragraph below, are you referring to the Navy/Navies in serial range 89000-91000 when you say, "Indiana received 250, and that same year New Hampshire bought 300." Texas ordered 368 Navies in August 1858, and former Ranger Ben McCulloch purchased 300 in the summer of 1860. Another 300 with iron back straps and trigger guards were bought by the state quartermaster, General R. C. Thom." Would those have been marked with the "US" and perhaps some other Navy markings?

I was looking at a Navy/Navy in the 89xxx range that has the "US" marking as well as an "Anchor" following the barrel address. Just wondered if it could have been purchased by Texas. That serial range would have been made in 1858, and could have been shipped to fill those orders.

NAVY-NAVIES are the later types with iron back straps and large, round, iron trigger guards. They have the small "U.S." stamped on the frame below "Colt's Patent" and "U.S.N." on the butt of the back strap. They are in the serial number range of



89000-91000. The first order, in June 1852, was for 100 belt pistols to outfit Commander Perry's expedition to the East Indies and the China Sea. Several states also purchased the belt-size revolvers to equip their militia. In 1857, Indiana received 250, and that same year New Hampshire bought 300. Texas ordered 368 Navies in August 1858, and former Ranger Ben McCulloch purchased 300 in the summer of 1860. Another 300 with iron back straps and trigger guards were bought by the state quartermaster, General R. C. Thom.

Thanks for any additional information you may have.

Thanks,  
Dan Williams

Thank you for your email and nice words about the 1851 Navy article.

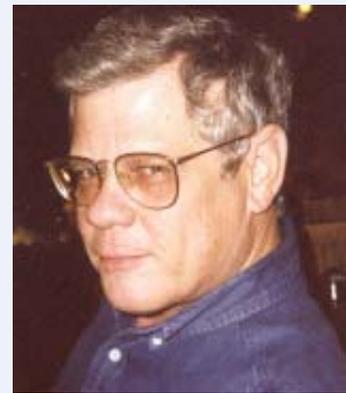
The only 1851 Navies I am aware of (Swyaze's book) with the small "US" marking on the frame with no USN stamped on the butt of the iron back strap in the 89000-91000 range were delivered directly to the US government by passing the inspectors. Those purchased by Ben McCulloch and by the Texas quartermaster (McAulay's book) serial number range were not mentioned. I've never read or seen any "US"-stamped revolvers with a Texas state marking.

Regardless of no Texas-connection proof, sounds like an interesting Colt.

David Stroud

## Dispatch Author **David Stroud** Is Piper Nominee

The *Dispatch* is proud to post this honor for our regular contributing author, David Stroud. David has written many informative articles on guns since the inception of our magazine. This announcement comes from Vice President of Instruction Gerald M. Stanglin, EdD of Kilgore College in Kilgore, Texas.



**David V. Stroud**

Please join me in congratulating David Stroud as the Kilgore College Piper Professor nominee for the upcoming year. He will compete with others from around the state for one of 15 slots for Piper Professor. David has taught history at Kilgore College since 1977 and has been a teacher since 1972, excluding his stint as a Marine Corps Drill Instructor. He will be getting his nomination materials together this summer so that he may be competitive at the state level this fall.

Along with this nomination comes a monetary award as part of the Hamilton F. and Kathryn G. Beeson Teaching Award at KC.

I know you will want to join me in wishing him well in the upcoming year's competition state-wide.

**Congratulations, Professor Stroud!**

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# Texas Ranger Phil Ryan

## *Steam Whistle?*



By **Lieutenant Lane Akin, Texas Rangers, Retired**

**Q**uarried pink granite from Burnet County traveled by rail over the rolling hills northwest of Fort Worth in 1895. Each block was numbered before it was off-loaded beneath the highest point in Wise County, Texas. The blocks completed their 225-mile journey behind mule teams on a brief uphill wagon trek. At the end, the granite was carefully placed atop the summit of Decatur, the county seat.

The purpose of the granite-block transportation was the construction of the Wise County courthouse. It took more than one year to finish this building, at the cost of just more than \$100,000. Since its completion in 1896, it has presided over the center of Wise County as an eagle perched in its lofty nest, and it can be seen from the most distant reaches of the area. The courthouse is a testament to Wise County government and remains the most notable structure in the county even more than 100 years later.

As for the people of Wise County, characters have come and gone. In Decatur at the time of the courthouse construction, there were several citizens of note. One of the most significant was Tom Waggoner, the owner of the Waggoner Ranch and arguably the best cattleman in Texas. He built his ranch headquarters on an opposing hilltop just east of the courthouse square, and his mansion was an impressive structure that was used as a model for the home in the 1956 movie, *Giant*, starring Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, and James Dean.

During the first third of the 20th century, Tom Waggoner was often seen visiting with local characters in the Decatur train depot. Legend has it that on one occasion, Tom and his circle of friends were gathered together verbally solving all manner of local and worldly problems. When a train pulled into the depot, a finely dressed, big-city salesman exited, toting his heavy luggage. He approached Tom and his entourage and asked the men if one of them might be interested in carrying his luggage to the hotel—for a healthy tip. Tom stood, grabbed the bags, and started up the hill. As they walked, the salesman looked to the east and spotted the Waggoner mansion.

He asked, “Who lives in that big house?”

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Tom, loaded and trudging upward, replied, "I do."

"How do you afford a house like that?"

Tom answered, "I carry my own damn bags."

A more recent Decatur notable is Texas Ranger Phil Ryan, who first walked the courthouse square in 1980. Local citizens soon realized their new Texas Ranger was a man of relentless dedication and confident ability. His unmatched quick wit was always followed by an easy, broad smile, and he won many admirers among the population and law enforcement community. Ryan was assigned three counties: Wise, Jack, and Montague. His sheriffs relied upon his expertise and availability, and Ryan became the face of responsible law enforcement.

Ranger Ryan had no adherence to any manner of a normal workday; when his phone rang, he responded. He might be found any time of day or night investigating criminal acts and pursuing those who were responsible. Much to the dismay of his wife, Ryan was a man on an unceasing mission: exposing and apprehending criminals. Prosecutors, sheriffs, and police chiefs sang his praises while Mrs. Ryan only shook her head in frustration. Even when her husband was at home, his mind was elsewhere, solving the unsolved and devising mental plans to disclose evidence and capture culprits.

In early November 1986, first baseman Bill Buckner was still shaking his head in disappointment, unsuccessfully trying to remove the images of his ground-ball error that had cost the Boston Red Sox the World Series. In Texas, an affluent businessman named Gabriel\* was not in the least concerned about Bill Buckner or the Boston Red Sox. He was also not concerned with the Texas Rangers. He had heard of the organization, but he was not sure of its purpose. Gabriel lived in the Wise County town of Cross Timbers, part of Texas Ranger Phil Ryan's assigned area. As far as he was concerned, the horse and saddle days were a thing of the past. He had no need for the Texas Rangers, and he had never met Ryan. That was why he called the FBI in the midst of his most recent dilemma.

Gabriel had transgressed, and now someone out there was trying to make him pay. His sins were not unlike the wrongdoings of others—he was only human. Locally, however, the exposure of his indulgences could ruin his business. He was a trusted establishment man who seemed unlikely to let anyone down, and for years Cross Timbers citizens had turned to him in time of need. Gabriel owned the local funeral home, and his calm manner and well-tailored suits instilled confidence in those who gathered to bid their last farewells.

Gabriel's marriage and his business were in jeopardy because he had drifted repeatedly into the arms of another woman. Someone other than his mistress knew about this because extortion letters threatening to expose the affair were sent to Gabriel's wife Nicole. The letters claimed that there were photographs and other records that left no doubt as to Gabriel's guilt. He could not deny the affair, so he admitted everything to his wife.

Nicole was about ready to gut-shoot her husband, but her anger was overshadowed by her pending shame. In the vicinity of Decatur, the Gabriels were highly regarded, and

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\*Gabriel is the first name. I have not used the last name in order to protect the victim's identity.



now unmitigated embarrassment waited. She was not prepared to reduce her standing in the closely interweaved community—what would her Bunko club say? Then there were the rumors that would surely course through her Tuesday morning women’s Bible study. She could not imagine the humiliation.

The extortionist wanted only \$3000 for his story and the photographs. Nicole thought it a small price to pay in order to maintain her station in the community . . . and she could also make her husband pay in other ways.

Nicole was determined to meet the demands, but Gabriel thought it best to contact law enforcement. He could not notify the hometown sheriff because he might talk to the county judge, who spent too much time in the Kountry Korner Kafe drinking coffee and smoking with local gossip crowd. So Gabriel called the FBI, but they could not navigate the federal bureaucracy quickly enough for an effective response. Therefore, the FBI referred Gabriel to Texas Ranger Phil Ryan.

Unlike the FBI, the Texas Rangers were able to fight crime without prior approval from supervision. Ryan and the Rangers like him were hired because of their ability to make appropriate decisions in a timely manner, and they were in no need of close regulation. Ryan’s captain, Charlie Moore, was 280 miles to the west in Lubbock.

At his home, Ryan took Gabriel’s call and patiently listened to the plight. Gabriel’s wife Nicole had already agreed to meet that night with the extortionist west of Jacksboro where the Olney and Wichita Falls highways intersected. As Ryan hung up the phone and blurted a loud curse, Mrs. Ryan looked up from her *TV Guide*.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, even though she knew.

“Will it ever end?” Ryan posed. He continued, “There is a major extortion plot, and I’ve got to go back to work. I’m so sorry.” In conciliation, he offered, “Maybe we can drive to Fort Worth this weekend and see a movie.”

Ryan hurried from the room and pulled on his proper Ranger regalia. He fixed the Resistol covering his deeply receding hairline and started for the door, keys in hand. “I’ll see you when I get back.”

In truth, Ryan had been looking for a reason to be out of the house. His extended Texas Ranger hours tugged at Mrs. Ryan’s patience, and he was home tonight in an attempt at appeasement. She had been searching the *TV Guide* for something they could watch together. Ryan had not been looking forward to watching *Wheel of Fortune* yet again, although he did like the way Vanna White exposed her vowels.

The cooling November air slapped Ryan’s face as his anticipation grew. Meanwhile, Jack County Sheriff Dub Mathis was having his yearly law enforcement cookout on his ranch south of Jacksboro. Ryan figured he could stop by there to get help, go resolve the extortion, come back to eat, and then be back home before the calf fries cooled. His wife would no doubt be sound asleep by the time he returned, and she would never know about the extra social hours.

Ryan drove at Texas Ranger speed—very, very fast—to see Sheriff Mathis. Dub was deep into his cooking project when Ryan wheeled up beneath a cloud of Jack County



dust. He got out and explained the extortion plot, meanwhile tossing a blistering calf fry from hand to hand.

Sheriff Mathis arranged for \$3000 to be withdrawn as flash money, and he supplied a couple of deputies who would assist. Dub sent the trio away, promising to save some food for the crime fighters and mumbling some words about being careful. He had grown particularly fond of Ryan, and even though Dub's words were muted, there was honest and deep concern in them.

Ryan shouted back, "Don't worry! It's no big deal." Ryan himself was not worried. He never was—at least not that anyone could tell.

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*“ Don't worry! It's no big deal. ”*

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Nicole was waiting for Ryan. After he fitted her with a small body microphone, he picked up the cash and handed it to her. He then climbed into the back seat of her car, got positioned on the floorboard, and covered himself with a blanket. From that location, he offered instructions to a visibly shaken Nicole.

The two deputies already had their directions and took position in a nearby secluded position. In their marked patrol cars, they awaited Ryan's radio call.

It was dark when Ranger Ryan and Nicole arrived at the extortionist's designated meeting place. Nicole parked her Suburban on a high shoulder near where the Olney and Wichita Falls highways merge. Ryan checked on the hidden deputies with a quick call by handheld radio. All was in place.

Now, Ryan and Nicole could only wait. Nicole passed the frightful minutes in meaningless conversation with the Texas Ranger, who was still in his position on the rear floorboard. Through Ryan's presence and comfortable conversation, Nicole began to relax. She also found it remotely tempting that she had a furtively placed Texas Ranger within her Suburban. He wasn't a bad-looking man, and there was something fascinating about the badge on his chest and the gun at his hip. Nicole felt that, at this moment, Ryan would keep her safe. These emotions were a manifestation of the Stockholm syndrome, an overwhelming need felt by kidnap victims to emotionally connect with their captors.

"He's here," Nicole abruptly announced when she saw headlamps pull to a stop several yards behind her vehicle. Ryan dug deeper into the floorboard and uttered some last-minute instructions to her about not venturing far from her car.

A darkened figure dressed in a hat and an overcoat approached and circled the vehicle. He looked inside in a weak attempt to make sure Nicole was alone. She got out and met the suspect at the hood of the car.

Ryan listened to the low-keyed body bug. He heard enough of the discussion to understand an agreement had been reached and money was being delivered. Into his handheld radio, he whispered to the deputies, "Come on." There was a brief instant of silence, and then engines raced and tires squealed—confirmation the radio broadcast was appropriately understood. The deputies were on their way.



The extortionist quickly gathered the cash from the Suburban hood. Stuffing crisp, hundred-dollar bills in his coat pockets, he turned to run away from the rapidly approaching patrol cars. As he looked back at the Jack County deputies, he smiled. In a few moments, he would be in the brush and they would never catch him. The fools were playing into his hands because he had figured that Nicole would rat out the deal, and he had planned his escape. He knew this country, and he had a vehicle hidden close by that was stolen and could not be traced back to him.

Ryan had never been a man of inaction. As soon as he had issued the radio call, he had scrambled from underneath the blankets in the back floorboard and pushed himself through the passenger side door like a fullback behind a pulling guard. The extortionist's smile was extinguished as Ryan caught him and drove his fist into the big man's chest. The shakedown artist bounced off the passenger side of the Suburban and fell to his knees. Ryan stood over him and shouted, "I'm a Texas Ranger! You're under arrest!"

"No, you're not," the extortionist pathetically replied.

Ryan shoved his badge in the man's face. "Oh, yes, I am!"

The extortionist jumped up and started running the opposite direction. After a short chase, Ryan tackled the man from behind and pushed him to the rough pavement of US Highway 380. When Ryan slapped the man alongside the face with his Texas Ranger ID and badge, a circle and star welted up from the big man's left cheek. He fought and attempted to rise, but Ryan kept him pinned.

Two shotgun-bearing deputies breathlessly arrived and thrust twelve-gauge barrels into the suspect's face. He quit fighting and started screaming something about wanting an attorney. As one of the deputies knelt and started to handcuff the extortionist, it was discovered that he held a butcher knife. The gentle nudge of a blue, steel barrel convinced him to drop the weapon.

Ryan backed away and noticed heavy blood spatters on the roadway asphalt. He conducted a quick visual inventory of the deputies and the suspect, but they seemed fine, so he cataloged his own body parts. Everything was in place, but there was blood from his knee to his foot and he felt an uneasy warmth in his right boot. Ryan first thought he might have sprained his ankle in the chase, but now there was something vaguely familiar about the numbness he was feeling in his ankle—he had apparently been stabbed.

The suspect struggled free of the deputies and was began the fight again. Ryan was understandably agitated due to his unexpected wound. He dove into the pile of tussling men and swung a wild left hook. The entire heap of humanity tumbled over a guardrail and into brush below. After some additional exertion, the suspect was ultimately handcuffed, and the officers pulled the suspect back up to the roadway.

When the Jack County deputies finally got a look at the extortionist, they quickly recognized him. He was a local probationer who also happened to be the husband of Gabriel's mistress.

Ryan sat down on the pavement and slipped off his blood-filled boot. The arterial injury was allowing a thick flow to spurt about four inches above the wound with each beat



of Ryan's heart. One of the deputies recognized the seriousness of the Ranger's injury. Keying his microphone, he uttered the most dreaded broadcast known to all of law enforcement, "Officer down! Officer down!"

An ambulance arrived, and Jacksboro doctors tried to slow Ryan's blood flow. He was given an IV and transported to a trauma center in John Peter Smith Hospital, Fort Worth.

A burley emergency room nurse was standing with her arms crossed when the ambulance doors flew open. Ryan did not note a hint of compassion in her face when she looked down upon his gurney. She visually examined her patient, and her eyes locked on the ankle bandages.

"Are you the Texas Ranger who was stabbed?" she dubiously asked.

Ryan confirmed that he was a Texas Ranger and did believe he had been stabbed.

A cynical sneer slipped across the nurse's broad, freckled face. "Did a midget stab you?"

After a few nerve grafts and the reconstruction of his left hand (the wild left hook had broken several bones), Ryan recovered and continued for a few more years as the Texas Ranger northwest of Fort Worth. In 1992, he was elected sheriff of Wise County. The previous sheriff had been convicted of corruption charges, and Ryan restored confidence in that office. In 2004, he retired from Wise County and spent his last two years in law enforcement as Denton County's captain of criminal investigations. Today, he continues his investigative skills in the corporate world.

Throughout over thirty-five years in law enforcement, Phil Ryan labored without fanfare. He became the product of his father's lessons and often had one of his countless sayings frequently passing through his mind: "The steam that blows a whistle never turns a wheel."

Ryan is no steam whistle. He is the steam that turns the wheel.

**Lieutenant Lane Akin** was born at Greenville, Texas, on September 24, 1952. After graduating from Princeton High School, he attended Texas A & M-Commerce, where he earned a BSCJ and graduated 1981.

He started his career in law enforcement as an officer of the DFW Airport Police Department in 1974. In 1976, he became a Highway Patrolman with the Texas Department of Public Safety and was named an investigator in DPS Narcotics Service in 1983. Akin proudly became a Texas Ranger in 1988 and was promoted to lieutenant of Company D in San Antonio in 2001. Soon thereafter, he transferred back to Company B as lieutenant. He retired in 2003 and became a member of AT&T's corporate security.

Akin was highly respected by his peers. During his years with the Texas Department of Public Safety, he was twice named Law Enforcement Officer of the Year (1996 and 2000) for Wise, Jack, and Montague Counties by the Three County Criminal Justice Association.

It is easy to see why the Texas Ranger Dispatch is proud to have retired Texas Ranger Lieutenant Lane Akin join our family of historians/writers. Having been a Texas Ranger, he brings a unique prospective to our magazine.

# Robert Addison Gillespie

## 1815–1846

By **Steve Moore**



**Gillespie County, Texas, is named for Robert Addison Gillespie. Its 1882 courthouse, designed by English architect Alfred Giles, is currently the town's public library and sits off of Main Street.** *Photo courtesy of Jim Long, Franklin TN.*

**M**any a Texas county is named in honor of a Republic-era frontiersman who gave his life to maintain freedom for our Lone Star State. Such is the case of Gillespie County, which lies some seventy miles west of Austin. It is named after a leader known as Ad Gillespie, who made his way to Texas in 1837 and became a businessman before he began riding with the Texas Rangers. He drew his first blood in a Comanche village raid and thereafter fought shoulder-to-shoulder with many legends of the Ranging service.

Robert Addison Gillespie was born in Blount County, Tennessee, on June 12, 1815. Shortly after moving to Texas, he formed a mercantile and land partnership in Matagorda with his brothers James H. and Matthew M. Gillespie. This business, which became known as Gillespie and Brothers, was moved to La Grange in 1839. There, the brothers established a mercantile store and bought Texas bounty-land certificates. Ad Gillespie spent three more years in this business before he began riding with the Rangers.

Gillespie's first documented frontier service was as a member of Colonel John Henry Moore's Ranger expedition into the upper Colorado River regions. When Captain Nicholas Mosby Dawson formed the Colorado County Company on September 20, 1840, Gillespie was elected first lieutenant. The expedition set out from Walnut Creek near Austin and moved up the Colorado River. Discovering a large Comanche village near present Colorado City, Moore's ad hoc Ranging companies made a surprise attack on the morning of October



24. They killed at least eighty Comanches and took another thirty-four prisoner in addition to seizing hundreds of horses and much plunder. Lieutenant Gillespie and the others of Colonel Moore's expedition returned to Austin in early November with their prisoners. None of the participants were ever paid for their service, as President Sam Houston felt that their captured horses more than fairly compensated the men.

Ad Gillespie's next Indian expedition was organized in May 1841 under Majors Mark Lewis and George Thomas Howard. In Fayette, the Fayette Volunteers were organized with Captain Thomas Green in command and Gillespie as his second-in-command. Major Mark Lewis's expedition against "the hostile Indians up the Colorado and Concho [Rivers]" pursued Comanche trails and killed a small number of Indians. Lieutenant Gillespie led one twenty-man detachment in pursuit of Indians on May 20, but the Indians hastily abandoned their horses and fled from Gillespie's party into the cedar brakes. In June, after returning to San Antonio, Captain Green's company joined forces with Edward Burleson to chase after Indian raiders on the Leon River. These Indians were closely pursued but were not brought into close combat. Gillespie and the rest of Green's company were discharged in Austin on August 28, 1841.



**Steve Moore**  
*Author*

In September 1842, Gillespie participated in the Battle of Salado Creek, in which rebel Vicente Cordova was killed. Late in the year, Gillespie was also a member of the Somervell Expedition, which marched toward Laredo to challenge General Adrian Woll's forces. Those who chose to continue as part of the Mier Expedition (Gillespie not included) were ultimately taken prisoner and held within those men, petitioning for money owed to them for services. Among those former POWs was one William "Bigfoot" Wallace.

Ad Gillespie joined the famed Ranger unit of Captain Jack Hays in March 1843 and served almost continually with the captain until 1845. During this time, he fought in a number of battles and was wounded at Walker's Creek in June 1844. While fighting with Hays's fifteen-man company, Gillespie and fellow Ranger Sam Walker were both run through with lances. Gillespie continued to fight and was credited with firing a death shot at the Comanche chief who was trying to rally his Indians for another charge against the Rangers. San Antonio resident Mary Maverick wrote that after Gillespie's sharpshooting, "a panic seized the Indians, and they fled in the utmost confusion."

In 1845, General Zachary Taylor arrived in Texas. Captain Gillespie commanded a company of volunteers who enlisted into federal service, and his unit helped Taylor in the occupation of Laredo. Gillespie's forty men took the town, seizing twenty-eight Mexican soldiers as prisoners.

During the Mexican War, Captain Hays formed the First Regiment of Texas Mounted Riflemen. Gillespie joined and commanded Company I, which was mustered into service



**The common gravesite of Ad Gillespie and Sam Walker in San Antonio.**

on August 30, 1846, with Bigfoot Wallace as first lieutenant. With Hays leading the regiment, Company I participated in the assault of Bishop's Palace atop Independence Hill. On September 22, 1846, Gillespie was the first man to reach the summit during this conflict; however, he was mortally wounded in the stomach. As he lay bleeding from a gunshot wound, he passed his sword to Lieutenant G. H. Nelson and said, "Lead the company. I am gone, but Monterrey is ours!" Gillespie then asked his men to prop him up behind a rock so he could do some damage with his revolver while his men advanced.

Gillespie passed away the following day, and his comrades returned his body to Texas for a burial in San Antonio. Years later, his remains were re-interred in the San Antonio Odd Fellows Cemetery along with those of fellow Ranger Samuel H. Walker. Both men had been wounded while fighting at Walker's Creek in 1844.

In 1848, Gillespie County was created, with Fredericksburg as the seat. The county was named in honor of the respected Texas Ranger who had recently perished while heroically leading his company in the Mexican War.

## Key Sources

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For more information on Hall of Fame Ranger Sam Walker, click on the links below:

- ◆ [Sam Walker by Robert Nieman \(Dispatch 9, Winter 2002\)](#)
- ◆ [Colt Walker by David Stroud \(Dispatch 2, Winter 2000\)](#)
- ◆ [Sam Walker by Allen Hatley \(Dispatch 2, Winter 2000\)](#)

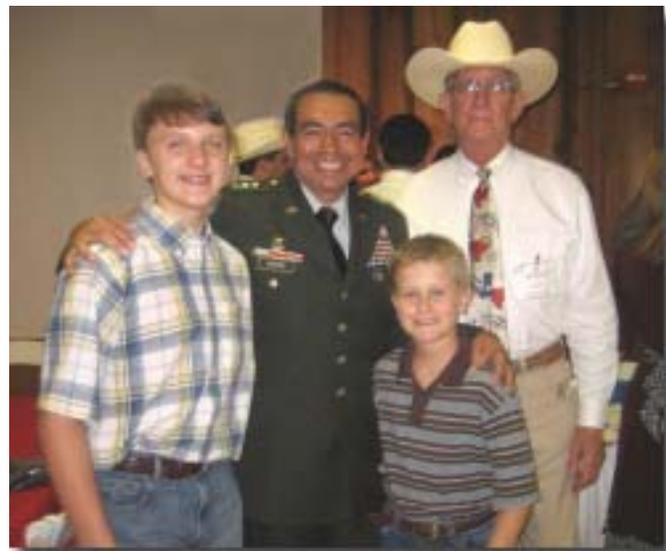
# 2007 Texas Ranger Reunion



▲ The keynote speaker at this year's reunion was Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez. After an insightful and important speech, he received a well-deserved and sustained standing ovation. General Sanchez commanded all coalition forces in Iraq from June 2003 to June 2004. When he retired in November 2006, he was the highest ranking Hispanic in United States military history.



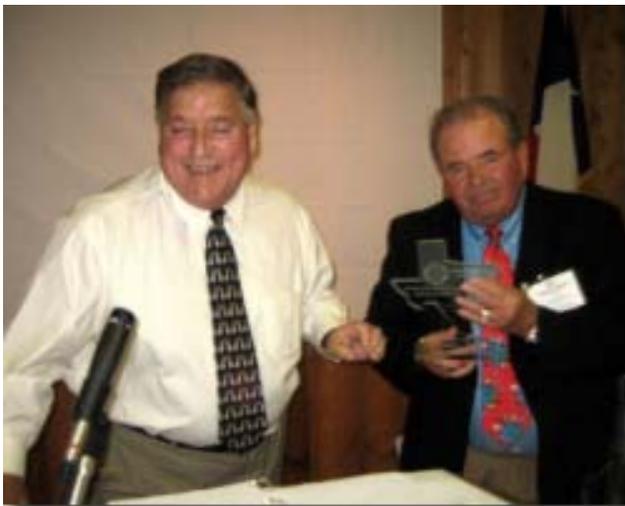
▲ Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum Director Byron Johnson addressed the foundation during their board meeting. He brought the members up to date on new construction and updating at the museum. The project started after the 2006 reunion and costs more than six million dollars.



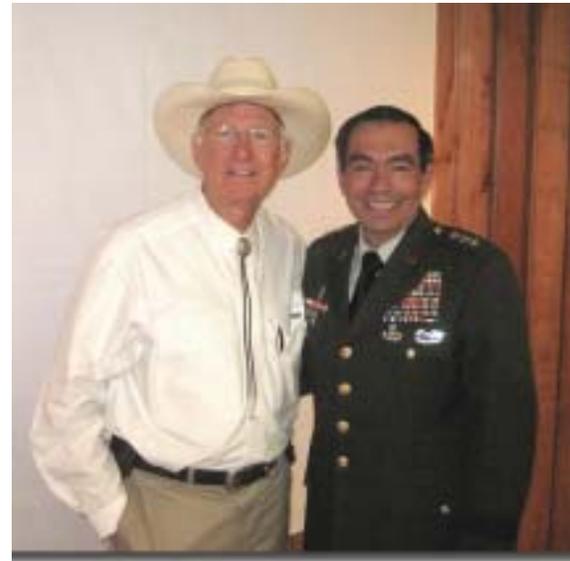
▲ After his speech, General Sanchez visited with many who appreciated his service to our country, including past Foundation Chairman Joel Jackson and his grandsons, pictured here.



◀ In February 2007, Captain Barry Caver (commander of Midland's Company E) and Foundation board member Vern Foreman sponsored a tremendously successful gala, headlined by actor Tommy Lee Jones. In this photo, they present Foundation Chairman Benny Vanachek with a check for more than \$180,000. For more about the gala see the *Dispatch*, Issue 22, Spring 2007.



▲ Incoming and outgoing Texas Ranger Foundation Association Chairmen, Ed "Bubba" Hudson and Benny Vanacek.



▲ All pictures in this article are courtesy of David "Smiley" Irvin, the Portrait Photographer of Fort Worth, Texas ([www.dsirvin.com](http://www.dsirvin.com)). Smiley is a great friend of the Rangers and the Foundation. Here he visits with General Sanchez.

▶ Past Texas Ranger Association Foundation Chairman Joe York addressed the board of directors.





► Each year, the Texas Ranger Association Foundation proudly presents the child of every Texas Ranger with a scholarship for \$3,500 to attend any accredited college or university of their choice. This year, Air Force Captain Heather Whitman Martin, who is the daughter of Texas Ranger Lieutenant Hank Whitman, gave the Foundation a thumbnail sketch of how this scholarship had benefited her. Her speech made every member's chest swell with justifiable pride.

Captain Martin's speech, in its entirety, may be seen on the following page.



◀ On May 15, 2007, Texas Ranger Joe Haralson delivered this speech at the Galveston County Law Enforcement Center during the National Police Week Memorial Ceremony.

Ranger Haralson's speech may be seen on the following pages.

► The usual large crowd attended the 2007 Texas Ranger Association Foundation Texas Ranger Reunion.





## Captain Heather Whitman Martin Speech

Presented at the 2007 Texas Ranger Reunion

*Captain Martin was the  
2001 Texas Ranger Association Foundation Scholarship Recipient*



First of all, I would like to thank Ms. White and the rest of the Texas Ranger Association Foundation for inviting me to speak tonight. I would also like to thank those of you who have contributed to the scholarship fund in the past.

As mentioned, I was a former recipient of the scholarship back in 2001. As a result of receiving the scholarship, I was able to complete my undergraduate studies at Portland State University the following year and was ultimately awarded a bachelor of arts degree in art and literature with a focus in Chicano/Latino studies and a minor in Spanish language and literature.

In addition, as a result of obtaining that degree, I was offered a commission in the United States Air Force and a position in the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance career field. I am now working on my masters degree in international relations with a focus in national security.

Had it not been for this scholarship fund, my life may have taken a very different turn. Your contributions allowed me access to the tools, training, and knowledge that would later assist me in supporting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, humanitarian operations in Africa and Europe, and training operations in Korea.

I would like to give you a little bit of insight into the nature of some of the operations that you contributed to as result of investing in my education:

In Iraq, you contributed to . . .

- In-depth intelligence analysis and tracking of the #1 suicide bomber network in Iraq; analysis drove operations that neutralized the suicide bomber's network and operations.
- Trend analysis of 36 airfields attacks in Iraq, which enabled airfields to mitigate threats. As a result, the attacks on our airfields in Iraq were reduced by 25%.
- Meticulous analysis involving improvised explosive tactics. As a result of that analysis, over 10K enemy weapons found in Iraq.

In Afghanistan, you contributed to . . .

- Analysis that sparked the most successful Enduring Freedom operation in four years. As a result, 8 weapons caches found and we had 50 enemy kills.

In Europe, you contributed to . . .



- Analysis that assured the President of the United States' safety during a historic visit to the former Soviet Union countries of Latvia, Georgia, and Russia.

In Africa, you contributed to . . .

- Movement of over 1,500 African Union peacekeeping troops into the war-torn Darfur region of Sudan.

As you can see, you've done more than just contribute to a scholarship fund; you've contributed to our country as well as the international community.

In closing, I would like to thank you again for investing in my education. Hopefully, what I've done here tonight is demonstrate to you all that by contributing to this scholarship fund, you're not just contributing to someone's education; you're ultimately investing in their future as well as the future of our nation. As a sign of my gratitude, my family and I would like to present the chairman of the Texas Ranger Association Foundation with a donation in the amount of \$1,000.

Thank you.

## Texas Ranger Joe Haralson Speech

Presented at the 2007 Texas Ranger Reunion



*On May 15, 2007, Ranger Joe Haralson delivered this speech at the Galveston County Law Enforcement Center during the National Police Week Memorial Ceremony. The Texas Ranger Dispatch wishes to express our gratitude to Breck Porter and the Police News for granting us permission to reprint.*

In 1962, the 87th Congress of the United States, issued a joint resolution, authorizing then President, John F. Kennedy to proclaim the week of May 15th of each year NATIONAL POLICE WEEK and May 15th each year POLICE OFFICERS MEMORIAL DAY, in recognition of the men and women who, night and day, stand guard in our midst to protect us through enforcement of our laws.

And it is for that purpose we have assembled. We are here to memorialize those police officers, who have made the ultimate sacrifice, to honor and say thanks to those police officers who have served honorably and retired, and to those who continue to serve.

The National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington DC has chiseled into it, the names of over 17000 police officers killed in the line of duty. In the last 10 years, there have been 1649 police officers killed in the line of duty in the United States. 145 officers



were killed in the year 2006. The average number of officers killed each year for the last 10 years is 165.

While the number of police officers killed each year is up and down, the number of felonious assaults against police officers continues to rise. There were 16, 072 assaults of police officers which resulted in injury to the officer in 2006. The increased availability and use of body armor and improved trauma care keeps the number of deaths from being much higher.

The duties and responsibilities of a police officer are many and varied. A police officer may issue a traffic citation to a good citizen, deliver a death message to the parents of a child killed in a traffic accident, testify in court, listen to a citizen complain his stolen property has not been recovered, and get into a life or death struggle in a single shift. Police frequently use terms such as, routine patrol, routine call, and routine traffic stop. Those routine duties took the lives of 145 officers in 2006.

Since the first police department was created in Boston in the 1700's, policing has changed. Equipment has changed, philosophy has changed, and tactics have changed - but the Mission remains the same. Many agencies have issued Mission Statements, and they all differ somewhat, but the Mission of every police officer and police agency is or should be, by all lawful means, to Protect the citizen they serve and their property, to defend the defenseless, and arrest those who would take advantage of law abiding citizens.

And something else that has not changed, a life and death struggle between a police officer doing his sworn duty and a criminal intent upon killing him is the same today as it ever was. I have read that there is no more toxic environment than face to face combat. When we speak of combat, we usually think of soldiers, God Bless Them. This was recently made real to us when Specialist Eddie Tamez, one of the Island's own, was killed in Iraq while serving with the United States Army ; but if you go forth daily, as a police officer does, and put yourself between peaceful citizens and those who would do them harm and not respect their rights, the possibility of a face to face, life or death struggle, is a reality. A recent article in the Strafford, Virginia newspaper referred to Police Officers as Soldiers in a War That Never Ends and I believe that is a good analogy.

Knowing this, men and women continue to join the ranks of police officers, serve their community, and put themselves in harms way. On September 11, 2001, 2726 Americans were killed in the World Trade Center. Of those killed were 77 police officers and over 300 firemen. There are stories of heroic actions of citizens who survived the attack and of those who did not survive, but those citizens were in the World Trade Center that day as a matter of routine, they worked there and went there every day. Those 77 police officers, as were the firemen, were not there as a matter of routine. They, borrowing a line from a dispatch General Custer sent from the battlefield at the Little Big Horn, rode to the sound of the musketry. And they did so willingly, not because of the adventure or the big money, but because of a sense of duty.

There are currently over 800,000 police officers in the United States, and across this country, on an almost daily basis, police officers are involved in life or death struggles that



make the OK Corral pale in comparison. The OK Corral was a different day and time and police may have been looked at differently. CNN did not cover the OK Corral, but everyone knows about it and know who the Earps and the Clantons were. The FBI shootout in Miami and the North Hollywood Bank Robbery was front page for a couple of days and was forgotten. I would be surprised if anyone here recognizes the names Gerald Dove, Benjamin Grogan, William Matix, Michael Platt, Larry Eugene Phillips or Emil Matasareanu.

This is reality, and if you think I have painted a picture of gloom, that was not my intention. Police Officers do what they do, they choose their station in life and few would trade places with someone else.

In days of old, when Knights roamed the earth, and there really were Knights. I am sure some of them were thugs, but Knights were known for their chivalry and honor. Each morning they got up, donned armor, picked up a shield that bore the authority by which they acted, and with a weapon on their side, went forth to do good deeds and protect the citizens they served. The Chinese invented gun powder, and gun powder defeated armor, and Knights disappeared from the earth. Today, across this country, police officers get up in the morning, don armor, pin a shield upon their left breast that displays the authority by which they act, and with a weapon on their hip, go forth to do good deeds and protect the citizens they serve. These men and women are Knights in every sense of the word.

These modern day Knights, these Paladins, deserve the support and gratitude of the citizens of this country. And you police officers, there is no greater responsibility or higher calling than that of a police officer, you have a sacred, solemn duty to live worthy and to conduct yourself with honor and chivalry as did those knights of old.

God bless you.

Reprint from the *Police News*, June 2007, Vol. IV, No. 6, p. 12

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Breck Porter — [editor@gcpolicenews.com](mailto:editor@gcpolicenews.com)



# John B. ARMSTRONG

## Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman

*John B. Armstrong, Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman* is the latest book by regular *Texas Ranger Dispatch* writer/historian Chuck Parsons. It is a long overdue work on one of the most legendary Texas Rangers of all time. Though best known for capturing the notorious Texas gunman John Wesley Hardin, Armstrong had a fabled career not only as a Texas Ranger, but also as a pioneer Texas cattleman.

As a Ranger, Armstrong served under the renowned Captain Leander McNelly. While a "Little McNelly," Armstrong and his fellow Rangers almost caused an international incident when McNelly led them in the invasion of the Mexican bandito stronghold at Las Cuevas, Mexico.

With the permission of the Texas A & M University Press, we proudly present an excerpt from this important addition to Texas Ranger history.

Excerpt from *John B. Armstrong* by Chuck Parsons

### Chapter 3

## *Gunfire at Las Cuevas*

*Orders were received to ride rapidly to Las Cuevas, alias Robber's Roost. We obeyed them to the letter; we rode rapidly; fifty-five miles in six hours, each man carrying one hundred rounds of ammunition.*

—Lt. T. C. "Pidge" Robinson

McNelly and his men had little to be proud of following the resounding victory over the bandits on the Palo Alto Prairie; there were no more significant victories against the raiders. Cortina's thieves were wary of these new *diablos tejanos* (Texan devils) from the north and rather than chance being run down and killed like the men on the Palo Alto Prairie they abandoned the stolen herds to escape with their lives.

What frustrated McNelly most was not that he couldn't locate bands of cattle thieves, Mexican or Anglo, but that the Rio Grande was an international boundary which law officers could not legally cross without expecting repercussions. His success on the Palo Alto

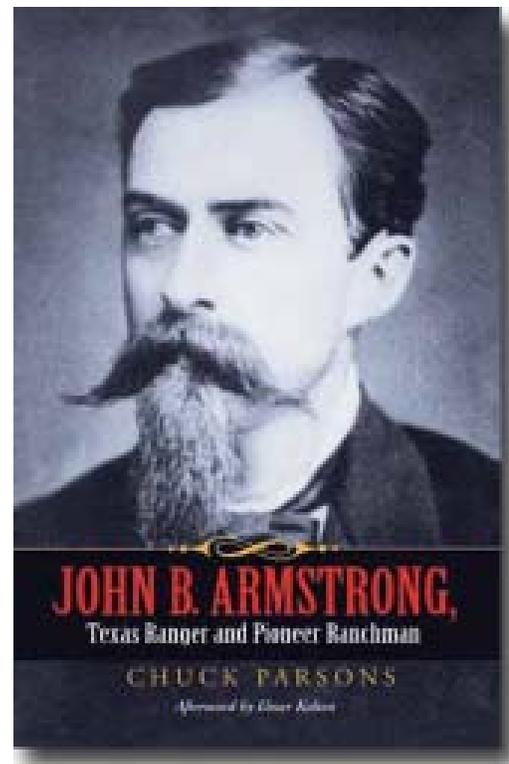
Prairie would not be easy to duplicate; in fact, the thieves were in such awe, or fear, of McNelly that they would not cross the prairie at night.

McNelly continued to work on his spy system and managed to locate a number of the bandits who were willing to provide information—for a price. He was able to inquire into the character of the men who made up the bands of raiders and “selected those whom I knew to be tricky, and secured interviews with them.” The result was that he was able to proposition a few to sell out their companions, promising to pay them more for their betrayal than they could make by continuing to raid. McNelly knew that in order to stop the raiding he cross the river with their stolen stock. McNeil), noted that all of these potential traitors whom he approached readily entered into his plans and that without exception he found them to be “reliable and trustworthy.” McNelly depended so much on these traitors that he agreed not to “interfere with their own individual stealing at all. I gave them liberty when I was not there in their neighborhood, to cross over with their friends.”

Not only did McNelly establish a successful spy system, he also managed to get one of his own men, Sgt. George A. Hall, infiltrated into Cortina’s organization. McNelly testified before the U.S. House of Representatives that he “sent” Hall on board the vessel that was to deliver some five hundred or six hundred head of Texas cattle, “for the purpose of taking down the brands. He went in the character of a spy. . . . Cortina was present himself, with a force of probably 150 or zoo men, delivering these cattle.”

During the months following the Palo Alto victory McNelly worked on improving his spy system, actually getting some raiders to betray their comrades in an effort to smash the raiding rings. Results were not satisfactory, however, as too many times McNelly and his small band of Rangers managed to catch up with the raiding parties only after they had crossed the river. Rather than give up, he chose to solve the problem in typically dramatic McNelly fashion: ignoring international law, he followed the raiders into their own land. For McNelly, Sergeant Armstrong, and the other young Rangers, this would be their first venture into Mexico.

T. C. “Pidge” Robinson, now writing for the Daily State Gazette of Austin, some six weeks after the late November invasion, provides an account of the venture into Mexico in his humorous style: “I would have sent you an account of the invasion long, long ago, but was compelled by special orders to write out a true account of it, which has been awful straining to the, mind; I am not accustomed to this, and have scarcely recovered from it





yet; besides, I think I must have been sun struck in Mexico, or received some kind of shock; I have not felt well since; it may be the effect of the heavy dew on the river; but every time a shot is fired in my vicinity, a disagreeable chilly sensation starts with lightning speed from the back of my neck, and comes out at my boot heels." Robinson was rarely serious in his contributions to Austin's newspapers, but he did provide a firsthand account of the invasion to recover stolen cattle.

McNelly gave considerable thought to invading a foreign country, even if "in hot pursuit." He met with Maj. A. J. Alexander from Fort Brown regarding the problem of raiders, and, according to McNelly, Alexander advised him in writing that he could "follow raiders anywhere." McNelly, eager to catch raiders and knowing his men wanted action as badly as he did, hoped to put Alexander "to the test in a few days." Further, writes McNelly, "I heard that the parties who buy most of the stolen cattle "[sic] have contracted to deliver (18,000) eighteen thousand head" to Monterrey "within the next ninety days." Eighteen thousand head would mean an average of two hundred head of cattle stolen from ranches in Texas and delivered every day."

On November 18 McNelly sent word to his Rangers to prepare to ride hard for the Rancho Las Cuevas, on the Mexican side of the river, as there was a herd about to be crossed. "Orders were received," writes Pidge, "to ride rapidly to Las Cuevas, alias Robber's Roost. We obeyed them to the letter; we rode rapidly; fifty-five miles in six hours, each man carrying one hundred rounds of ammunition."

McNelly was not alone in trying to stop the thieves. Lt. Col. James F. Randlett from Fort Brown had learned from an unidentified "Mexican Citizen of Texas" that a party of fifteen thieves had crossed and would probably recross with stolen cattle soon. Randlett intended to intercept them while they were still on U.S. soil. Thus, at almost the same time, two military forces had the best of intentions to get to the river before the bandits could cross. Randlett with some thirty men actually did catch up with the raiders shortly after they crossed but did not pursue them into Mexico. He did fire on them, killing two and wounding another, at which time the thieves retreated further, leaving only a few head of cattle which had gotten stuck in the river's sand.

McNelly arrived and heard the shooting but, unlike Randlett, chose to cross over with his twenty-six Rangers. Although he did manage to commandeer a boat, it was an unworthy affair as it leaked badly. Writes Pidge of the crossing, "In single file and leading the horses, we gathered at the beautiful, the beautiful river and in silence commenced the embarkment; on each side of the crossing crouched the men, gun [rifle] in hand, to protect the passage of the first boat; from below at another crossing echoed the sullen roar of the Springfields, where the regulars [under Randlett] were making a feint, while we went over undiscovered; with a very little assistance I could have made a feint myself about that time. After crossing two horses and getting them through the quicksands, it was calculated that with the best of luck and no accident all of them could be safely landed on the Mexican bank by Christmas Eve."

Nevertheless, McNelly and his men did manage to cross over in the dilapidated vessel

without incident. Pidge writes that the “tub” was in such poor condition that “it kept four men busy bailing to keep the nose of the man who paddled above the water. It only carried four; it might have carried more had there been room enough for them to bail, but there wasn’t.” Finally, all were crossed over, McNelly, guide Jesus Sandoval, and interpreter Tom Sullivan going over first, followed by Armstrong, Robinson, and George A. Hall, who got across with their horses.’ The remainder were on foot. On the Mexican side they rested until dawn, then proceeded to march toward Las Cuevas, the rancho which Pry. William Callicott called the headquarters of all the thieves. Pidge describes the exhausting march: “We . . . marched to Las Cuevas, said to be one mile distant; after we had walked about three, we concluded there must be a mistake somewhere, or that the town was marching too; a little further and we ran full upon the ranche.”

At the ranch which McNelly believed to be Las Cuevas, orders were given to ride in and shoot everyone except old men, women, and children. McNelly, Armstrong, Robinson, Sandoval, Sullivan, and Hall galloped through shooting and yelling, followed by those on foot. Pidge records that seven Mexicans were killed and nine wounded. But McNelly had attacked the wrong ranch. Sandoval had not been on the Mexican side for quite some time and instead of leading McNelly and the Rangers to Las Cuevas had led them to a ranch close by, Las Cucharas. When McNelly realized his mistake he could only gather his forces and anticipate the worst. He had not only killed possibly innocent people but he had lost the element of surprise. Juan Flores Salinas, titular head of the bandits around Las Cuevas, was close enough to have heard the shots and no doubt was preparing to attack the invaders.

Pidge estimated that there were at least two hundred men ready to defend their country and their honor and protect the stolen herd as well. Callicott estimated the number at 250. Whatever the number, they vastly outnumbered McNelly and his twenty-six.

There was little cover now for McNelly and his Rangers so the only sensible thing to do was to retreat back to the river, where the bank would give them some protection. This they did, with Lieutenant Robinson leading the way and McNelly bringing up the rear. Pidge wrote later of the retreat: “I was awfully fatigued, but I scorned to let this interfere with my duty; and stepped up with much alacrity; such fiendish yells I never heard, but I could see very little; where the smoke came from the guns it hung like a pall, and I was not



**Leander McNelly**  
**Renowned Texas Ranger Captain**



sorry to leave, for it had a very offensive odor to me. Back to the river we went, and waited further developments.”

The “further developments” were unexpected, as now, with Mexicans charging him, Captain Randlett came to the rescue with some forty soldiers of the 8th Cavalry. With all the gunfire Armstrong’s and Hall’s horses panicked and jumped out from under them, leaving them afoot. The two horses were taken by the Mexicans. McNelly now brazenly ordered his men to “open up.” In the firefight which followed Juan Salinas was killed, resulting in the Mexican line’s breaking and retreating. McNelly bent down and picked up Salinas’s fancy pistol, a Smith & Wesson inlaid with silver and gold. The captain, having survived the first onslaught, was determined to stay in Mexico until he recovered at least some of the stolen cattle. No doubt, Armstrong and Hall, now on foot, were just as determined to stay until they recovered their horses.

And stay they did. McNelly crossed back to the Texas side of the river to communicate with President Grant about his actions in crossing and creating a potential political crisis. During his absence a group of Mexicans under a white flag and led by Dr. Alexander Manford Headley, an English doctor who practiced on both sides of the river, approached the troop with the intention of convincing the Rangers to return to Texas soil to save their lives. The doctor and his group were rebuffed.

Three times the truce party approached the Rangers, each time requesting the same thing: return to Texas. But each time the response was the same: they would leave only with the stolen cattle. Ultimately, McNelly did agree to return to Texas on condition that the stolen cattle and the horses and saddles of Armstrong and Hall be returned the next morning at Rio Grande City, a few miles up the river. McNelly almost certainly agreed to this because of Dr. Headley’s involvement. It was Dr. Headley who negotiated the terms of peace which allowed McNelly to save face by returning to Texas and who promised that at least part of the stolen herd would be returned.” McNelly recorded this in a telegram dated November: “I withdrew my men last night upon the promise of the Mexican authorities to deliver the cattle to me at Rio Grande City this morning.”

But when the next morning came no cattle were produced, so again McNelly crossed, but this time he met with a delegation of citizens who informed him that the cattle could not be crossed because they had not been inspected. McNelly saw this as a delaying tactic and threatened that he “would kill the last one of them” unless the cattle were produced within five minutes.”

Pidge recalled that the Mexicans needed assistance to cross the cattle, and McNelly and ten men, Armstrong one of them, went over.” Then another excuse was provided, that there was no permit allowing the cattle to be taken across the river. Pidge Robinson was one of the ten who helped with the crossing and recalled the following: “Capt. M[cNelly]—exhausted all arguments with these gentlemen, except one, which he reserved for the very last, and which, as a dernier resorte [sic] in this country, is considered ‘a clincher;’ then he exhausted that; ‘Prepare to load with ball cartridges—load!’ The ominous ‘kerchak’

of the carbine levers as the long, murderous looking cartridges were chambered home, satisfied them as to the permit and the cattle were allowed to cross over without one; such is the power of a fifty-calibre argument, such the authority of Sharp on International law.” The cattle were miraculously produced under this threat, although the number amounted to only sixty-five head. McNelly telegraphed Adjutant General Steele that the Mexicans would produce “more [cattle as] soon as captured and the delivery of the thieves.”

The sixty-five head of cattle were delivered, and Armstrong and Hall recovered their horses, saddles, and bridles without further incident. No thieves were delivered, however, in spite of the promise of the Mexicans. The cattle were returned to their owners, many of them ranchers in the immediate area. Those of cattleman Richard King were also returned, with volunteer Rangers Durham, Callicott, Rudd, and Pitts herding them back to the Santa Gertrudis Ranch. A greatly surprised King had never expected to see them or any of the Rangers again, as he anticipated that McNelly and his invading force would become “another Alamo.” He was so grateful that he ordered the right horn of each of the recovered cattle to be sawed off and the cattle turned loose on the range to live out their days in peace. King’s vaqueros called these special cattle los viejos (the old ones).

It is unfortunate that during the tumultuous affair no single incident resulted in Armstrong’s receiving any special attention. He was one of the first to cross the Rio Grande and among the first to attack, although unintentionally, the Rancho Las Cucharas. Even though a sergeant, he, as well as Sergeant Hall and the privates, were merely following orders and had no opportunity to display heroics. He received some little attention when his horse was recovered. However, all this would change in 1876 and 1877. Glory enough would be his.

### **Chuck Parsons**

*Author*

Excerpt used with permission from Chuck Parsons from his book, *John B. Armstrong, Texas Ranger and Pioneer Ranchman*. Texas A & M University Press, 2007. Cloth \$20.00.

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# Mr. Barrington's Mysterious Trunk Series

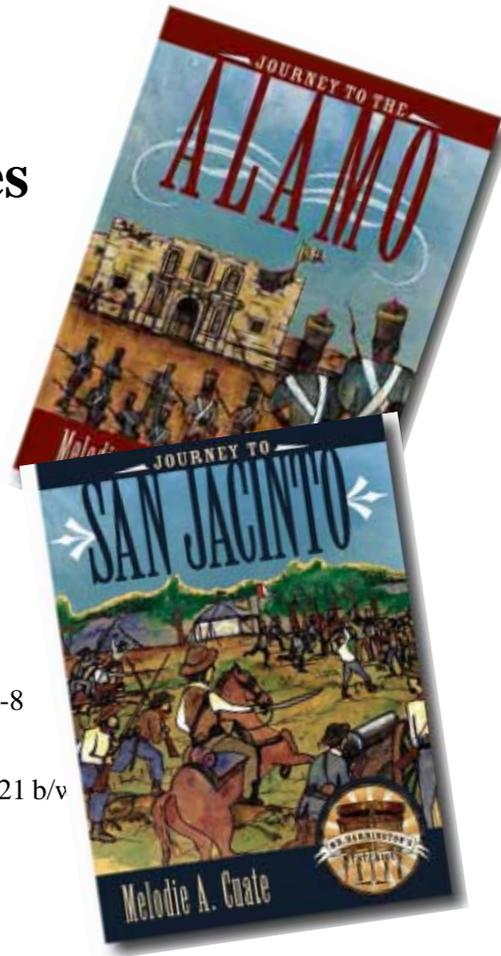
*Book 1: Journey to the Alamo*

*Book 2: Journey to San Jacinto*

By Melodie A. Cuate

Book 1: Journey to the Alamo  
Texas Tech University Press, 2006  
138 pages, 18 illus. Hardback. ISBN 978-0-89672-592-8

Book 2: Journey to San Jacinto  
Texas Tech University Press, 2007. 156 pages, 1 photo, 21 b/v  
illus., 1 map. Hardback. ISBN 978-0-89672-602-4



Book Review by Nancy Ray

**M**y first thought? Another book about the Alamo—what could possibly be different? Author Melodie A. Cuate, a teacher of fourth-grade gifted and talented students, quickly proves these stories are not the standard historical accounts. She grabbed my attention in the first few pages of *Journey to the Alamo* when she introduced three middle-school students as main characters: Hannah, her brother Nick, and her best friend Jackie. Why were these three modern-day students in a book about the Alamo? Because the author used the magic of time travel in writing these stories to let the students experience the famous battles at the Alamo and, later, at San Jacinto.

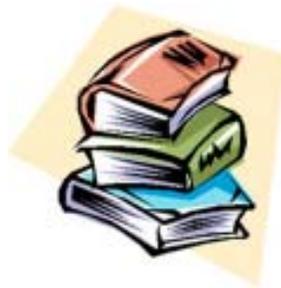
The two books in this review are the first in the Mr. Barrington's Mysterious Trunk series. Mr. Barrington is a 7th grade teacher who uses an antique trunk full of artifacts to

teach Texas history. Mysterious things happen because of this trunk, and these events trigger the time travel. Although both books follow this premise, each one is different enough to keep the reader wondering.

I remember reading about these famous battles as a student, but the Texas heroes were just names on the pages in my textbooks. The historical characters become real when reading about them through the eyes of Hannah, Nick, and Jackie. To ensure the readers learn about people such as Jim Bowie, Susannah Dickinson, Sam Houston, Santa Anna, "Deaf" Smith, and others, the author includes a section at the beginning of each book titled, "The Historical Characters." In it, each character is listed alphabetically and described, with the dates of birth and death included.

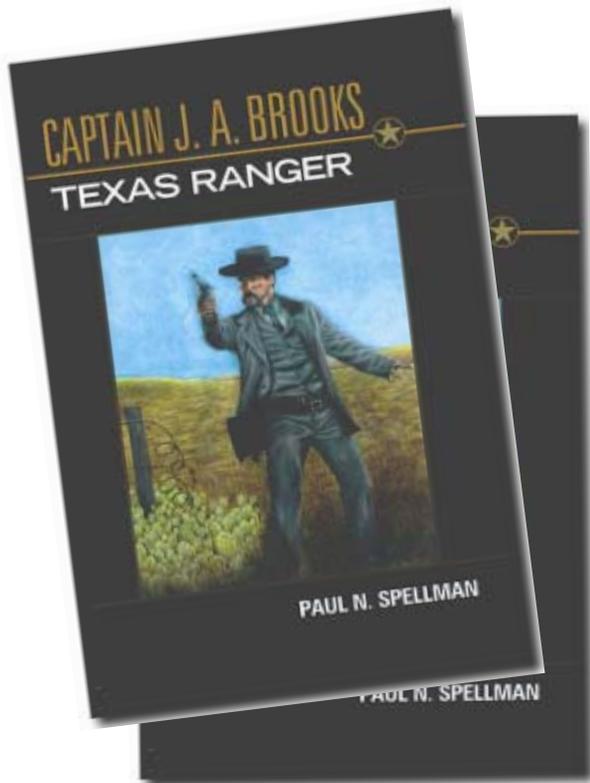
By combining fiction with historical facts, the readers can easily visualize some of the differences between our modern-day lives and those of the people who fought for Texas. Yes, we all know their clothes were different from ours, they spoke differently, they walked or rode horses, and the list goes on. But these discrepancies became real when Hannah wishes for a bubble bath and Jackie realizes there is not a mall. The author does an excellent job contrasting the past and present to make the differences come alive.

Both books are written for youth (middle) readers, but I enjoyed them, too. By effectively combining historical facts and modern-day characters, the author creates stories interesting enough to hold a reader's attention while teaching Texas history at the same time. Maybe a good way to enjoy these books is to use time travel between generations: have parents or grandparents read the books with a child or grandchild. The quality time spent reading together is a good review for the older generation and a learning experience for the younger one. I recommend Mr. Barrington's Mysterious Trunk series, and I look forward to the third book, *Journey to Gonzales*.



# Captain J. A. Brooks, Texas Ranger

Frances B. Vick, Series 1, vol. 4



By *Paul N. Spellman*

Denton, Texas:

University of North Texas Press, 2007

p. viii + 272 pages, 29 b/w photos, 1 map, notes,  
bib., index. Cloth \$24.95.

ISBN 978-1-57441-227-7

Orders: 1-800-826-8911 or

<http://www.unt.edu/untpress>

**Book Review by Chuck Parsons**

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James Abijah Brooks (1855-1944) is best known for his career from Texas Ranger private to Ranger captain, which began just as the main threat of Indian raiding parties was ending. Brooks found his glamour and excitement by hunting down Anglo outlaws. During the fight with the Conner gang in East Texas, he nearly lost his life, and his wounds were a constant reminder of how close death could be for a Ranger. A lesser man might have opted for a more peaceful profession after that gun battle, but Brooks remained in the force, rising to the rank of captain. His achievements earned him the distinction of being named one of the four great Ranger captains, along with John H. Rogers, William J. McDonald, and John R. "Border Boss" Hughes.

Brooks entered the Frontier Battalion on January 15, 1883, and served until November 14, 1906. His tenure was a near record for longevity, and the huge area he covered is significant as well. He fought lawlessness in La Salle County in South Texas, the Fort Worth railroad strike in North Texas, El Paso in West Texas, and the tall pines of East Texas.



Following his resignation from the Rangers, Brooks continued to serve the Lone Star State. Although he never claimed to be or originally intended to become a politician, he ran for a seat in the state legislature in the fall of 1908 and won. When a new county was carved out of the rough brush country of South Texas, it was named Brooks County in his honor, and he served as county judge.

Dr. Paul N. Spellman has gone far beyond merely writing a first book-length biography of this important Texas figure. Whereas secondary sources could have filled the pages with exciting material, Spellman chose to delve into primary source materials. In so doing, he uncovered numerous new photographs and significant information. The Texas State Archives provided the record of Brooks's ranging days, and numerous other depositories of primary material supplied additional data. Of great importance was the cooperation of Brooks's family members. Working with Brooks's granddaughter, Spellman unraveled the life of the man through his handwritten memoirs, personal files, numerous lists, letters, personal notes, photographs, and newspaper clippings that he had preserved. Brooks's last will and testament from 1939 and the presidential pardon signed by President Cleveland in 1887 were available as well.

Spellman could have glossed over the darker aspects of Brooks's life, especially the neglect of his family and the abuse of alcohol, but he chose not to. The result is a fascinating tale of a man who made himself into a worthy citizen. Even with his weaknesses, Brooks contributed greatly to society—not for personal gain, but because of his sworn duty to the laws of the state. This book is a major contribution to Texas history.

For more information on Captain J. A. Brooks, click below for Paul N. Spellman's earlier feature article:

**19th Century Shing Star:**  
**James Abijah Brooks**  
in the Texas Ranger Dispatch  
Issue 15, Winter 2004



Paul N. Spellman  
Author of *Captain J.A. Brooks*



## Ross Sterling, Texan

*A Memoir by the Founder of  
Humble Oil and Refining Company*

**By Ross Sterling and Ed Kilman**

Don Carleton, editor

Foreword by Gov. Dolph Briscoe

Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2007

320 pages, 35 photos. Hardcover \$24.95.

ISBN 13:978-0-292-71442-7

**Book Review by Robert Nieman**

Texas is where men and women rise from humble beginnings to immense heights with yawning regularity. In that vein, former Texas governor and entrepreneur extraordinaire Ross Sterling is one of the most remarkable men the state ever produced.

Sterling was born on a farm near Anahuac, Texas, in 1875 and died in Fort Worth in 1949. The story of his seventy-four years would be implausible if it were not so easily documented. Named after Governor Sul Ross, who is also a member of the Ranger Hall of Fame, he was one of eight children, not an uncommon number in those days. With so many siblings, each child quickly learned to fend for himself.

While chopping cotton as a youth, Sterling developed an uncompromising work ethic that carried him through his lifetime: "If I hit four licks while the other fellows are hitting two or three, they just can't keep up with me." With only a fourth-grade education in a backwoods school, that approach propelled him to a business and political pinnacle matched by few. He was already running a chain of successful feed stores and dabbling in the oil business when he went to Humble, Texas, in 1904. The state and the world would never be the same.

With a few associates, Sterling formed the Humble Oil Company, which would one day be the largest division of the ExxonMobil Corporation. He also became a successful



banker, rancher, and newspaper publisher, owning controlling interest in the *Houston Post-Dispatch*.

Sterling was a rabid foe of the Fergusons, a powerful political duo in the Lone Star state. Jim “Pa” Ferguson is the only Texas governor impeached and removed from office. He did not let that slow him down, however. “Farmer Jim,” as he liked to be called, simply ran his wife Miriam “Ma” for governor, and she won—twice. Their slogan was “two governors for the price of one.”

In 1931, Sterling ran for and was elected governor, defeating “Ma” Ferguson. He served only one two-year term (the set length of term at that time). During his two years in office, Sterling proved to be the best friend the Texas Rangers ever had in the governor’s mansion—and the Rangers knew it.

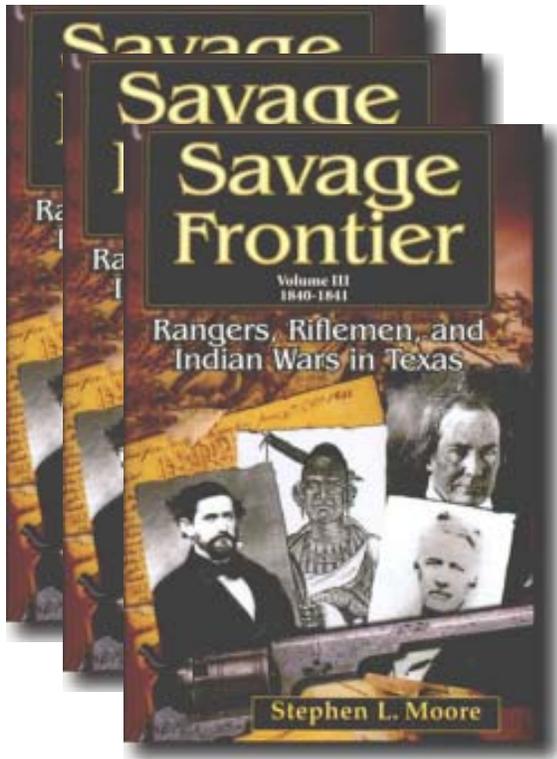
In 1933, Sterling ran for re-election against Ma Ferguson. However, he lost in one of the most contested, dirty, and questionable elections in Texas history. The Rangers had made the fatal choice of actively campaigning for Sterling and against Ferguson. When she was victorious, those Rangers who had not already resigned when she took office were promptly fired, thus giving birth to the infamous Ferguson Rangers. It became one of the darkest periods in the history of the Texas Rangers.

All too often, a politician enters office a poor man and leaves an extremely wealthy one. It was Sterling’s misfortune that he became governor at the height of the Great Depression. He was an extremely rich man when he became governor, but when he left office, he had lost everything and was bankrupt. He was fifty-eight-years old when he started over, and he never regained the enormous wealth of his earlier years. Nevertheless, when he died fourteen years later, he was an affluent man.

Sterling wanted to leave a record of his life. Not being a writer himself, he hired his longtime friend and editorial page editor of the *Houston Post*, Ed Kilman, to record his story. Kilman began his task with an adoring zeal. The book was almost completed at the time of Sterling’s death, but because of Kilman’s flowery and enthusiastic writing, he could not find a publisher.

The original Kilman manuscript is a part of the Ross Sterling papers deposited at the Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, where Don Carleton is director. Governor Dolph Briscoe, a close friend of Sterling and Carleton, urged Carleton to rework and then publish the former governor’s narrative, even offering to sponsor the project. Whereas Kilman had written the book in the third person, Carleton took Sterling’s oral history and edited it back to the first person. The end product is a highly readable, enjoyable, and important work.

The *Texas Ranger Dispatch* is proud to recommend this book to all readers.



## Savage Frontier 1840-1841

*Volume III*  
*Rangers, Riflemen,  
and Indian Wars in Texas*

By **Stephen L. Moore**

University of North Texas Press, PO Box 311336,  
Denton, TX 76203. xii + 436 pages, extensive  
endnotes, bibliography, appendices, index,  
illustrations and maps. Cloth \$34.95. Paper  
\$19.95.

ISBN 978-1-57441-229-1.

**Book Review by Chuck Parsons**

**S**tephen L. Moore, a sixth-generation Texan, has developed as an authority on Texas history and World War II military history. This is the third volume in his study of the early Ranger history of Texas. The preceding volumes covered the 1835-1837 and then the 1838-1839 periods. In addition, two other works by Moore focus on early Texas history: *Eighteen Minutes: the Battle of San Jacinto* and *The Texas Independence Campaign and Taming Texas: Captain William T. Sadler's Lone Star Service*.

This *Savage Frontier* volume now presents accounts of not only such well known fights as the Council House Battle (March 19, 1840) and the Battle of Plum Creek (August 12, 1840), but also lesser known engagements such as Jack Hays's fight against Mexican marauders near Laredo (April 7, 1841) and his Uvalde Canyon Fight (June 29, 1841). Musters of those men engaged in various battles accompany the narrative.

Combined with the narratives of the numerous engagements and campaigns are the muster rolls, a valuable addition to the book, as in volumes one and two. Moore's works become immensely important not only for the historians as reference works, but also for genealogists. Many an individual wants to claim a Texas Ranger in their family tree, but are unaware of documentation. This work will be a good starting place for those searching for verification.



Moore's works are not limited to traditional secondary sources, such as the writings of John Henry Brown, Noah Smithwick or A. J. Sowell. He has combed through an extensive amount of primary source materials, materials in the Texas State Archives and the Center for American History, for example. Combining all these muster rolls, as well as many other prime source documentation, making them easily accessible in book form, makes Moore's works a necessary addition to any library of Texana.

One fascinating chapter deals with the so-called legend of Captain Jack Hays holding off a group of Comanches from the top of the Enchanted Rock in present Llano County. Many historians have scoffed or seriously questioned whether this engagement did in fact take place. Their reasoning is that there is no contemporary account of it, such as in early newspapers, and Jack Hays made no report of it—at least a report that has survived. Thus many believe it is just another Texas Ranger tale, based on nothing.

What is most interesting however is that Moore presents evidence that the fight probably did happen, perhaps not exactly as recounted by early writers, but reasonably close to the descriptions. Hays' reports did not always describe what today we would consider important: in one fight one of his rangers was killed, but he made no mention of the man's death. And perhaps some newspaper did report the engagement but that newspaper has not survived.

The first published account appears in Samuel Chester Reid Jr.'s account of Ben McCulloch's Texas Rangers, published in 1847. John Caperton wrote a manuscript on Hays' life, having been a ranger himself and hearing of Hays' exploits from Hays himself. Caperton's account was prepared a number of years later, and possibly based his account on Reid's.

There will always be discussion about early events in Texas history. Healthy and civil disagreements do no harm to anyone. Works such as Stephen L. Moore's three volumes only enlighten all readers.



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