

Interview with
JIM GILLESPIE
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Mr. Gillespie's Home
Dumas, Texas
Thursday—October 30, 2008

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Jim Gillespie, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



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JIM GILLESPIE

TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED

NANCY RAY: My name is Nancy Ray. Today is Thursday, October 30th. I am visiting with Jim Gillespie of Dumas, Texas. With us is Eddie Ray. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Gillespie's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Gillespie, do I have your permission to record this interview?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes.

NANCY RAY: There is no video included, this is strictly audio. Ranger Gillespie, do you understand that this audio will belong to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes.

NANCY RAY: And Ranger Gillespie, do I have your permission to present copies, there is no video, so I will only present the transcribed document to the website, or to be placed on their website, at the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. Is that OK?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes.

NANCY RAY: All right. And Ranger Gillespie, let's start with just telling me your full name.

JIM GILLESPIE: Jimmy Lee Gillespie.

NANCY RAY: Where were you born and when?

JIM GILLESPIE: Born in Ralston, Oklahoma, in the old Cherokee outlet or Cherokee strip on September 23rd, 1936.

NANCY RAY: Well you just had a birthday recently then.

JIM GILLESPIE: Getting older.

NANCY RAY: Everybody is. Well tell me a little bit about your family. Your parents.

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, parents were Virgil and Florence Gillespie. They were both born and raised up in the Oklahoma Panhandle. Well not the Panhandle itself, in... well one of them was in Beaver County and one was in Harper County.

NANCY RAY: And their names were?

JIM GILLESPIE: Virgil and Florence.

NANCY RAY: I'm sorry, I missed those. OK, what about brothers and sisters?

JIM GILLESPIE: I had two of each. Do you want their names?

NANCY RAY: Yes, please.

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, Beverly Snider. She lives in Woodward, Oklahoma. Sylvian Gillespie, he lives in Roswell, New Mexico.

NANCY RAY: And how do you spell his name?

JIM GILLESPIE: SYLVIAN. And Karen League, LEAGUE. And the youngest is Jordie Ray Gillespie. He lives in Sweetwater, Texas.

NANCY RAY: And where were you in the line? Were you oldest or...

JIM GILLESPIE: I was the oldest, yes.

NANCY RAY: The oldest one... you had to set the example then.

JIM GILLESPIE: Bad, bad, bad.

NANCY RAY: Bad example? I doubt that. Well where did you go to school?

JIM GILLESPIE: Follett, Texas.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell that?

JIM GILLESPIE: FOLLETT. Its north... the last town in the northeast corner of the Panhandle.

NANCY RAY: And you graduated from school there?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes.

NANCY RAY: All right. Did you... were you active in any kind of extracurricular activities in school? Sports or...

JIM GILLESPIE: As small as the school was, every time there was a sport, everybody could... had to join in seems like.

NANCY RAY: So what did ya'll play?

JIM GILLESPIE: Football, basketball... basically that was it. We were big enough to have all kinds of teams.

NANCY RAY: What stands out in your mind about school, anything?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, it was just fun.

NANCY RAY: What made it fun?

JIM GILLESPIE: I don't know. We were just a bunch of idiots enjoying ourselves.

NANCY RAY: Having a good time.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yep.

NANCY RAY: What about when you graduated. What did you do after that?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, well we were... my dad was a custom harvester and we'd start down every year... when school was out we started down around the Red River in southern Oklahoma and we would cut wheat all the way up to the Dakotas. And that filled our summers up.

NANCY RAY: I'll bet. Well what kind of equipment did you have at that time?

JIM GILLESPIE: Combines and trucks.

NANCY RAY: What was your primary job during that time?

JIM GILLESPIE: Sitting out on the combine. That's the reason I've got these problems (*pointed to skin problem on his face*). Sunshine causes a lot of problems.

NANCY RAY: Right. So did all of your brothers and sisters do this too?

JIM GILLESPIE: Every one of them.

NANCY RAY: Well when you graduated from high school, did you stay around Follett or what did you do then?

JIM GILLESPIE: I went to Tech for a couple of years. And then I got tired of just spending my folks' money because they couldn't afford it so I went back home and worked for farmers there. And one day I got this letter and it says your friends and neighbors think you need to go to the military so I got drafted. I spent two years at Fort Riley, Kansas.

NANCY RAY: So you were in the Army?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes. And then after the Army, went back home and finally got... let's see, that was '62, no '61. I got married.

NANCY RAY: Well tell us about your wife then, what is her name?

JIM GILLESPIE: Nelia, NELIA.

NANCY RAY: Thank you.

JIM GILLESPIE: Nickname, Trudy, TRUDY. Maiden name was Wilson. And she lived on a farm six miles north of Follett which just happened to be over in Oklahoma. And anyway, I purchased a service station in Perryton and had that for a year or two and then joined the Department of Public Safety in 1963, February 27th. And...

NANCY RAY: Well before we go to your DPS career, tell me when did you marry your wife?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh golly, all these hard questions. Let's see. Uh May 19th, 1962. We got married there in Follett.

NANCY RAY: And you have children.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, we've got children.

NANCY RAY: I can see some beautiful pictures. Tell me about your children.

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh we just have two. Boy, Shannon, and a daughter, Sharlotte, with an S. Anyway uh Shannon... do you want that information?

NANCY RAY: Sure, that would be fine.

JIM GILLESPIE: Shannon uh wanted to, he wanted to go into the law enforcement but I said you won't make any money there. So he... they were doing these CLEP tests so he did the CLEP test and he walked on the campus at West Texas A&M and he liked three hours of being a sophomore so that saved us a bunch of money there.

NANCY RAY: That would... cut out the whole freshman year.

JIM GILLESPIE: And uh he went with the intent on being, uh getting his degree in geology and going to work for T. Boone Pickens. But a year before he graduated, the bottom dropped out of the oil business so anyway he came back home, or back here to Dumas, and walked on as an employee out at Diamond-Shamrock. It was Diamond-Shamrock then, Valero now. Anyway he worked his way up to (*looked at me*)

NANCY RAY: I think it is Plant Operations Manager.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah because he's gone up so much I don't even try to keep up with him anymore. And of course he's got five kids. That's what you're looking at here.

NANCY RAY: Beautiful kids.

JIM GILLESPIE: The (*unknown word*) Gallery. But anyway the daughter, Sharlotte, uh she married a boy there in uh Amarillo, a football player. His name is Rob, Robert Roblero. But anyway, they couldn't have any children so uh they started doing foster child stuff. And since then, they have ended up with two boys. One of them's two and one them's three. And they, they are a *wild* bunch. They are.

NANCY RAY: Were you going to say something?

JIM GILLESPIE: No, just go ahead.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well let's go back to the Army. You were gonna tell us... you spent two years at...

JIM GILLESPIE: Fort Riley.

NANCY RAY: And what did you do in the Army.

JIM GILLESPIE: I was a company clerk. Uh and we processed, well actually our unit was the First Aviation Company. It was uh... the First Infantry Division had just come back from Germany. They had been over there ever since the war. Anyway they'd just come back and they started processing recruits. Well I got assigned to the First Aviation Company down there as company clerk. And we processed people coming in that worked on helicopters and fixed wing. And the six-month people, they come in the military for a six-month deal, we had just a running, a constant run of these people. They'd come in and be there for a little while and then they's gone. And uh basically... just drudgery after a while.

NANCY RAY: Well you had a lot to keep up with and at that time, you didn't have computers. Everything was on paper?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh yes. You did the typing. That helped a little bit because I could type.

NANCY RAY: Well does anything stand out in your mind about your time there at Fort Riley? Anything...

JIM GILLESPIE: No. I had a company commander and he must... I think he must have been Greek because he had the weirdest name. And I learned how to read hieroglyphics because there was no other way to explain his writing.

NANCY RAY: He could have been a doctor?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh. A doctor wouldn't have stood a chance.

NANCY RAY: Now you were... were you married at the time? You weren't married then.

JIM GILLESPIE: No.

NANCY RAY: All right, is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your time in the Army? You never went overseas anywhere?

JIM GILLESPIE: No. It was right there. Everybody was getting money to go to their next station. If they'd given me any it would have been about twelve cents because they paid you by the mile. But I was just down across the river.

NANCY RAY: Right, you didn't get to go far from home.

JIM GILLESPIE: No.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well then you came back home. And you bought a service station, is that right?

JIM GILLESPIE: No, I came back home and just worked for different farmers... farm work. And also I did some... I had a truck, a wheat truck. My brother and I owned this truck that we used during the summers because by then I had quit going on the uh harvest run. And, but during winter I'd use that truck and I'd haul cottonseed uh... cottonseed and different stuff out to the oilfield because they put that stuff down in the hole. And I did that for a while and then I had a cousin that said, hey, we got this opportunity of this service station at Perryton so I got involved in that thing. And anyway, in that time I got married and we went over there and was there for a year or two and along came... there was this state trooper kept stopping in there and visiting every once in a while. I decided I'd go that route because it had insurance and it had stuff like that... and retirement. And there was no such thing in the service station.

NANCY RAY: And this was in the full-service, service station days, right?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes.

NANCY RAY: Very different from today.

JIM GILLESPIE: Right.

NANCY RAY: Do you have any storied about that?

JIM GILLESPIE: None.

NANCY RAY: Nobody famous ever came through Perryton?

JIM GILLESPIE: If they did, they didn't stop there.

NANCY RAY: Oh no. Well do you remember this trooper's name who I guess that was the person who influenced you toward law enforcement?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well I don't know whether you'd call him a good influence or a bad influence. Yeah, I remember, he's retired. I think he's still alive, I'm not sure.

NANCY RAY: So did you apply... what year was this? (*he gave me a look*) Oh, you're rolling your eyes.

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh... I think I applied the latter part of 1962, yeah. Latter part of 1962 and I got accepted... well, you have to take tests first. I took tests and that all went all right. And I uh was called down to Austin and had to start down there on February 27th of 1963.

NANCY RAY: Now did you go before an interview board to go into this, before you were accepted?

JIM GILLESPIE: I remember taking the test in Amarillo. If there was an interview board on that thing I don't remember. That's too far back.

NANCY RAY: OK. So you started the school. Tell us about it.

JIM GILLESPIE: They tried to kill you (*laughter*).

NANCY RAY: How was that?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh, they just run you to death. And exercise and...it was...

NANCY RAY: What was the toughest part of it?

JIM GILLESPIE: Just the physical stuff.

NANCY RAY: Did you box any?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, they had us box for about two weeks. And... but from then on, the rest of my career in DPS, they had us practice shooting all our time. So I thought well, they don't want you to fight they want you to shoot. If you've gotta shoot somebody, well you need to be able to shoot them, not fight them. So most, I think most of your shooting occurs you know across the road, you're that close.

NANCY RAY: Well do you remember the monitors you had?

JIM GILLESPIE: I can see them but I can't tell you their names.

NANCY RAY: Well what was their purpose?

JIM GILLESPIE: I just.... To keep us in line and uh make sure that we were there when we were supposed to be... and in class and don't act up and...

NANCY RAY: Well I've heard they would get you up in the middle of the night.

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, we had two guys that were nice. We didn't have... our school was kind of a small one... uh eighteen, nineteen... there was something about measles or something went through and it was different.

NANCY RAY: Well do you remember how many started in your class and how many finished?

JIM GILLESPIE: Not off hand. I... that was... I used to be amazed at that because there were quite a few started but very few finished.

NANCY RAY: And I guess the purpose was to see...

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, who wanted to really go and wanted to stay.

NANCY RAY: And you made it.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, I made that.

NANCY RAY: Surely did. What do you remember... does anything stand out? Any memories stand out from when you were in school?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, they were building, they were adding onto the building and we had to... now you had to go for guard... guard duty you know all night long.

NANCY RAY: I haven't heard that, tell us about it.

JIM GILLESPIE: Well this back... like I say, they were building on. And of course you had to dig holes and put uh concrete down in there for the foundation. And one of these idiots... on guard duty... I don't know, it was probably six by six by six or eight feet deep... I don't know how deep it was. That idiot walked off into one of those... that was funny. But uh...

NANCY RAY: It wasn't full? It was empty at that time?

JIM GILLESPIE: It was empty. Yeah, it was just a hole they had dug to do this other work.

NANCY RAY: And he was on guard duty and he walked into it?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, walked into it. Fell off into that.

NANCY RAY: Did somebody have to help him out?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh yeah.

NANCY RAY: Well tell me some of the things that you learned. I'm sure you learned about laws, about safety, and...

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, that and... basically you... the law stuff. Penal codes and stuff like that.

NANCY RAY: Probably things you don't think about just a whole lot today.

JIM GILLESPIE: No.

NANCY RAY: Where was your first duty station?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, we had... first duty station they had... First of all, they had so many openings in Highway Patrol and so many openings in, in Drivers License. And the brilliant mind I've got, everybody said most of your questions in Highway Patrol is about driver's license. I said that sounds like a place to start. That way you get the background and... so I got stationed in Midland about June something or other of that year of 1963. At the Drivers License office at Midland. Now *that* is scary.

NANCY RAY: How's that?

JIM GILLESPIE: You're driving down a four-lane street and you tell a little old lady that can't hardly see over the steering wheel... at the next corner, turn left. And you've got two lanes coming at you and she gets down there and she turns left. That'll give you ulcers *fast (laughter)*.

NANCY RAY: She didn't yield to the traffic?

JIM GILLESPIE: She was doing what she was told. It was funny but...

NANCY RAY: I bet you had some more experiences giving driving tests too.

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh, I don't know if you want to put it on tape or not.

NANCY RAY: Sure. This is part of your history.

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh, well. There was this woman of African descent and she tried and tried and tried and tried to pass the test. There were other guys giving driving tests too. And, but anyway I got her one day. And she come up and she rammed her... finally she passed. And she stuck her hand down in my pocket and I like to come unglued. Anyway, I felt in there and she had stuck some amount of money, I don't know... a dollar or two, five or something. I took it out and gave it back to her. That was different to me. And then at times we had, we'd uh... I would at night when my wife... Let's see, our boy was born there in Midland. And uh my wife, she

went... I took her up to her parents so that the child would be born up there. Anyway... and her mother could take care of her because I couldn't. I'd ride around with the Highway Patrol at night and I can remember one time there was some guy who had a gun out west of Odessa. And he'd whipped upon a woman or something and he was out in this field. So we got there and of course it was night time and I was just riding. So the trooper gave me a shotgun and we went and I got the shotgun on that old boy and we had him raise his hands. And he crawled... he went up over that barbed-wire fence with both hands in the air. That was a trick, I thought that was... to me that was funny.

NANCY RAY: Did he get away?

JIM GILLESPIE: No.

NANCY RAY: How'd you catch him?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh we had him surrounded out there in the weeds. He'd get up and come over.

NANCY RAY: Well you raised a question that I was gonna ask a minute ago. You were talking about a shotgun. What kind of weapons did you have when...

JIM GILLESPIE: Just whatever they issued.

NANCY RAY: What did they issue? This is the state, right?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah. Uh revolver, Smith & Wesson. And uh... well after two years in Midland, then I transferred to the division... back then, I don't know whether they have much of it anymore, but Motor Vehicle Inspection. And transferred to El Paso. And see when I started, Drivers License did not have, did not carry weapons. But they had a trooper, I believe it was in San Antonio, the Drivers License, no guns... the badge, that's all they had. Walked in a place that was being held up. Of course they shoot at a badge, the bad guy does. And so they started...

then they started issuing the Drivers License personnel to carry a sidearm. So in that time, I was in Vehicle Inspection and we had the revolver, and the shotgun. Let's see, I was in El Paso for two years. Do you want to... I can't give you the dates.

NANCY RAY: That's fine. What... in Motor Vehicle Inspection, I know you're gonna be inspecting vehicles, but what is the purpose? What is the primary responsibility?

JIM GILLESPIE: Back then they had... you had to get this sticker put on your windshield to say yes, this meets all this criteria. And these people have to be supervised. The people that put those on... When I got to El Paso... that was my first Motor Vehicle Inspection station. And they were giving a school and they had something like 500 mechanics there taking written tests and once they passed that, then they'd go to where they worked and they had a headlight machine where you adjust the headlights. And they had to know how to do that. But uh it was just to see that all vehicles complied with state laws and regulations that are obligated...

NANCY RAY: So your responsibility was to oversee the people who actually did the inspection.

JIM GILLESPIE: Right. I went out there and I think I was supervising probably 250 men at however many places of inspection that was. And sometimes they would forget to do stuff and you'd have to have a serious talk with them and stuff.

NANCY RAY: Can you remember any serious talks you had?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, a lot of denials but oh... it... to me I guess, to you it might be serious but to me it wasn't. So I wouldn't know where to start and where to end.

NANCY RAY: OK. So you did this for two years.

JIM GILLESPIE: No. I did that for two years in El Paso and two, four, seven in Amarillo. After that, then... while we were there we had, our daughter was born. And so to get a wife and

grandkids close to grandmas, because both grandmas and grandpas lived up there in Follett. An opening came up in Amarillo so I transferred to Amarillo in Motor Vehicle Inspection. Got there, moved into this little apartment and within two weeks, somebody called my wife and said that they were going to repossess our motorcycles. I wouldn't have had a motorcycle on a bet. But come to find out, there was about three or four people there with the same name.

NANCY RAY: In Amarillo?

JIM GILLESPIE: In Amarillo. Uh... Anyway, needless to say, we got them straightened out.

NANCY RAY: They didn't repossess *your* motorcycles!

JIM GILLESPIE: They didn't repossess mine. But... along that line, my boy, he was six or seven and I got a bill from a doctor somewhere that they... I owed some money for something that one of these other guys had... their son was...

NANCY RAY: One of the other Jim Gillespies?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes. That was getting tiresome. But anyway, that happened. And another time, I had... I wrote a check at this cleaner's where we had our uniforms pressed and cleaned. And uh the check... one day I walked in there and this lady said say, this check came back. And I looked on the back and it went from their business to a local bank there in Amarillo and back to them. It had never gone to my bank. Well it just so happened that the guy that wrote it... the same guy with the motorcycle and the son that he wasn't paying the bills on. Uh his mother worked at that bank and these other ladies knew that he wasn't good for the check so they didn't... they never sent it. I started really getting tired of this guy but uh... You look back and it's funny.

NANCY RAY: It wasn't funny at the time.

JIM GILLESPIE: No, it wasn't funny at the time. Yeah.

NANCY RAY: Well here you are in Amarillo and you have a young family. And you're working in Motor Vehicle Inspection. What happened in Amarillo, anything stand out?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh, not really. Uh... it was just the same business as usual.

NANCY RAY: Well were you ever in the Highway Patrol?

JIM GILLESPIE: No, not, uh...

NANCY RAY: That wasn't your career.

JIM GILLESPIE: No, I was just headed down the road doing something else. Uh...

NANCY RAY: Were you in Amarillo then when you went to become a Ranger?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes.

NANCY RAY: OK, what... what encouraged you, or what made you want to become a Ranger?

JIM GILLESPIE: When you're a young boy and you're growing up, you always want to be like Roy Rogers and all those type stuff. Well, there was the Lone Ranger and Tonto. I didn't have no Indian friends. But the friends I did have, I wanted to be this guy or this guy or Lash Larue or whoever. But you know you start out with that it is just something that you kind of have a background for.

NANCY RAY: Kind of the legend of the Rangers.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, it was...

NANCY RAY: Well then how did you go about becoming one?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, uh had a friend named Kelly Rogers. He was a Ranger there. He was temporarily assigned to Amarillo for 27 years.

NANCY RAY: Temporarily for 27 years.

JIM GILLESPIE: I believe that's right, he was. And they finally, before he retired, they finally made it permanent. But uh...

NANCY RAY: So Kelly Rogers is the one who...

JIM GILLESPIE: He was the influence yeah, I would say mainly.

NANCY RAY: How did he... what did he do that stuck out?

JIM GILLESPIE: Just the way he carried himself. The way he conducted business... I just... I was just impressed.

NANCY RAY: Describe that. What impressed you?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, he was a big man and... he was intelligent. And he wasn't afraid of nothing, nobody. But, but he was likable and he was just a nice guy.

NANCY RAY: Did he wear a hat?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh yeah.

NANCY RAY: So how did you become a Ranger, what was your first step?

JIM GILLESPIE: First you make application. And then you start, you take tests. And you have to score in a percentile because they were you know... sometimes there would be openings for a few Rangers and sometimes more than that, several. But you take the written test and you pass that and then you go for an interview board.

NANCY RAY: Now did you pass the written test the first time? Or do you remember?

JIM GILLESPIE: I think so but I...

NANCY RAY: That's pretty good.

JIM GILLESPIE: Don't hold me to that. Too many years have gone by. But I think that's right. And then you go to the interview board. And then you have to place... depends on how

many they need. They'll take uh that many plus two or three more on the list... put you on the list. And then as openings came about the list would last for a year.

NANCY RAY: Well do you remember who was on the interview board?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh golly no.

NANCY RAY: No. Were you scared? Do you remember how you felt going to it?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, no, not really. Uh and in the interview board, the calmer you are the better you do. That's the way it worked with me, other people may have different ideas but...

NANCY RAY: Well when you go before the interview board, is it like an hour or two hours? Or how long are they talking to you?

JIM GILLESPIE: It seemed like everybody had a set... everybody on the interview board had a set amount of questions. And uh...

NANCY RAY: Do you remember any of the questions?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh golly.

NANCY RAY: Oh golly, that's too long, right?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah. I don't even remember what the wife tells me from day to day or hour to hour.

NANCY RAY: OK, well you made it. You passed the interview board. What happens next?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, you just wait and see if retirements come along for the most part.

NANCY RAY: Well how many people were put on the list with you, do you remember that?

JIM GILLESPIE: No ma'am, I sure don't.

NANCY RAY: And do you remember any of the people who made it with you?

JIM GILLESPIE: I can remember the guy that made it right ahead of me... was uh... no I can't either. I think it was Jimmy Mull. Have you talked to Jimmy?

NANCY RAY: I've tried to call him but I haven't reached him yet.

JIM GILLESPIE: Seems like it was either... no. I could have gone ahead of Jimmy. Marshall Brown. I believe Marshall Brown was right ahead of me.

NANCY RAY: Well when you finished, when you made it, when an opening came up, where did you go?

JIM GILLESPIE: Would you believe Dumas, Texas?

NANCY RAY: I would, right where we are today.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes. Uh, it was August 1st, 1974. I always have to start back in 1963 and add 35 years or whatever.

NANCY RAY: You know what, you are exactly right. August 1st, 1974.

JIM GILLESPIE: Well good.

NANCY RAY: So your memory is better than you thought. When you made Ranger, you didn't wear a uniform, right?

JIM GILLESPIE: No.

NANCY RAY: How did you dress?

JIM GILLESPIE: Suit, western suit. It was before... before me but I don't remember. They used to have a... it was a western suit and everybody wore the same color. It was a suit by Niver's out of Fort Worth, Dallas, somewhere down there.

NANCY RAY: So you picked your own, your own suit?

JIM GILLESPIE: After that.

NANCY RAY: Well tell me about when you put on that badge. What did it mean to you? Here you are... you finally became a Lone Ranger.

JIM GILLESPIE: That was all right... that was all right.

NANCY RAY: Can you describe it in words?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh... no. I wouldn't try. It was you know... I reached my... I could see over the top of the pedestal I guess you might say. It was an honor and privilege, it sure was.

NANCY RAY: Well how did people react to you now that you're a Ranger?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, depends on what part of Texas you're in. There's a difference. I found that out.

NANCY RAY: Tell me about that difference. Start with Dumas, how did they react to you?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh they were... you know it was cordial and everything nice. But you go to South Texas and the population you know... hey, there goes... it's more relaxed up here I guess. I don't know.

NANCY RAY: One word I've heard is respect. A lot of respect.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, yeah. But like I said... it is respect but they're more relaxed around you than they are in other places.

NANCY RAY: Do you think that's just the way of life up here?

JIM GILLESPIE: I think it's the culture... yeah the culture of the area. OK, you go down around Austin, San Antone, down there, the Rangers are Walker type you know. A friend used to be the sheriff up here at Spearman and he had kinfolks down in Louisiana. And he said down there that when "Walker, Texas Ranger" came on, everything ceased because everybody went in and watched. I told him that I'd taught that guy everything he knew. *(laughter)*

NANCY RAY: Well good for you.

JIM GILLESPIE: But anyway, it... there was people that were really impressed up here but they were still more relaxed with you.

NANCY RAY: Well were you... had this been a Ranger station already or was it...

JIM GILLESPIE: No. That's... I never delved into it but years ago, there was a fire in the capitol and it burnt all the records. So back before a certain date, all the records, most of the records were destroyed by that fire. And uh so I was stationed up here and uh there was... there had not been any Ranger on record the way I understand it that had ever been stationed north of the Canadian River. I was the first one. There was one at Pampa but he was south of the Canadian River. Uh but the people... there was a sheriff over here at Channing, Texas, that allegedly was a... had been a Texas Ranger at one time. And the history over there said that he was a Ranger stationed at Channing. But like I say, I didn't delve into it because if that's the way they want their history, that's fine. But on record right now, I think I'm the first one that was permanently stationed up north of the Canadian River.

NANCY RAY: Well that's quite a responsibility to come to a new place... a rookie Ranger.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes. Well, this area was worked by Ranger Rogers out of Amarillo. He would supervise this area plus the area down in, around Amarillo. But I thought... what was... you know they had that first uh war there in... the first Bush... they went in there?

NANCY RAY: Desert Storm?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah. Tell me the name of the country. That little...

EDDIE RAY: Kuwait.

JIM GILLESPIE: Kuwait! And I'd look at that picture and how big is that... Well one day I looked up and got the land mass of Kuwait. And then I got... my territory was Dallam, Hartley, Sherman, Moore, Hansford, up around Spearman, and Borger. Come to find out, the area that I supervised was six counties was larger than Kuwait and that's where they were fighting this big war. I thought that was kind of odd.

NANCY RAY: That's a good way to compare the size and put it in perspective. Well what did you do, how did you establish yourself as the Ranger?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh... of course you work with... Am I gonna tell you the same thing that everybody else has told you about?

NANCY RAY: Everybody's turns out differently. It's amazing.

JIM GILLESPIE: Is that right?

NANCY RAY: Yes.

JIM GILLESPIE: I... you just go in and meet the sheriffs, chief of police of all the towns... we're here to help you do this. Have you got any, any problems? All you've got to do is call and we uh... What helped mostly is you got these small population counties that their budget isn't that great. And if they got somebody that can afford to go and do a lot of traveling and stuff it helps them out. It was...

NANCY RAY: So you had the budget from the state to travel around?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yes, we'd go anywhere in the state and sometimes out of the state if necessary whereas a lot of them were restricted because of budget problems.

NANCY RAY: Well how did the uh local law enforcement accept you?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh it was all right. Like Kelly Rogers, he'd been... four of these counties were... he had worked for years. Kelly Rogers had the first four from the west and then uh Hansford and Hutchinson, I inherited them from Ranger Bill Baten out of Pampa. So... well most of the sheriffs and chiefs I knew already because I'd worked out of the Motor Vehicle Inspection in this area. So they, they were all... no problems anywhere.

NANCY RAY: Well do you remember what was your first case?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah.

NANCY RAY: Tell us.

JIM GILLESPIE: Do you want to know? Well uh, when we first went in we spent more time on the road and going to schools in Austin. Seems like it was a constant thing. But anyway, the sheriff over here called and, at Dumas called and said we had a burglary at the drug store in Sun Ray... said come on over. So I went over there that morning and some guys or unknown people cut a hole in the roof and there's a drop ceiling and they'd gone down the drop ceiling and a leg went through the drop ceiling and they got out and went on down into the thing. So the store owner's son and I climbed up on top and we're looking down in there and he said looky there. Well there is one of those billfold-checkbook looking things. So he dropped himself down in there because I probably would have fell through myself. But anyway he come back up and I said, Sheriff, this... they'd done it just the night before. The first thing they'd walked in and there was all this stuff. And anyway I said hey Sheriff, and I gave that to him. And he looked at it and there of course it's got the guy's name, address, telephone number, everything. Boy... and the sheriff and one of his deputies or somebody took off and they hooked 'em down to Amarillo. Anyway, that guy was, he was shocked that he was found out so quick. He couldn't figure that out. But...

NANCY RAY: He could be on TV as one of the dumbest...

JIM GILLESPIE: Dumbest...*(laughter)* that's exactly right. One of the dumbest criminals.

NANCY RAY: Well that's one of the questions I was gonna ask you.

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, one of the dumbest criminals. But uh if it's tragic I guess, it was tragic to him. He'd come up here and he was an Army recruiter. But before he got drafted or however he come in there, got in the military... I've forgotten. He was studying to become a lawyer. So I never did know how his law career, professional career came in.

NANCY RAY: Probably not very well.

JIM GILLESPIE: But he'd come up there and got to running around with these uh dopers, a couple of dopers. And I don't know whether they were on a... some kind of bush that you'd take the seeds out and you'd chew them. They had, one guy, one of his partners, that uh was I think the instigator in the whole thing. But anyway, we captured him in Amarillo. He was... that was kind of strange.

NANCY RAY: Well, here in the Panhandle area, what were the types of crimes that you had?

JIM GILLESPIE: Um, you name it. Because people are people and they're gonna do the same things here that, except we didn't have too many goat thefts. But down state, every time we'd get together for a school or something, you know... well we've been running this farm theft ring and all trying to track them down. They'd be saying things like how many goat thefts have you worked? I thought what're you talking about? Because we didn't... you don't see too many herds of goat up here.

NANCY RAY: I haven't seen any.

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, they... believe it or not, now we do. We've got this little town of Cactus, its north of here, it's got a big Hispanic and of course they like barbeque goat. So ever once in a while somebody had some goats stolen.

NANCY RAY: Well did you have... did you have lots of burglaries?

JIM GILLESPIE: We had burglaries, oilfield thefts, residential burglaries, farm burglaries, farm thefts... somebody was always getting killed.

NANCY RAY: What about kidnappings. Did you have any kidnappings?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh right now I can't think of any. But uh... well yeah we did but I didn't... I was out of pocket. Well, they had two girls kidnapped here one time, raped. But it was before I got back it was already solved... they had them in custody so I didn't get to work on it.

NANCY RAY: Well you mentioned schools... that you went to a number of schools. What did you go and learn?

JIM GILLESPIE: Just how to use different equipment and methods and certain types of investigations. It was everything.

NANCY RAY: Well think about this. This transcript will be looked at you know many years down the road, hopefully, so for those people to learn what kind of tools you used to investigate a crime, what did you use?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh well like one thing, the identi-kit, which is you talk to the individual to get a witness or try to build a picture of the perpetrator you ask them different things on looks and how it looks. And you've got little cheat sheets. *(short pause to change discs)*

NANCY RAY: OK, you were about to explain about an identi-kit.

JIM GILLESPIE: OK. We had, we had a guy named or referred to... I don't recall his name, as the traveling rapist. And we had uh the sheriff from Hutchinson County call me and said we need some help on this. There was a young girl named Abbie Hamilton, she was pregnant. Oh I don't know how close she was, several months along. Anyway, they found her... she had been stabbed to death. But there was a guy that was... well we finally figured out he killed her, raped and killed. And then at Amarillo there was a young girl raped and at Hereford there was a young lady raped. And it seemed like there could have been more than that. Anyway, because he traveled around they... somebody laid the moniker on him that he was the traveling rapist. Anyway, somebody saw a black male in the area of this girl over there at Borger, in her area

close to the time that they figured she was murdered. And so you take this identi-kit and it will have different uh views of the face... hairstyle, mustache, nose, eyes... different features. And you can swap them in and out but this one of the original ones and it was all made out of plastic, overlays. So anyway, you build on this and you change it to match to go along with what the witness describes. Anyway, we worked one of those up and uh somebody did a character's drawing of him, this person walking, and did a darn good job. But anyway, we got a... well premonition... I don't like to use the word but all I can say it was a big old hard investigation. But I had a premonition that this guy... it was in someway... they had so many different agencies working on this thing that you got information from... all kind of information and the black male part gelled together and maybe the knife, using the knife, something... do it or I'll hurt you. But anyway, we finally deduced that we had leads for meat packing plants that were around. There were a lot of knives involved there so we got to thinking well maybe it could be that. Well we had number one, in my area I had just across the line in Oklahoma, we had a bunch of the black students, male students up there from Africa and wherever else, all over the country. And we had a bunch... well we had a meat packing plant there in Amarillo and a meat packing plant west of Hereford in the Bovina area. Well these are around so you've got a multitude of people. We got this picture made up and I had this premonition about going to Elk City, Oklahoma. And I had the same thing about up here at this college in uh the Oklahoma Panhandle. But one... someway, seemed like I did it... but so many people working on this thing but it seemed like I called this guy in Elk City, Oklahoma, probation officer. I said hey, do you have anybody that might be tied in? And he said well... or do you have anybody under your probation department that lives in the Amarillo area? And he... I hope I'm getting this right but it's been so long. He said yes, I've got somebody who lives over there and I haven't seen him in

quite a while but he's still on probation. And I said yeah... Anyway, he gave me the information on this guy and come to find out, he was working in this beef plant right there on the east side of Amarillo which was uh less than a mile from where one of the girls was assaulted. And he lived in Amarillo on the same block as the Highway Patrol. But anyway, the guy turned out to be the culprit.

NANCY RAY: And where did that premonition come from?

JIM GILLESPIE: Lord knows. I don't.

NANCY RAY: That's probably where it came from.

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, but I... I had, I don't know.

NANCY RAY: So identi-kits... that was one of your big tools then.

JIM GILLESPIE: Well at that time it was... well it was *a* tool we had. But I think they've upgraded that, it may be computerized now, I don't know.

NANCY RAY: Maybe so. Now DNA was not used...

JIM GILLESPIE: DNA was... it was not that far along that I recall. Probably could have been but I might have slept through that class, I don't know.

NANCY RAY: Fingerprinting though would be.

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh yeah, fingerprinting was.

NANCY RAY: Now how did you... did you have a kit or how did you...

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah, we had a fingerprint kits. And we had all kind of tools, I mean just regular tools for different things, different uses. But fingerprint kit, identi-kit... Not everybody had identi-kits though. They just uh... it wasn't something they bought for everybody because I had one and maybe a guy in Childress or I don't know whether the Amarillo office had one or not. But I did.

NANCY RAY: Well you mentioned traveling quite a bit. Were you gone a lot?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, yeah, uh... they... you never knew. If the phone rang at two or three o'clock in the morning and said hey, we've got this. Could you come? Well you get up, put your clothes on and hook 'em. Uh I had this one, one old alcoholic lived here and he moved to Amarillo, him and his girlfriend. And that, he'd... he'd get drunk and his Social Security check or some kind of check he got, his girlfriend would... to keep him from, I guess, from spending it all on booze the first minute he got it, she'd steal it from him. And he'd call me at two or three o'clock in the morning wanting me to do something about her. So I'd say well put her on the phone. Well she'd be sitting right there by him. I'd say is he soused again? Yeah he is. But usually the... when you get called at that time in the morning you just get up and go.

NANCY RAY: So you had a relationship with this drunk, he knew your phone number.

JIM GILLESPIE: He knew my phone number. He knew mine and the fire chief and the... several others here in town.

NANCY RAY: Well did you spend your entire Ranger career here in Dumas?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yep, sure did.

NANCY RAY: Think back. You must have had a lot of cases, what one was the most difficult? Does one stand out in your mind as being very hard to solve?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well... ones that I actually started with and ended with, I don't know. I've touched around on some that they would say would you do this for me? Like would you drive to Dallas and take this down there or would you drive to Austin and take this evidence down there. I had some of that which I really didn't do any investigation on... I just more of a postman and stuff like that.

NANCY RAY: Well what case stands out in your mind that you could tell us about? I think your wife mentioned there was one you had worked on.

JIM GILLESPIE: The girl, the traveling rapist.

NANCY RAY: That one. OK. That would be... were you able to get a conviction?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah.

NANCY RAY: And do you remember what happened?

JIM GILLESPIE: No.

NANCY RAY: OK.

JIM GILLESPIE: It's too far back. That... it seemed like we had about three or four different jurisdictions and they might have combined it all or something like that. I don't know that they had a trial in each jurisdiction or not.

NANCY RAY: Now you said oilfield theft, was that a big one up here?

JIM GILLESPIE: Uh, yeah, used to be. I don't know what it is now, I haven't heard in years. They're uh, the oilfield... is a hard thing to prove unless you're out there and you catch them doing it. And of course they are watching for you. We had a lot of oilfield thefts and grain thefts. We used to have a terrible amount of grain thefts.

NANCY RAY: We haven't heard about grain thefts. Tell us.

JIM GILLESPIE: You haven't?

NANCY RAY: No.

JIM GILLESPIE: Well, there was just a bunch of guys out of Oklahoma, eastern Oklahoma, around Salisaw and Ten-Killer Lake and over in that area. They were the GNR Grain Company or something like that – Grab and Run (*laughter*) – that's what the GNR stood for, Grab and Run. Did you ever see any grain?

NANCY RAY: Uh huh.

JIM GILLESPIE: See any serial numbers on it?

NANCY RAY: No.

JIM GILLESPIE: OK. You understand they are hard cases to prove unless you just catch them.

NANCY RAY: Well was there a certain amount they had to steal before it was a felony or whatever?

JIM GILLESPIE: Oh yeah. Well no, if you go into property that's not open to the public at that time. Well that's called that you're committing a theft.

NANCY RAY: Were you able to get any convictions on those?

JIM GILLESPIE: Let's see. Yeah they got, got a guy over at Spearman one time and... well these guys were self-destructive a lot of them were. They, two of them went out in Main Street, at high Noon, and shot it out. They were... they were a strange bunch of people.

NANCY RAY: Who were they shooting?

JIM GILLESPIE: Each other!

NANCY RAY: You have another dumb criminal story.

JIM GILLESPIE: No, it's just some weird stuff over there. That's Oklahoma, that's a rough place over on the east side. We went over... me and Ranger Baden... we had some tractors being stolen. And we ended up down in southern Oklahoma on the east side and the sheriff, over there, said don't you guys go out into the country side. He said there were places there that he didn't even go because it was so dangerous. They were dangerous people. But I don't remember what happened in that case.

NANCY RAY: Well this has to be a dangerous profession. Were you ever drawn on? Can you ever remember when someone pointed a gun at you?

JIM GILLESPIE: No. Uh back when I was in uniform in Amarillo there was one that I had the feeling... there's that premonition again you know, that he might have but I didn't give him a chance.

NANCY RAY: How did you stop it?

JIM GILLESPIE: You put your gun on the other side and he don't know where it's at. If he don't know, then you got a little bit of control over it.

NANCY RAY: You have an edge there, OK.

JIM GILLESPIE: So, but I don't know.

NANCY RAY: Well did you ever have any capital murder cases that you had to deal with?

JIM GILLESPIE: Yeah.

NANCY RAY: Can you tell us about that?

JIM GILLESPIE: Well we had a trooper that was uh stationed up here at Stratford up here north of town. We had a black guy again. He was going through town and they were doing some work on the road between here and Cactus. And this guy evidently had driven straight through from Florida and was going to Colorado City, Colorado. And uh he got up north of town here and he and a delivery truck going through this work zone where they were having trouble passing each other. And uh one would honk at the other one and you know get out of the way and got up there and this delivery man stuck a finger up and said "you're number one" and anyway it irritated this guy, but he was tired evidently. And so he just pulled out a gun and pointed it at him because his had a bullet in it. But anyway, this guy decided he had gone far enough on that so he pulled off, went in the manufacturing plant up there and went on. Well this

guy called the police and reported it... guy waving a gun, gave a description of the vehicle. Anyway, uh this young trooper was in the area up around Stratford and he saw this vehicle go through and it went north out of Stratford. Well the trooper, not knowing or realizing what he had here because the old boy was distraught and no sleep. Anyway, they got up a mile or so north of Stratford and the trooper pulled him over. And anyway, they were talking and this guy evidently felt that he'd been pushed too far. Anyway, they got in a tussle over... tried to grab the trooper's pistol and they got in a tussle over that. And he got it away from him and knocked the trooper down. The guy was known to, I found out later, that he was a pistol shooter... go out and do, they'd have quick draws and all that kind of stuff. Anyway, he had the trooper's pistol and the trooper was backing away in a "bar" ditch. I believe he fired all six rounds. He hit him five times and the sixth time he stuck it right here... he was already down... right here and behind the ear and pulled the trigger. To me it was more an assassination but...

NANCY RAY: So how did you work that case?

JIM GILLESPIE: I was in Amarillo and they called so I come up and stopped here at the hospital where the trooper was. But he was already dead. Anyway, went on up there and we had... well the guy was in town. He was north of town when he did it. He took a country road and went west of town and come back in. Well he hid the gun out west by a golf course. Anyway, he come back into town, parked behind a Dairy Queen, and was walking across the service station. And there ain't but one other colored person in that town and he's a cowboy and everybody knows him. And anyway here's the strange one so they latched upon him. And it was of course the guy I was looking for. Anyway, but then it was just criminal investigation. But that was a sad, sad deal.

