

Interview with
LARRY GILBREATH
Texas Ranger, Retired

©2008, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Terry County Municipal Court Building
Brownfield, Texas
Wednesday—November 5, 2008

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Larry Gilbreath, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



Introduction

Welcome to the E-Book Project of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum (TRHFM). The TRHFM, located in Waco, Texas, is the State-designated Official Historical Center of the Texas Rangers. It is operated as a service of City of Waco by authorization of the Texas Department of Public Safety and the State of Texas.

The mission of this project is to provide easy access to books, oral histories dissertations, articles, and other literary works on Texas Ranger history.

Public Domain Works: Many of the works in this non-commercial library are in the public domain and may be freely enjoyed—please follow the conditions set forth below.

Copyrighted Works: Some works, which are clearly noted, *are under copyright*. They are in this library through the courtesy and permission of the copyright holders. Please read and enjoy them, but they may ***not*** be redistributed, copied or otherwise used without the written permission of the author or copyright holder.

Conditions & Statements

1. The Adobe Acrobat™ or other file format in which this work resides may not be redistributed ***for profit***—including commercial redistribution, sales, rentals, or fees for handling, access, download etc. These works may not be modified, changed or sued in derivative works in any manner without the express permission of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum.
2. The TRHFM staff has exercised due diligence to determine that this material is in the public domain or to secure copyright permission. If you believe this work is under copyright, and you are the copyright holder, please contact us at **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame, PO Box 2570, Waco, TX 76702-2570** with proof of ownership.
3. You may link to the main page of the library, however, please do ***not*** "hot link" directly to the files or repost them.
4. If a work is redistributed for educational or nonprofit use, the following must remain intact: (1) The author/copyright holder credits (2) the registered name **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame E-Book™**, (3) the **logo** and name **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum™**.

LARRY GILBREATH
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED

NANCY RAY: My name is Nancy Ray. I am visiting with Larry Gilbreath of Brownfield, Texas. Today is Wednesday, November 5th, day after election. So we want to say congratulations to the newly-elected sheriff of Terry County.

LARRY GILBREATH: Thank you.

NANCY RAY: You're welcome (laughter). Hopefully you'll be able to stick with it and finish.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yes, that still don't sound just right.

NANCY RAY: The purpose of this interview is to discuss discuss Ranger Gilbreath's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Gilbreath, do I have your permission to record this interview?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yes ma'am, you do.

NANCY RAY: And, do you understand that this video will belong to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: And Ranger Gilbreath, do I have your permission to present copies of this video to various historical organizations such as museums, libraries, schools and once transcribed to place this document on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum's website?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: Let's start then by finding out what your full name and where were you born and when?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well I'm Larry Dennis Gilbreath. I was born in Lamb County, just north of here, on June 10th, 1948. But I grew up basically in Hockley County, also the first county north of here. My parents farmed out east of Levelland and uh I grew up working on the farm for my dad. And we also ran the little country store out there in the community of Opdike.

Which I could say now at the original townsite, there's an Opdike West over there now that's a package store. So Opdike's original town site is about dried up. Yeah, we uh, if I wasn't chopping cotton or changing pipe, changing water, I was usually in the store working. So I...

NANCY RAY: What were your parents' names?

LARRY GILBREATH: K. E. and Essie

NANCY RAY: ESSIE?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yes ma'am. Gilbreath. And yeah uh they lived there. In fact, we... my mom... my dad died in '71 and mother. I'm sorry, Daddy died in '77 and Mother in '91. And we sold their place after she died. You know I basically, we moved to Hockley County when I was six months old and lived right out there about a mile and a half, you know all of my years of growing up are within a mile and a half of the farm.

NANCY RAY: Well traveled.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, I was (laughter).

NANCY RAY: Well tell us, did you have brothers and sisters?

LARRY GILBREATH: Four older brothers and one younger sister. Uh I had two older brothers that were Highway Patrolmen. They went into DPS right ahead of me. One, Donnie, went in recruit school in '68 and then Kennard, or most people just called him Ken, entered recruit school in oh I guess February of '69. Well let me back up. I was in May... Kennard started in March of '69 and I started in... anyway, he was two months ahead of me. And uh so I turned 21 in... he started March, I started in May because I turned 21 and went to recruit school. I'd never been very far east of Lubbock I guess (laughter) when I left for Austin.

NANCY RAY: What your other brothers' names and you sister's name?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well uh Ken's the oldest and then there was Bobby. And Bobby worked until he retired from Guiberson Oil Tools there in Odessa a few years ago. And Donnie was the other Highway Patrolman. Donnie, he's five years older than I am. And then Joe was between Donnie and I. Joe retired from the Farmers Home Administration a few years ago. And then I have a younger sister, Rita.

NANCY RAY: What was her name?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Rita, and uh she is a teacher in Pecos, Texas. She's getting ready to retire this next year. I think she's got close to forty years teaching I think. And she's talking about retiring at the end of this school year in June. And uh...

NANCY RAY: Well, when you were in school, did you have... is there somebody who had a big influence on your life or a special friend that you can remember?

LARRY GILBREATH: In recruit school? Or when I was growing up?

NANCY RAY: No, when you were growing up.

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh well you know, uh not I guess... my Dad (*emotional moment*). You know we all grew up working on the farm and...

NANCY RAY: A special man, wasn't he?

LARRY GILBREATH: (*emotional moment*)

NANCY RAY: Well, we'll come back to that.

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, he just, you know he taught us to work (*emotional moment*). I'm sorry.

NANCY RAY: That is just fine. I think your dad would be proud that he had such an impact on you. We'll come back to that. What about any subjects? Did you like anything in school (laughter)...

LARRY GILBREATH: Football. Oh, I uh I really... I wasn't very studious.

NANCY RAY: You're not the first one.

LARRY GILBREATH: Well I did enough to get by and that was about it. No I enjoyed the social part of it I guess, the social side of going to school. But uh, and... I never aspired to do anything very great in high school.

NANCY RAY: Where did you meet your wife?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, uh I spent about six years with DPS. I graduated in uh, in 1969. Excuse me, I graduated and spent my years as a young Highway Patrolman in Aspermont and Haskell. And in lots of ways, I kind of decided that I needed to something else besides being a Highway Patrolman and anyway I worked in the private sector for about a year and a half. And uh didn't really... always missed the Highway Patrol.

NANCY RAY: What were you doing in the private sector (laughter)? Or do you want to talk about it?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, I uh got crossways with my... my sergeant and I got crossways and I quit you know. And I knew when I quit that it was a mistake. But I was just a little too hard headed to admit it I guess. But I went to work as a roustabout in the oilfield, worked about three or four months. And then a guy offered me a job as a produce manager in a grocery store there and I told him, man, I don't know anything about produce. He said that's all right, we'll teach you. And uh so I worked for him about a year and then uh the parts manager at the Ford house called me one night. He was needing a uh, an assistant in the Parts Department there and offered me a job so I decided I'd tried that. And I worked him for about a year or a little... like I say, was eighteen months there all together. But uh... and things just wasn't going... I wound up moving to Post and got a job as a deputy sheriff in Post. And uh I met my wife in Post, Texas.

NANCY RAY: And her name?

LARRY GILBREATH: Is Gail. And uh while I was in Post, I went to work to reinstate with the Highway Patrol. I worked there six months and uh Major C. W. Bell was... he was the Regional Commander there in Lubbock. And uh I had some personal business I needed to get straightened out and Major Bell told me, he said bring your application in and we'll see what we can do with it. And anyway, he helped me reinstate. And anyway, after of course Gail and I started dating there at Post, and then she lived in Lubbock. She was from Lubbock... still had friends down there and run around down there. Anyway, I went to, reinstated and wound up opening a new station, Highway Patrol station in Crowell, Texas.

NANCY RAY: Before we go to that, let's talk about when did you marry? (laughter) You're running off and leaving me.

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, that's after I moved to Crowell, Gail and I got married. And uh I had to go to Vernon for about six months while we were getting things ready to open that station over there. And then I moved to Crowell February 1st of '78. And then Gail and I married on April 17th. And uh...

NANCY RAY: Well, what about kids?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, we both had previously been married and uh I had a daughter from my first marriage and she had a daughter from her first marriage. They were two months apart.

NANCY RAY: That made life interesting.

LARRY GILBREATH: It did. And I eventually adopted her daughter, Trinette.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell Trinette?

LARRY GILBREATH: Just like it sounds.

NANCY RAY: TRINETTE?

LARRY GILBREATH: TRINETTE. But anyway, Trinette's kind of short and red headed. And my daughter was a little taller and dark headed.

NANCY RAY: And what's her name?

LARRY GILBREATH: She's Brenda. And uh I used tell people they were my twins (laughter).

NANCY RAY: You had some fun out of that.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, they'd look at me a little funny. But then, and then after Gail and I married, we had two children. Clint was born in uh '78 and then Danessa in 1980 while we was there in Crowell. And so... But uh, yeah they were all here last night.

NANCY RAY: Good, that was a lively place.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah.

NANCY RAY: Well let's go back to your uh Patrol school, let's talk about that. Tell me again, what year did you go in?

LARRY GILBREATH: '69. I was in May of 1969. I started and graduated in August of '69. We started uh 120 people and graduated 36.

NANCY RAY: You had a big reduction.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, we uh... we had a big... well I don't even remember now. We had uh about 20 people quit the first week we started. I'll tell you a funny story about that. Of course like I say, my brother was in the school right ahead of me. I was 20, he was 32. And uh and we... so you know I kind of knew what I was getting into with Donnie had been through it and Kennard had been through. And they was telling me how hard it was and talked about all the PT and this and that. And I just made fun of them... Said they was just old men and too soft to do

that. And which was a mistake I found out (laughter). But yeah, we uh, we had about twenty people quit. That first night we were there, what I was gonna tell you. The first night we were there, we checked in on Tuesday afternoon and uh of course this other school had been there about two months. And recruit school at that time was sixteen weeks, four months. And uh they were halfway through. And so the new school came in like I say, you know I knew really kinda what to expect. In fact, Donnie's sergeant was one of the counselors in my school. And uh and then... but anyway, they had, that evening we were all standing around there you know and the new guys was pumping the old guys about what to expect you know. And of course they were... lots of lies flowing... you know they were really pumping us up. And I just sat there listening you know and kind of snickering under my breath. And Kennard was in, he was standing over there listening to all this. And uh the (*side conversation*)... but anyway, we were all standing there and there was this guy in their school that had got, had got his feet messed up and he was on crutches. He come by as we were talking about boxing. You know everybody was worried about the boxing. We were talking about that and this guy come by on those crutches and somebody in my group said man, what happened to him? Well, he got hurt boxing. Really? Well I guess he didn't have to box anymore then. Oh man, they put him in that ring and propped him up on them crutches and told him to get after it you know. Well, this guy was standing there and didn't say a word. And the stairway to the dorm, we was on the uh third floor of this little old dormitory deal, just about the second or third floor above the classrooms and cafeteria there in the old part of the academy. But anyway, this guy didn't say a word. He just turned around, went up the stairway, and nobody thought anything about it. But it wasn't just a few minutes he came down that stairway with his bags and right out the door he went. So that's kind of where it started you know. We had about twenty quit by that Friday afternoon and they turned them loose and we

went down about twenty people. It was, in four weeks, we started boxing in four weeks and we were down to about forty people by the time we started boxing. And then we boxed two weeks and we were at thirty-six. And that's what we finished with after the boxing.

NANCY RAY: So it was the PT that mainly got rid of a lot of them?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, mostly. Uh and you know classroom was, you had to work at the classroom but the PT, I don't know... The PT field at that time was they said was about 330 yards around it. And uh the first day we went outside was Friday afternoon. And uh in May in Austin it's pretty warm. We went out Friday afternoon to work out and uh I don't remember now but you know the two PT instructors and they were... while we were doing stuff, they were just walking around you know. And they'd find somebody that was cheating a little or you now they'd jus accuse somebody of it I think (laughter). But we'd have to run a lap around that PT field and come back and start over you know doing pushups or whatever we were doing. And I really don't remember. I know I wanted to quit so bad I couldn't stand it. But I knew I'd ragged on two brothers so hard I couldn't. But anyway, and Kennard was waiting on me. He was gonna ride home with me that evening. He had a carpool he went with and of course I had come in that week. But he was gonna wait and ride home, back to Levelland, with me. And uh I could see him standing over there, he and another guy up there on one of the outside fire escape landings. I could see him up there watching us. And I said man, there ain't no way. But they, but the reason... he told me later t reason they were up there, they had been standing out in front of the gym by the parking lot waiting for us to quit. And they said there were so many... we ran these eighteen laps and sixteen quit or sixteen laps and eighteen quit. But there were so many that were coming out and they couldn't figure out why I wasn't coming out. They thought it was through because so many people were leaving. And so they went around to the door, went through the

doors and come out there to see what we were doing. But they, man... you know I thought I was a pretty tough old boy but... it was...

NANCY RAY: Well, they were trying to break... find out who was...

LARRY GILBREATH: No, I think, I don't know if that was the excuse or they were just mad about something. But you know it was one of those things where we had a, we had two or three, you know that was Vietnam... that was during the Vietnam era and we had two or three folks who had served time in Vietnam in the Marine Corps. Matter of fact, we had one man that, that was a drill instructor. He had spent ten years in the Marine Corps. Been to Vietnam twice, he was black, he was a big old boy. Just ... I mean shoulders about three foot wide and waist about a foot wide you know. I mean he was just a picture of... His back was just full of shrapnel scars from Vietnam. And he was the only Marine that finished that school. And uh I asked him down towards the end of it, you know about it and if it compared to the Marine Corps boot camp. And he physically it was very comparable to their boot camp. But it just didn't have the mental end of it though you know. They just didn't work on you mentally the way the service did. But yeah, they was... in fact there was one guy you know I thought he was kind of hurt. And one morning we was all dragging you know after PT. We headed towards the cafeteria you know and this guy was kind of crippled, he had turned an ankle or something you know. And the PT instructor asked him you know, is this as tough as the Marine Corps? He said ain't nothing as tough as the Marine Corps. You know that was a mistake because he gone by the end of the week. That guy got on him and got to riding him and that old boy quit. He... But I don't know... I don't think... I think he just wanted to see how... You know it you know the school helped. I mean that's just the way it was. And you know Donnie and Kennard both you know, under different PT instructors, or well Donnie was. But their's was just as tough as ours. And uh we always said the

next school, they uh... in fact our counselors told us there before we graduated, the next school they didn't do near what we did. One of the sergeants told us one night that the colonel called the PT instructor to the office. Told him if he run off that many again he was gone.

NANCY RAY: That's a high percentage.

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh yeah. I said I never heard of that many leaving. But and so I don't know what he was mad about... He didn't lighten up until the new school came in. About the time we were about halfway through, well another school came in. And he kind of lightened up on us. But then he was mad because that first couple of weeks was harder on us than it was to begin with because he couldn't persecute the new ones (laughter), he took it out on us. But, you know it wasn't anything... If it had been any tougher I don't know if I would have stayed (laughter).

NANCY RAY: But you did.

LARRY GILBREATH: But I did.

NANCY RAY: Well, what did you take away from that school that helped you the most in your career?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, two or three things. Pride.

NANCY RAY: Oh great, that's good.

LARRY GILBREATH: You know, pride in self and pride in the Department. And, I was tested physically, challenged I guess. Because I found out I could do things I didn't think I could do.

NANCY RAY: Boosted your self confidence too.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, tremendously. And uh you know it, with... and I was challenged in the classroom too but not like the physical end of it. You know I just... of course it was a lot different back then. A lot different. I... Clint...

NANCY RAY: That's your son?

RICHARD JOHNSON: My son, Clint is a Highway Patrolman. And uh I was telling you a while ago about changing the signs (*side conversation about changing election signs*). We were taking care of that. The Department has changed so much and I, it's just not all for the good.

NANCY RAY: Well what are some of the changes that are going on? Can you put your finger on anything?

LARRY GILBREATH: Discipline, they don't have the discipline. The last ten or fifteen years, I see the discipline... You know when I was a Highway Patrolman, a sergeant could fire you and you was fired. And a sergeant doesn't have that authority anymore. And that's not good, you know. They put the sergeant in the first line supervisor's position where uh they really weakened his authority in my opinion. And uh as a result of that, I see uh lots of things going on in the Department now that would not have gone on twenty years ago. And uh I still... I'm still proud of DPS (*emotional moment*).

NANCY RAY: That's part of your history.

LARRY GILBREATH: I'm proud to have been a part of it. And uh I'm, and I'm proud that my son is there.

NANCY RAY: Did you encourage him to go into law enforcement or was that a natural progression?

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh well, I just wanted him to get an education. Yeah... no, Clint... you know, of course Kennard quit the DPS, oh in about '70... oh not long after I did. He quit

about '76 I guess. And uh he eventually came back into law enforcement but uh he was too old to reinstate to the Highway Patrol even if he'd wanted to. You know Donnie retired. He was a License and Weight trooper. Uh he retired I guess about a year ahead of me in about '02. You know Clint, that's about all he knew.

NANCY RAY: It's probably in his genes (laughter) isn't it.

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, pretty much. But you know he always... he never talked about much of anything but law enforcement when he was growing up. You know the various different agencies. And...

NANCY RAY: Let me ask you this. When you were growing up, did you ever plan to be a Texas Ranger?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well you know I guess that any young kid in Texas, you know I think that's part of any youngster's dreams. But in reality, no, I never dreamed I'd ever, that I could ever measure up. But uh you know the Lord blessed me and I uh... well you know Bill Wilson was the senior captain when I went... when I promoted. But when I was in recruit school, Bill Wilson was a Ranger sergeant there in Austin. Back then they were sergeants instead of lieutenants. But and uh... he, in fact he received word right before he... he came over to our recruit school and helped do our class, talking about the *unknown word* and stuff. And he found out right before that class started that he had made captain. But and as he talked to our class you know, I thought that would really be something. And I never really dreamed that I could make that step. And uh when I went to the interview board, Bill Wilson was senior captain and he chaired that board. I guess I went to the last board that he chaired... as a matter of fact that he sat on until he retired. Well he was diagnosed with cancer not long after that and he retired there before too long. But he...

NANCY RAY: So he had an influence on your life?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well yeah, but you know to tell you truth I never would have even taken the test if it hadn't been for Leo Hickman.

NANCY RAY: Well we're gonna come to Leo Hickman in a little while then. OK, you graduated from your school, recruit school. And what was your first duty station as a patrolman? You did go to the Highway Patrol?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yes ma'am. We uh, when we graduated like I said, we graduated 36 people August 28th, 1969. And there was one Highway Patrol vacancy in the state at that time. One man out of our class was commissioned coming out of school. And everybody else was sent to the regional and district's regional offices around the state to work in khakis. And I had spent about a month in Lubbock I guess. The month of September I spent in Lubbock working in khakis. I think there was four others, or three others, there's four of us I think. And uh by the first day of October, I had, I was assigned to Aspermont was my station but I had to go to Haskell for my six-month's probation. And uh I went to Haskell.

NANCY RAY: Who was your partner?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well uh I started out working with James Davis. And then uh finished up my probation working with Skip Lane before I went... and like I say, I went to Aspermont and Bobby Stone was my partner there in Aspermont. And uh stayed there two and a half years and uh enjoyed it. You know had a good time.

NANCY RAY: What did you learn you know during your probation time? How did they education you in the real way (laughter)?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, I guess the, one of the biggest things you know is driving. I'd never had anything that rode fast. It, but you know pursuit driving was probably my biggest

challenge as a young Highway Patrolman. Because the first time the sergeant rode with James and I, after I think about the first stop I made, well he told us to take him back to the courthouse and he got out (laughter).

NANCY RAY: Well how come? Was it about that ride?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, it was just one of those things that I was a little nervous. You know I made him a little nervous. But that's the way it set with James, you never... I never got anything out of him whether it did or not. But no, I you know... that was probably my biggest challenge. I'd been used to, like I say, I grew up in a little old country store. I knew how to talk to people and I knew how to work and uh, but you know there's not much manual labor to that job. That was the discipline too I guess. But no, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed my time in Aspermont. And went back to Haskell, I transferred back to Haskell for eight years. And I...

NANCY RAY: Now what did you say your partner's name was there in Haskell?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well James Davis was the first one I had and that's who I worked with when I moved back over there. And Skip Lane was the Highway Patrol and I worked with him the last month of my probation.

NANCY RAY: So what kind of problems did ya'll have to deal with?

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh I don't know, just the usual stuff. We wrote a lot of speeding tickets and arrested a lot of DWIs you know.

NANCY RAY: Are there any incidents that stand out in your mind that you want to talk about?

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh, I don't know if I want to talk about them or not (laughter). It's uh... well Frank Jersey was my sergeant there and uh Frank, Sarge, we called him. He was... I guess he was a pretty big influence. He was uh, he... first time when I went to Haskell and got my assignment, they told me when to be there. And I walked up there to the third floor of the

Haskell County Courthouse, and uh found the office up there. And I walked up to the door and Sarge's desk was on one side of the room facing the wall. There was three Highway Patrol there. Gene Barrett was there, he came out of the school right ahead of me and he had been there, he came out in khakis also. And he was a month ahead of me, he got a commission the 1st of September and went to, he was gonna open up a new station in Throckmorton but he was breaking in there in Haskell. There's two desks on the other side of the room facing each other. And of course the three, James, Skip and Jimmy were working off those two desks. And I got a drawer out of James' desk. But I walked up there to the door you know and I could hear Sarge talking as I come down the hall. I didn't know what was going on but he was chewing them, something about paperwork you know. It was Monday morning and they were all in there trying to do paperwork. And he was, oh he had his back to the door and kind of looked over his shoulder and he was chewing on them about something. And uh anyway, he noticed them looking at me so he turned around to see who was standing in the doorway. But you know he was a pretty gruff old man but he was... he was a hell of a Highway Patrolman. And uh, he uh like I say, later on he and I got cross ways and I quit over it. And then I later went back and we ironed that out and without his blessing, I would never have got back in the Highway Patrol.

NANCY RAY: But you made it. Let's go back to this pursuit driving. I'm still interested in that (laughter).

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh, something I was gonna tell you. You were talking about something happened. I guess the first, I hadn't been there very long but we always went to the ballgames. You know Friday night we were... we were at the ballgames, football. And one night after Haskell had played ball there in town and I don't remember who they were playing but they had a good team that year. And uh Bobby had come over from Aspermont, he was at the game.

James and I were at the game and Skip and Jimmy were all at the game. After it was over with, well we uh you know just sort of split up and went... Bobby was working and on his way back towards Aspermont, he got in a high speed pursuit. And uh the car he came... was going east and uh we were there close to town. I don't know, Skip and Jimmy weren't too far. But anyway, as it happened, he chased this car through Haskell with lots of traffic. You know after that ballgame there was lots of kids... and I don't know, just the Lord's hands is the only way we got through there without killing somebody. But Bobby's responded and then we were to aid him. Skip and Jimmy got in the chase and some sheriff's deputies. You know I mean it was one of them deals. We wound up... Sarge was riding with James and I. I'd probably been working a month, less than a month. And Sarge was in the back seat and James was driving, I was in the right front. You know I didn't know what was going on. You know, I was doing what I was told to do. But anyway, we uh, we wound up... Sarge from the back seat got the shotgun and he leaned out the window from the back seat and shot into the back of their car. And as I recall, I think Skip and Jimmy, they were kind of behind the deal and they wound up shooting the tires out. They, we went out... and made a big turn and come back towards town. The bar ditches were muddy, they weren't boggy but they were muddy. This car pulled off the road you know and that was pretty bad you know he slid around. Anyway, we started back passing them and Sarge said we ain't letting them get back, going back through town. That's when he got the shotgun and... But anyway, Skip wound up shooting a ten gauge and shot the tires out of that car. When they come back toward them but they set up on side of the rode as they came by... And when that car came to a stop... of course we could see you know there was four people in there. And the sheriff was there and you know it was kind of a Chinese fire drill type deal like that (laughter)... but anyway, I didn't know what to do. Everybody started around that car and James, James is on the

driver's side... James is in the front, Sarge is behind him and the sheriff is behind him. James reaches in there and he pulls that driver out and he swats him pretty good and he throws him back there. Sarge swats him pretty good and the sheriff, he does the same thing and puts him on the ground. I said well I guess... throw him on the ground then the deputies got the guy back. But anyway, I was just doing what everybody else was doing you know. It wasn't just... they were some minors that were drinking and they wouldn't stop, they didn't want to get tickets. They wound up going to jail over that. But anyway, we had... you know it's uh things like that you know that... it was a different time you know... a kinder gentler world I guess. But yeah, we did some things.

NANCY RAY: Did you ever have a crash?

LARRY GILBREATH: My partner did. Bobby, he uh, man he uh... that is one reason he was in Aspermont I think. Anyway, Bobby tore up two or three. He crashed two or three. Uh... one or two, I don't know. I'll say this, there were a few times I thought I was going to but I don't know how I didn't a few times but I was pretty lucky all the time I was on the Highway Patrol. I had my patrol car parked in front of my house one day and a neighbor across the street backed out and *smack* (laughter). I wasn't even in it. Yeah, but luckily, or the grace of God, I never, never did.

NANCY RAY: Well narcotics a big issue at that time?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, you know marijuana was still a felony. Any amount of marijuana. That's about the time I guess when they started decriminalizing narcotics. And really, uh it was... it was around. It wasn't as prevalent as what you see now. And uh, that's... you'd find somebody with small amounts of marijuana once in a while or you know, or something but it wasn't... alcohol was the big thing in that time period in that area.

NANCY RAY: Were you ever afraid to walk up to a car that you stopped?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, I never had that much sense I guess. I don't know... you know... the biggest part of my career... the only time I really worked with a partner was when I was there in Aspermont. I moved back to Haskell and we worked one-man units over there... what we called sub-station schedule where we worked weekend nights and you know once in a while I guess things might have happened that I was little bit leery, I don't know.. Like I say, I don't know if I ever had enough sense. I just... when you're young, you don't stop to think about stuff like that I guess. I uh, I'll tell you a little funny thing about that. Rule, a small community there just west of Haskell about ten miles, and uh like I say, I worked a one-man unit while I was there when I went back to Haskell. Well one Sunday afternoon it was in the summer, hot summer time. Rule is a small community. In fact if you ever heard of Art Briles, he's the coach at Baylor now, head coach there at Baylor. But Art was in high school over there, he graduated from Rule. But about the time, at that time period... but anyway, Rule is a little old small community over there. And right out on the north side of Rule they had a little old black café. A lady by the name of, they called her Cat. Cat was probably about five foot tall and nearly that wide. And uh you know they always had barbecue and she did a little bootlegging out of there I'm sure. But they had a constable in Rule, Sonny Pitcock was the constable over there and he'd generally took care of anything in Rule. I was working one Sunday afternoon and uh, they called, City Hall... the night watchman called me from City Hall and you know like I say, it was the middle of the afternoon. And he says we got a call from Cat over there at her café there in Rule. Said she's having problems with this guy and wants somebody over there. Said I can't find the sheriff or the deputy, you know I can't find anybody and would you go over there and Sonny's out of town, would you go over there. You know James was off and I was the only one he could find. So I took off over there. And uh Rule, the hangout was, you had the east and west highway and north south highway with a four-way stop where they intersected there in downtown... metropolitan Rule. And when I went through Rule, Rule had one of the Class A state football championship that previous year I believe. Anyway, when I went through Rule, well Sonny had a boy that played on that team. And uh these kids all kind of hung out... there was a Texaco station at that

intersection and that's where they sort of hung out at night when that station was closed. Anyway, when I made the turn there, I seen Nolan, Sonny's boy and two more high school boys or I guess they had probably graduated, young boys filling up that pickup, big kids. Anyway, I didn't, I really didn't think anything about it. And pulled up out there at Cat's place and there were cars everywhere, literally everywhere. And I thought Lord have mercy this...(laughter) no telling what we're gonna find here. Anyway, I got out of the car and looked around and those three boys pulled in the parking lot, just pulled off the highway you know and they was just sitting there you know. I knew them, you know what they were doing. Nolan had probably taken that call from the City Hall from the night watchman over there at Haskell and he knew somebody would be coming. So when I showed up over there, Sonny used to ride... and I knew them boys. Anyway, they pulled up out there in case I had trouble with anybody, they'd be there to help me. But anyway, and uh I carried a little sawed-off pool queue about eighteen inches long from the big end of a queue in that car and I guess that's the only time I ever got it out. But I pulled that thing out and this little old building, it wasn't probably about as big as half of this room we're sitting in here. And uh when I opened that screen door on it, the inside door was open. And when I went through that screen door and pulled that screen door back, I beat on the door frame with that pool queue you know pretty loud. Of course everybody heard me coming in and Cat was over there behind the counter. I said Cat, you having problems out here? I knew at first glance everybody in there was drunk, it was just a matter of how drunk (laughter). And she said yes suh, that Wally Cox is raising hell and I want him out of here. Well Wally Cox was a regular in our Haskell County jail and he was uh he was generally drunk on Wednesdays... if you saw him he was generally going to jail. And uh but I looked around and Wally wasn't the only drunk. I said well you know, which one... I could carry five I think was about the max. I could put three in the back and two in the front and those two were gonna sit in each other's lap nearly because I had radar and radio equipment in the middle there. I said OK, you, you, you, you, you... and I talked to them. Nobody said anything but old Wally and I knew... But anyway, they seen them boys sitting out whenever I come into that café you know. And I didn't even... back then we didn't even handcuff them so I put all five them... or maybe I put four in the back seat, I don't know how I loaded

them in there. They were packed in there pretty tight. And I told them you're under arrest for being drunk and you're going to jail. And we went out there and loaded up and I put seat belts on them, had to put their seat belts on. And when we pulled up to the four-way stop there going back to Haskell where I'd seen those boys, Wally said I ain't going, I'm getting out here. And I reached over there and he opened the door, I reached over and pulled that door back shut. And I said you ain't getting out of here until I say you are. And I jerked that door back shut and I just took off. You know, we's running a pretty good clip on the way to Haskell and I thought, well when we get out at the jail we're gonna see who's the toughest you know. When I got out at the jail, them boys pulled in right behind me and we went in there and booked them there. They were mouthing... We didn't have anything but mouthing but I come out and those boys were still sitting there. They said well, I said I didn't know if you were gonna need any help or not we just come... (laughter). But living in small communities, you know you don't have that in bigger towns. And so uh you know... I had enjoyed my time there. I had a good time.

NANCY RAY: Did you do all your service with the Highway Patrol there at Haskell?

LARRY GILBREATH: Whenever I quit, like I say Sarge and I got cross ways, and I thought... I knew he was right but I was too hard headed to admit it. And uh I quit in June '75 and I reinstated in August of '77 and I went to Vernon for six months and then went to Crowell and stayed for over five years. Like I say, I promoted into the Rangers from Crowell.

NANCY RAY: Well, what about those two locations? Anything stand out?

LARRY GILBREATH: Oh, just good times (laughter).

NANCY RAY: That brings up a question. I have heard patrolmen say we made our own fun.

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, you know, you got to enjoy what you do.

NANCY RAY: What did you do?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, I don't know. You just pull pranks on each other and everything. You know, I was... oh out of high school and me and my running buddy, we got to doing a little snake hunting, rattlesnake hunting. So you know I, when I was there... I guess I was in Crowell. But I worked Crowell, it is a small place, there was about 1800 people in the county when I was there and they were

building a dam down there on the Pease River. So we had a lot of construction people in there and in the area at that time. But I worked Vernon and Quanah as much as I worked Crowell. Knew everybody but anyway, I don't know, I was out there one night and I had killed a rattlesnake, a pretty good sized snake. And cut his head off you know and was taking home to skin him, you know keep the skin. But I put him in the trunk of my car. And uh you know, I didn't think anything about it. I was in Vernon that night. We was up there at the PD, that's where we drink coffee at the Police Department. And we, I met a couple, one of the city units and one of the other Highway Patrol units I guess or... at the sheriff's office jail, they always kept a pot of coffee there at the jail. But anyway, I was getting something out of my trunk and I thought... I'm going to show them guys a snake. You know really I didn't even think about with the intent to do anything but I just put that snake up and they was standing over there about fifteen or twenty foot from me talking. And I said look here what I got and I pitched that snake out there on the ground and that city officer like to have had a heart attack. He jumped and run backwards (laughter) and ... and it really wasn't planned, it just happened. But you know, just things like that. You, you... well you know you get out and do your job and you just had a good time. I enjoyed it... like I say, I worked a lot in Vernon. Vernon was a three-man or four-man, I don't know. They had maybe... I guess it was a four-man station. Quanah was a two-man station. And you know...

NANCY RAY: You probably had a lot of traffic going through those...

LARRY GILBREATH: US 87, it carries lots and lots of traffic. (*short break*)

NANCY RAY: OK, we're back. And you were telling us you know about the fun that you have. I was gonna ask, how do the law enforcement people build up this camaraderie that you have?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, you know you've got to depend on each other. And that's part of it. If you can't trust that man to be there when you need him, I mean you're not going to have much to do with him you know. And uh I think I mentioned that the biggest part of career in the Highway Patrol, I worked a one-man unit. I spent five years there in Crowell in a one-man unit. And uh you know of course like I say there was about 1800 people in the county and the sheriff and when he had a deputy, there was three of us in the county. So it was... I worked with him and he worked with me and we just... but you know,

you've just got to trust each other, Nancy. That's the bottom line. And that was one thing, you were talking about the recruit school. That's something, that's another thing we learned in recruit school. The boxing, you know that was the big thing back then. We knew you know if you went through that recruit school, you had been tested, physically, and you would fight. You wasn't... whether you wanted to or you didn't want to wasn't an issue. You would if you got down to it. And that you wasn't gonna to turn and run. You wasn't gonna back out when things got tough. You were gonna be standing there. And uh you know, I... Ted Poland was a Highway Patrolman in Quanah and he was later sergeant there in Childress when I made Ranger, he was my sergeant. But uh Ted and I one night, I guess you heard about Bob Wills Days at Turkey, Texas.

NANCY RAY: Tell us.

LARRY GILBREATH: And uh... well back in my Highway Patrol days, Turkey got pretty wild on Bob Wills weekend. And it got to where we were... they brought in a force of Highway Patrolman and I'm talking you know ten, twelve people to work that thing in addition to your local officers. But Ted and I one night, we worked together. We worked together a whole lot even there when he was in Quanah and I was in Crowell. We'd get together and ride together and I'd go to Quanah and we'd get in the same car together and alternate contacts. You know he'd make one and I'd make the next one. And uh but we stopped a bunch of kids one night. Well we didn't know when we stopped them, we'd stopped a car load of drunks up there at Turkey, Texas. We was about ten or twelve miles out of Turkey and uh of course that's not... we didn't really know that territory because it was late at night, we didn't... But anyway, we come up on this car and they looked drunk. You know they was driving all over the road and we didn't have a choice but to stop them you know. Well, we stopped that car. Like I say, there were two of us and they started piling out of that car and they're some of the biggest old boys I'd ever seen. And uh, I mean they was five or six of them. That car was plumb full. And the driver was a little old bitty thing, he wasn't bigger than you. The rest of the guys were as big as that door. And I was driving. I was in the lead so I was driving the unit. Ted and I, we stepped out of the patrol car and them old boys started piling out of that car and we thought you know... we got a car load of drunks here and they're getting out. We're

fixing to see who's toughest. You know we looked at each other over the top of that car but you know neither one of us backed up. We knew got a job to do. And we approached them and we arrested them. And they, they was kind of mouthy but they never really challenged us but we didn't give them an opportunity. We took control of the situation and we let them know we was in charge and they were going to jail, one way or the other. And it was kind of funny the way that deal worked. We had a command post set up at the Fire Department there in Turkey. And uh you know, the judge was set up in there and uh you know all... just the whole operation was running out of there. And of course we called them, and I think it was late, it was probably, I don't know, two o'clock in the morning, I don't know, it was real late. And uh we called and told them we was, we had these five in custody and we was enroute. And we uh of course run the license plate and the driver's license and all that you know. And anyway, we drove up there in front of that fire station and uh you know we split them up. I don't remember, one of us drove their car in and had part of them in the patrol car and part of them in their car you know. And we drove up in front of that fire station and there stood a Highway Patrolman, I think from Shamrock. I can't remember now but one of those stations up to the north there. And uh them old kids started... they was all young, young guys. They started piling out of them two cars to go in there to see the judge and be processed or whatever. And this Highway Patrolman went to chewing on them (laughter). And he, he ate those kids out like they were his own you know. And told them now, get yourself in there and talk to that judge you know. And uh they walked on in and me and Ted were just standing there you know (laughter), we didn't have any idea what... He said that's my all-state football team from last year (laughter). And it was... but you know stuff like that and you don't know when you're gonna... as Highway Patrolman, you don't know, or as a police officer. Not just Highway Patrolman, any police officer. I had a friend there when I was in Ford County, an old rancher. And uh, he used to tell me he said, he'd grown up and never lived anywhere but out there on that ranch. He told me, said you know that's rattlesnake country. Said I'd rather walk up on a barrel of rattlesnakes as to do what you do. And I said what are you talking about? He said, you walk up on that car out there in the middle of the night and he said you never know what you're gonna find. And I said well, you know I never thought about it that way. And he said I know what's in

that barrel of rattlesnakes (laughter). I never really thought about it that way but that's a pretty good analogy.

NANCY RAY: Well let's switch to your Ranger career because what you just said... with the Rangers we've interviewed, they said you know, when you're a Highway Patrolman, you don't know what you're dealing with. But when you're a Ranger, you know you're dealing with sorry people. So that's kind of a difference so let's talk about when you became a Ranger. What prompted you or how did you go about doing that?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, I mentioned while ago Leo Hickman. And I was there in Crowell, Ford County. And like I say, they'd never had a Highway Patrolman in Ford County when I moved there and opened that station. And uh, you know I went in there and uh got along with those folks and uh did what was asked of me you know. I mean I took care of my business and you know... I'm not trying to pat myself on the back you know that was...but I felt like that when I went there I needed to establish some good relationships but I also had a job to do. But anyway, uh then Leo, that was his county, he worked down there occasionally and like I say, Wilbarger, Vernon and Quanah was... Hardeman County, those were all his counties. And Leo is one of these, one of these guys that you know where you stand with him. He either likes you or he don't have any use for you and there's not too much in between with him. And you're gonna know but uh... And I met Leo pretty quick after I went to Vernon there in the sheriff's office. But anyway, Leo I guess got to watching me and he got to, he started encouraging me to take that test. And you know, quite honestly, I didn't, I didn't have any idea that I could ever make the cut. And, but... I was... I was getting tired of what I was doing. You know I was getting to the point in life that I wanted a change and uh but every time I saw him, he'd tell me you know, you studying? No Leo... Now dang boy, get to studying. And he'd... he told me. He said I don't have much influence but if you can get to the interview board, we'll see, see how much. See if I can help you any, you know. But because of his encouragement, I did go to studying. (*emotional moment*) And uh you know, like I told you while ago, I never was very studious. And I, you know, I read the paper and that's about all the reading I like to do (laughter). You know what I mean? Newspaper and that's about as far as I get. I have read a book or two

here lately though, I found some good ones. But uh, I got to studying. And of course you know it was a challenge because I had kids, had to work, and... But I decided that I wanted to give it a shot because of his encouragement. And I went to studying and I set me up a routine. I worked what we call a sub-station schedule. I worked days during the week with days off during the week. And then on weekends, I worked nights. But I set me... I would study an hour a night during the week. After Gail and the kids would go to bed, I'd get my books out and open them on the living room table and I'd study for an hour. And uh I figured out that after an hour, it didn't do much good. But uh, and I worked at that for close to a year. And when the test came up, uh the way that works and I'm sure you've heard this before from a Ranger. But you got a written test and anybody is eligible to take the written test you know, statewide. And then they take the top so many scores off the written test to go to the oral interview board. And uh I, I made the interview board.

NANCY RAY: First time?

LARRY GILBREATH: Yeah, surprised me (laughter). But yeah. And Dick Johnson was a Highway Patrolman in Childress and Dick, Leo was encouraging him. And Dick and I went to the interview board. In fact, there was four out of the Lubbock region that went to the oral interview board. And uh, and you know like I say, I never had made any big splashes. About the only splash I'd ever made was when I jumped up and quit. But, but Leo put in a good word for me. And you know here I was from a little old place that nobody's ever heard of... a one-man station out in West Texas. But anyway, you know the Lord blessed me in a tremendous way.

NANCY RAY: Do you remember who all was on the interview board?

LARRY GILBREATH: Well, not really. I remember there was Bill Wilson was senior captain and he chaired the board. And uh Maurice Cook who was a brand new... he had just made captain in Midland not very long before that. He was a brand new captain was one the board. And Charlie Moore was the captain in Lubbock. And he was on the board and that was the three Ranger captains. And uh there was a Highway Patrol captain or I think he was in the colonel's office there in Austin and I was trying to think of his name. I never did work for him but my brother worked for him when he was a lieutenant in El Paso.

