

Interview with  
NORMAN AUTREY  
Texas Ranger, Retired

©2009, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Mr. Autrey's Home  
Somerville, Texas  
Thursday—April 23, 2009

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray  
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Norman Autrey, Billie Autrey, 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™** .

**NORMAN AUTREY**  
**TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED**

**NANCY RAY:** My name is Nancy Ray and I am visiting with Norman Autrey of Somerville, Texas. Today is Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Autrey's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Autrey, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Of course.

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

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** And 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 on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum's website?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Let's start with learning a little bit about you. What is your full name, your date of birth, where were you born?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** My full name is Norman Wesley Autrey, Sr. And uh I was born December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1929. That was during the bad... tough times... it really was.

**NANCY RAY:** Where was that?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** It was in this county, Burleson County, in Caldwell. I was born right there in Caldwell.

**NANCY RAY:** What about your parents? What were their names?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** My dad's name was Joseph William and my mother's name was Rosalee Langer Autrey.

**NANCY RAY:** Where did you go to school?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I went to uh... I graduated from Caldwell High School in 1948.

**NANCY RAY:** What about... did you have sports at your school?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** And you played?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I played football and basketball and baseball, all three.

**NANCY RAY:** What about any favorite subjects?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** My favorite subject was uh... certainly not math, not English... uh probably Texas history.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, that seems to be kind of standard. Well when you graduated from high school, what did you do?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well, uh... during that time there was not much going on in Caldwell and my parents were poor. They couldn't afford to send me to college. And there were not many jobs to be had and so I joined the U.S. Air Force with uh three or four of my buddies.

**NANCY RAY:** Where... where did you serve?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well we went... we went through basic training in... well two of them went to basic training in California. Three of us went through basic at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

**NANCY RAY:** What about after you finished? What was your job?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** After I finished there I went to, they sent me to Randolph in San Antonio.

**NANCY RAY:** You didn't get far from home.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I didn't get far from home. And they put me to working as uh... an aircraft dispatcher. We trained... we trained uh pilots in AT-6s, they call them Texans now. And I worked right on the flight line and I had a... I had to keep records of all the flights from all the instructors and their respective students. What kind of flight they made, whether it was just straight and level or turns, or stalls or spins or whatever. There was a place on a large uh diversified flying chart and I had to keep records of all that. And we had, we had students... student pilots that were aviation cadets and like in the morning. And in the afternoon we had the student officers that were anywhere from second lieutenants up to a full colonel... learning how to fly. And it was very interesting.

**NANCY RAY:** I'm sure it was. Well did you spend your whole time at Randolph?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No, I went to uh... I went to Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. That was during the Korean War and uh, and they put me behind a desk there.

**NANCY RAY:** How did that go?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Not so well because I loved airplanes. I liked to have anything to do with airplanes. As a matter of fact, I used to fly an airplane myself.

**NANCY RAY:** What did you fly?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I flew uh small single-engine aircraft... Piper Cub, that's what I first soloed in. And I flew Roncas and several other different single-engine aircraft. Had a good time. But it got expensive.

**NANCY RAY:** What about uh... did you ever go overseas or anything?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Never did.

**NANCY RAY:** All in... domestic.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** So what year did you get out?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** boy... you're testing my memory now. I think it was 1951... December I think of 1951.

**NANCY RAY:** Is there anything else about your time in the Air Force you want to tell us about?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well, there are probably a lot of things but they're too long a story.

**NANCY RAY:** Well it's your story so...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No, I'm not gonna get into that. There was a full bird colonel and I got crosswise one time on a trip to uh... to St. Louis because nobody could get along with that little gentleman.

**NANCY RAY:** Better left unsaid... *(laughter)*

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I'm gonna leave that unsaid because it's too long a story.

**NANCY RAY:** Well when you finished with the Air Force, what did you do after that?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well... I went to uh... I went to school in... in Macon, Georgia, for a short time. But I didn't realize I was going to be discharged so I enrolled in college there. Of course I had to drop out there and uh... When I came home, there was not much going on and there was a friend of mine that was owner of a service station. And I drove down there to fill up with gas one day and he said what are you doing as far as work is concerned? I said not anything

right now. So he said uh why don't you go to work for me? He said I need somebody to stay down here with me while I've got other things to do. And I said OK. I don't have anything else to do so I'll try that for a while which I did. And one day there was a... one of the bankers of a local bank came down and filled up with gas and uh... he wanted to know what I was doing. I'd known him for years just like everybody else knew everybody in that small town you know. And to make a long story short, he finally talked me into coming up there and talking to the president and several others about going to work for them. And so I finally relented and I decided that I would go check it out which I did. And they talked me into going to work there as an assistant cashier trainee plus bookkeeping plus working the windows and things like that.

**NANCY RAY:** Everything they could think of.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah. I stayed there for five years and while I was there I married my first wife. And uh then after that uh... after that I went into the DPS.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Let me back up real quickly. Did you have brothers or sisters?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yes, I had a number... there were two sisters in my family that have died. I'm the baby of the family. They were much older and died as infants. Then I had three other sisters and only one of them is left. And I had one brother and he's gone also. What is your sister's name who is still living?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Her name is Billie Yost.

**NANCY RAY:** And you are currently married to Billie also.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I'm currently married to Billie Autrey.

**NANCY RAY:** What about children?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well I had four. Norman, Jr., and then Suzanne and David and Bruce. I lost Suzanne to cancer two years ago (*emotional moment*).

**NANCY RAY:** I'm so sorry about that.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** It has not been easy.

**NANCY RAY:** Now you also mentioned some... that Billie has some daughters, is that right?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Billie has four daughters and uh they treat me like a king.

**NANCY RAY:** Good. Do you want to tell us their names?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well yeah. Susan lives in... Susan is married to an architect in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Then there is... which one is next, Terese. Terese lives in Caldwell with her husband. She has a daughter that's a pharmaceutical doctor in Georgetown. Her name is Leslie. And they just had a new baby girl not too many months ago. And they have a son... Sean and he is a PHD and has a job uh in New Jersey. It has something to do with medical research. And then there's... let's see there's Judy who is divorced and lives in Bryan. And she has uh four or five children and I'll never remember their names. Uh and there's Monica who is a registered nurse. She lives in Caldwell. Her husband is a PA.

**NANCY RAY:** So you have a pretty good size family.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Big family... big family. I have pictures of them all.

**NANCY RAY:** That's good, you should have pictures. Well OK... so now then you're out of the service and you've... how did you get accepted or what made you become interested in the Highway Patrol?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well I was uh... I was in the Air Force in Georgia with a... I met a guy from Austin one day and he lived in the barracks right next door to me. And uh we became close

friends. And uh he... he was discharged from there about two days before I was and he waited for me to get my discharge papers completed. He had a car, I didn't, and we came home together. And we were... we were friends, close friends, and he came to see us all the time. We came home and drove straight through from Georgia to Caldwell. He took me right to my front doorstep and he went on to Austin. Later on, I guess it was uh... well it was several years later, I was working in the bank and he came over and he said I saw a... He was working in a bank somewhere in Austin and he said uh I saw an ad in the paper where they're needing uh Highway Patrol officers. He said you know my dad was a Highway Patrol officer and he said I kind of think that I might try to get in there. He said why don't you go with me? So we tried it. I made it, he didn't. And that's how I wound up being a Highway Patrol officer.

**NANCY RAY:** All right, tell us about the Academy. What was it like?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Tough (*laughter*). I had uh... I had four children by then and uh... staying over there you know a week at a time because we usually got off Saturday afternoon and we were close... I was close enough to go home which I did just to see my kids and my wife. And uh... but other than that it was a lot of fun too. It was challenging.

**NANCY RAY:** What was the hardest part?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Physical education (*laughter*)... physical training, boxing, running. You know they'd have you running with a 200-pound man on your back. Things like that. But you know I guess it was good for you.

**NANCY RAY:** Well now when did you... do you remember the date that you entered the Highway Patrol?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Lord have mercy... no.

**NANCY RAY:** Or the year?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Or the year? Well... let's see... it was 1956. I think it was either March or April.

**NANCY RAY:** Were there any others in your class who eventually became Rangers?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah, a number of them.

**NANCY RAY:** Do you remember their names... any of them?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** boy... right offhand I can't. I know one lives over right next door in Bryan... Bobby Connell, Bob Connell. And then there were several others and I can't remember right off hand who they were.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what do you remember learning that helped you in your career... while you were at the Academy?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well frankly, not a great amount... not about being a state police officer. Of course we learned a lot about the law you know and penalties and things like that. But uh you know we had classes in English we had classes in public speaking and we had classes in first aid. I'm sure I learned a little bit of everything you know. But most of it, and they'd tell you, you'll learn most of it out on the road when you get to working with your partner who's been working a while.

**NANCY RAY:** Where did you go? What was your first duty station?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** My first duty station was Taylor, Texas. That was... if you know where that is it's just 30 miles from Austin.

**NANCY RAY:** You're still close to home.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Not too far away and the guy that was my partner, I graduated from high school with.

**NANCY RAY:** What a small world. What is his name?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Jimmy Kubecka, It's a Bohemian name and uh everybody around this area called it Kubechka, put an "h" in there which wasn't there.

**NANCY RAY:** So you learned from him... he was your senior partner. What did you learn from him?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well I learned how to fight (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** So you had some physical confrontations?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Almost every night.

**NANCY RAY:** Really... tell us about one. What caused them?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** What caused them? Uh... people probably you know... we had a lot of Fort Hood soldiers come down there on the weekends. And most of them were drinking and uh they'd get a little tipsy and they'd... they'd decide to contest you.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you have to take them in?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** What happened to them? Did they go to your jail or to the camp, to the fort jail?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No, they went to the civilian jail.

**NANCY RAY:** Well can you think of any incidents that happened that you want to tell us about while you were a patrolman? You're in Taylor...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** There were so many... I worked there 20 years.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, so lots of wrecks?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah. We uh... we traded off every week. My partner would lead one week and what that means is that uh he would write all the tickets and I was just there as a backup. And then the next week I would be in the lead and he would be the backup. And uh... there were times... I can remember one time when we were... he was in the lead and we were working a little accident in a small town close to Taylor. It was on a Sunday afternoon and I was directing traffic because the vehicles were out in the center of the roadway. And I heard this loud scuffle and talking going on. Looked around and they were both in a fight (*laughter*). So I ran over there and I jerked the guy off of him you know and stopped the fight. And we got him loaded up. He was... he was intoxicated. And uh we went to jail. He had... his wife was with him and about four or five children as well as I can remember. And we had to haul all of them into town. We turned them loose of course and I guess they called someone to come pick them up. But her husband went to jail. There were so many things. There were a lot of real funny things.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us a funny thing.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well one night there was not very much going on. The roads were pretty quiet and my partner and I, and it wasn't Jimmy. It was... I had another partner by then. He moved away from there after I was working for three months, left me by myself. He transferred to another station and so they sent another patrolman over there to work with me. And we were, I was driving along one night and I looked up in the rearview mirror and uh I could see this pretty good straightaway. And I could see these lights of this car just jumping you know and I knew he was running high. And I was sitting on about 50, must have been about midnight. And this car came by me when he must have seen the map on the side of that car door and so he locked his

brakes down, pulled over to the side of the road, bailed out of the car and I got out and met him in the front of my patrol car. He was a black man... big, husky, and he was talking a blue streak about he was in a hurry because he had an emergency. He said my wife and I are going up here to such-and-such town because uh one of her children has been hurt in an accident or something or other. I said what's your wife's name? And he couldn't tell me what his wife's name was. She was still sitting in the car. So I walked up and I had her to roll the window down. I said, ma'am, is this your husband? She said no, that's not my husband (*laughter*). So things kind of got busy there for a little bit and I got back there and I was fixing to write him a ticket. And he said please officer, don't write me no ticket. He said I'll do anything... anything in the world just don't write me no ticket. He said I'll play a harmonica and dance for you and I said do you have one with you? He said yes sir, I do. And he reached in his old overalls pocket and he pulled out this harmonica and he started playing that thing. He'd been playing that thing all his life and he was good! And he was dancing the jig out there and I told him I said get in the car and get out of here. I don't even want to see you no more (*laughter*)... let him go. That was pretty funny.

**NANCY RAY:** I would imagine. I wonder why he was in such a hurry... you never did find out the reason?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Never did find out the truth, no.

**NANCY RAY:** What kind of car did you have?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** At that time... probably a 1956 Ford.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you ever have any crashes or wrecks or...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No... not me. Come pretty close sometimes, yeah... a lot of times as a matter of fact. But uh we were very lucky.

**NANCY RAY:** Were there any high speed chases you can tell us about?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** geees... a thousand. I got after a car one night right north of Taylor that I clocked at a hundred miles an hour on my dash radar. This was one Saturday night. And uh going north, you go through uh several little towns... three or four little towns before you get to Temple. And I could not catch that car. I was driving over a hundred miles an hour and I couldn't catch him. Of course I'd slow down going through these towns, he wouldn't. He was wobbling all over the road and fortunately there wasn't a whole lot of traffic out there on that road that night. So I called Temple on the radio and found uh... a DPS unit working there and I asked him if he would go out on 95 and set up a roadblock for me. I was chasing this Chevrolet at over a hundred miles an hour and couldn't catch him. So he did and got him stopped. And when I got there, he had the guy on the hood of his car like this (*he made a motion*), spraddled legged you know and he was searching him. And he had about five other guys in that car with him. They were all Fort Hood soldiers. And so I arrested him, carried him back to Williamson County and let the others go. But that was a...

**NANCY RAY:** Why was he going so fast?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Probably saw my red lights and tried to outrun me, which he did. But uh... you can't outrun that radio.

**NANCY RAY:** What about drugs... were they bad at that time?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** At that time, no. no... we didn't have any problems with drugs.

**NANCY RAY:** So your primary responsibilities then would be traffic and what else?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** That was it. Traffic and automobile accidents... that was it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well did you ever work on any criminal investigations while you were there?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Uh... yeah... I had, I worked with some other Rangers on... on several bank robberies. Had to assist in arresting three convicts that were escapees from I think North Carolina one night. And things like that.

**NANCY RAY:** Well some of the Rangers we've interviewed said they thought that Highway Patrolmen had the most dangerous job.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** They do.

**NANCY RAY:** To you, why is that?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Because of high speed driving... high speed driving. You can't stop those cars.

**NANCY RAY:** Well did you ever feel concerned for your safety when you made a stop?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yes, all the time.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us about one time.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** boy... Let's see, one night I was... I was working alone. And I stopped this car for speeding and weaving across the center stripe. And uh I got him stopped and it was in the winter time. But it wasn't real cold. This guy had his window rolled up and he was just looking straight down the road you know and I knocked on the window and told him to roll his window down and he wouldn't do it. And I did that several times with my flashlight... a little bit harder. Still didn't roll it down. And I reached over and he didn't have the door locked. So I jerked the door open and when I did he lunged at me with a knife in his hand. And I was ready... I was ready for it you know. Because when you're working by yourself, you've got to realize things like that can happen. And on the way out I just grabbed him by the back of the head and pulled him on out. And he sprawled out on the highway there (*laughter*). And I got him down

and put handcuffs on him and uh got him in the car... and called a wrecker to come get his car and took him to jail.

**NANCY RAY:** You just never knew who you were gonna stop.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No, especially at night. Nights were the worst because a lot of times you can't see what's going on in the car. Especially if the windows are rolled up because of glare from the windows you know. You can't see too well... you never know what you'll see. I'll never forget a training film that we watched one time. And uh I believe it was in our training, initial training, that showed this convertible going down the road and this Highway Patrol officer pulled them over for something. I think it was a female driver and she was sitting up there you know looking pretty and then the officer walked up to her and when he did this guy raised up out of the seat in the back with a gun... *boom*... And I guess I'll never forget that because it happened so quickly you know. You always look. You get used to looking in the back seat before you go up any further.

**NANCY RAY:** You did carry that away from your Academy training, right?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I think so.

**NANCY RAY:** That's what you just said. You did get something out of it.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah, I'm sure I got a lot of stuff out of it.

**NANCY RAY:** You probably just took it for granted. Were you ever faced with someone pulling a gun on you while you were a patrolman?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Not a gun. I've had uh several knives pulled on me.

**NANCY RAY:** That's bad enough.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah bad enough... I hate knives.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you spend your whole time as a patrolman there...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** There in Williamson County, sure did... 20 years.

**NANCY RAY:** What made you want to become a Ranger?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well, uh... because I liked the Rangers. They... I always felt like... I did traffic work for 20 years and I felt like that was long enough. And I was getting, I think a little too old to be driving a race car up and down the highways chasing these idiots. But I wanted to be a Ranger. You know I had several friends that were Rangers and I enjoyed working with them when the opportunity came up.

**NANCY RAY:** Are there any Rangers in particular that you worked with who influenced you?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Lord yes. There was Jim Riddle who was my first Ranger captain. He was a sergeant in Austin at the time. And then there was Bill Wilson who was a fledgling Ranger that worked with him. Uh we worked a couple of bank robberies together. I assisted them in doing that. Uh there were several more and like I said, my memory is not real good anymore.

**NANCY RAY:** That's OK. You'll think of names later. So what did you have to do to become a Ranger?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well you had to take a written exam. And if you passed that then you went to uh... you went to a personal interview. I took the test three times. The third time was charm.

**NANCY RAY:** Good. And what year... I show you became Ranger September 1<sup>st</sup> of '74.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** That's correct.

**NANCY RAY:** Do you remember who was on your interview board?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Captain John Wood, uh... they were all captains. I can see their faces but I can't remember the names.

**NANCY RAY:** Do you remember any of the questions they asked you... things they were looking for?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I remember John Wood asked me if I spoke Spanish.

**NANCY RAY:** Do you?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I said know *muy pocito*. He said OK.

**NANCY RAY:** So who else made Ranger with you?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Uh George Frasier is one of them. And uh... I don't remember the other ones. There were six of us that made Ranger at the same time.

**NANCY RAY:** And where did you go... your first station?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Brownwood, Texas. They assigned me to five counties... or assigned five counties to me.

**NANCY RAY:** What did you do... did you replace someone or were you new?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah, I replaced uh Lefty Block. Lefty Block... he made sergeant and moved to San Antonio. The captain down there was... was John Wood. They didn't have lieutenants then... just privates and sergeants and captains. And uh I remember reading Sid's interview and he was talking about working uh all this huge oil, crude oil theft out there in our country. And he said he went to Houston and one of the Rangers went, that was at Brownwood, went with him. That was me with me that went with him and he said something about Lefty Block. Lefty Block was at Brownwood but he'd forgotten a little bit. That was me that went with him.

**NANCY RAY:** That was you. Well tell us your version of this.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well he told it pretty good. We had a great amount of crude oil thievery in that county and one of those counties out there belonged to me. So I was working that uh... and there was a deputy sheriff that caught one of the guys loading his tanker one night and that's what started the investigation. We managed to find out from him who his bosses were and so forth and so on. And after getting in contact with him, we had a big meeting in Houston. And we went down to uh... we went down there and uh... did a lot of checking on everything that we could check on. And wound up... wound up with a bunch of people going, getting convicted on it.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you have to go to court much?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Never went to court on that case. They all pled guilty.

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

**NORMAN AUTREY:** My first case...

**NANCY RAY:** Or the first one that you remember.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** My first case was a murder case.

**NANCY RAY:** wow, what a way to start.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Tell me about it. And it's still unsolved. It was a bad one. It was very bad. We had uh... I hate to talk about police officers but the Brownwood Police Department... they'd go into a scene like this and they'd tromp... every patrolman they had out on the road at the time would have to tromp around in the area... and would destroy a lot of evidence you know. And that was the main, the main reason that never did get solved. And then while I was

working on that I had something else happen which I don't remember what it was now. But then you've got two things you're working on.

**NANCY RAY:** Well this murder case, was it a man or a woman or...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** It was a man. He was found in his bed. He was apparently beaten to death with a baseball bat or a tire iron or something. We couldn't get... we couldn't get his body sent to a forensic pathologist at that time. The county just didn't want to pay for it. And so it didn't get to go and I could not come up with any kind of information at all. I knew that he, this guy, was a big beer drinker. And I found out which bar he used to go to. I went in there and talked to the bartender, or the owner of the place, and the guy never would look at me. And I was a little suspicious of him. I asked him what did this guy... did this guy owe you a bunch of money? No, he owed me a little bit. He never would look at me and he was wiping the bar... just wiped the bar. I know that's the guy that did it but there was no way I could prove it. I know in my heart.

**NANCY RAY:** Well do you have a case, another one that you were not able to solve that just sticks with you today?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** all of them stick with me... yeah. All of them do. Uh I've worked kidnappings.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us about a kidnapping.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** OK, if I can remember. I probably won't remember some names.

**NANCY RAY:** That's OK. Just tell us about the incident.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well that happened just outside of Brownwood I guess about 15 miles out in the country. This lady was kidnapped. And the first we knew about it was uh... her

husband called the sheriff's department and said his wife was... had been kidnapped. They lived out in the country and had a little ranch out there. He was in real estate business and had an office in town. And uh so that started... he had called several times and she wouldn't answer the phone so he went out there and couldn't find her. The house was open... the TV was on and so forth and so on. And we were pretty sure that she had been kidnapped. And uh trying to make this as short as I can... she was placed in a... way off in the boonies in an old abandoned house and handcuffed to... underneath the sink to the pipes. And she managed to get loose. She broke those pipes and kept jerking on them and broke those pipes and walked to a farmhouse out there... probably six or seven miles away... and called the sheriff's office. Well that really started things in motion. And uh... we had uh... of course we interviewed her. Got her into town and interviewed her. She said it was a young boy and an older man in an old van. And of course the husband had started getting ransom calls and telling him where to bring the money you know if he wanted his wife back. And so the guy'd show up and of course he was you know working with us and we were right with him all the time. Nobody would ever show up. This happened about two or three times. And finally we uh... we got a break in the case. I don't remember exactly how that happened but these people were out of Austin. There was a;... it was an old pickup truck about halfway between Brownwood and Austin. It was broken down on the side of the road and a Highway Patrol officer ran the uh... check on the license plate and found out who the owner was. He called the owner in Austin and the guy told him, he said well such and such guy borrowed that pickup at such and such time and we kind of put two and two together and that... The guy that was driving that truck was one of the kidnapers, turned out to be. And so

we got... that would be an awful long story to tell about all that went on but we did manage to get uh... we got three people... three people arrested in that case.

**NANCY RAY:** How did you find... OK, the one... the pickup, that was your first clue, right?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** And then how did you find the people themselves?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well, the guy that owned the pickup told us where they lived. And so we got all of their names and checked on their backgrounds and so forth and so on and started looking for them and found one of them. Well I do remember this. I had another call... we had a call from another little town just outside of Brownwood. And uh the husband was supposed to take this money to this, close to this certain service station. And uh nobody showed up there but we found out that this, the kidnapper made the call from a phone booth right next to this particular service station. And so uh a deputy sheriff and I made... we already had pictures of those people and I made a lineup of pictures and this deputy and I took them over there and showed this... showed them to this service station attendant, the man who owned the service station. And uh he knew... of course we told him what we were doing. He said yeah, I remember that guy. He said he was an older man and a younger man and... and uh they were driving an old blue van. Well that matched with what the lady said. So I said OK, take a look at these pictures and don't say anything until you look at all of them. He put his finger on one and he said that's him right there. That's the guy that made a phone call from that phone booth right out there. So that's... put us inside the room with him.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, they caught the guy on the phone and then the van matched what the lady described.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well after that, the husband of the victim uh after a day or so got another call to uh bring... I don't remember how... \$10,000 or \$20,000 to a place in Austin at such and such time. And he told him he said I don't have... I can't get there in time... you're gonna have to give me a little time to get there. So they extended the time a little bit and that gave us a little time to help people in Austin get ready and uh get the place under surveillance which they did. And uh I, fortunately, didn't have to go on that trip. Well we didn't have really enough time. We had... and this guy wasn't planning on leaving the money. We had a bag of uh... I can't remember... some kind of bag we put his money in. And we had an officer waiting for him outside of town and he took the bag and placed the bag where they said to put it you know. And then of course we had five or six other people out there... had the place under surveillance. And sure enough, there was... this young boy drove up there. I guess he was probably 20, 19 or 20 years old. Drove up out there and he looked all around you know and he went to grab that bag and he got converged upon with officers... and grabbed him. Well they got him down to DPS headquarters and put him in a room by himself. And uh let him sit there and think about it for a little while before anybody went in there and talked to him. But he wouldn't admit to anything. And after they put him in jail, the cleaning lady came in there and was moving some chairs around and found a note of some kind. I can't remember exactly what it was but it uh... it was a note that had to do with this kidnapping... and he shouldn't have known about it. So we used that as evidence also. And we got them convicted.

**NANCY RAY:** Did they go to prison?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yes. They're probably still there.

**NANCY RAY:** You've mentioned bank robberies a couple of times. Did you have some in Brownwood?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No, I had one in uh... in Breckenridge but that wasn't exactly a bank robbery.

**NANCY RAY:** What was it?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** That was some wild guy from up in that part of the country that... police up there, as well as I can remember, got after him and Breckenridge County belonged to me too. And uh... trying to think... seems like there was a deputy sheriff or something that got to chasing this guy and he was driving an older model Cadillac, I do remember that, somewhere outside of Breckenridge. And came in there and drove... drove his car up the steps to this bank. Barged into the bank and pulled two guns and uh captured a bunch of people in there including all of the employees and customers you know. So now we've got a hostage situation. So...

**NANCY RAY:** How did you get involved?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** The captain called me and told me to go to Breckenridge.

**NANCY RAY:** So off you went (*laughter*).

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah, so off I went. We got up there, or I got up there and uh so I could see what the situation was. He was in the vault with all these people. When we finally talked him into letting some of them go, he was getting hungry and he wanted a hamburger or something. We sent somebody out to get him a hamburger. And George Frasier was in on this later on. George was... George was our company sniper. My captain came uh...

**NANCY RAY:** Who was your captain at that time?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** At that time was Cook. I was having a little trouble with... the chief of police called the FBI and they came in there like gangbusters and just took over the whole situation. I got a little angry and I called my captain and he got in the helicopter and flew down there. And uh we went to this head man of the FBI and... they wouldn't even talk to me. They wouldn't talk to me at all you know. And they had a few words and it got a little heated. And the FBI relented and he told him in so many words that this Texas Ranger right here, this is his county and he's got to make reports of everything that goes on here and I expect you people to comply. And he said we'll do what we can. Well, uh then I don't remember how many hostages the guy had but he was in and out of that vault and George Frasier showed up. And he also had a knife that when it was open it was about that long (*he made a motion*)... a folding knife. And he had two pistols that were about that long (*he made a motion*). I've never seen pistols like that before in my life. They were enormous.

**NANCY RAY:** That's what, about 18 inches long?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** ... at least 15 or 16 inches. They were old timey pistols but they were in good shape. And anyway, he uh, the old boy got... I guess he was tired too because we'd been there many hours.

**NANCY RAY:** (*short pause to change discs*) We're back and we're in the hostage situation and George Frasier has just shown up.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yes, George uh... George walked into the area. My captain put me on the radio to be in touch with everybody so we'd have a central location. And George got in... in an area where he could see the guy through the glass windows. But he was afraid to shoot because he didn't know how much uh ricochet... the glass would cause the bullet you know and

he was afraid to do it. But anyway, it got down to where this old boy... and you know the FBI SWAT team, I guess that's what they were, they were in other strategic places. Uh some closer to this guy than George was and I don't remember now exactly what this boy did but he came out, he came out of the vault. Laid his pistol up on a... a knife, he was wielding a knife too. And he laid his knife I think it was up on this filing cabinet and when he did George charged him and tackled him and got him under... and the FBI just stood there and watched the whole show. I'm... I'm not a... I know several FBI agents and they're friends of mine but there are some of them I... I don't like to work with. But nevertheless we did. There's one FBI agent went and grabbed the knife. I didn't see that because I'm off in another part of the building trying to work the radio. And my captain came and told me and said FBI agent so-and-so has got that knife. He said this is your case and that's part of the evidence. What are you gonna do? I said I'm gonna get it. He said I thought you would. So I went to him and I told him... I said say, I said I'm gonna have to make reports on all this stuff and I need that knife that you took off of that filing cabinet. He said OK. So he pulled it out of his pocket and I opened it up and I said I need you to mark this some way or another so you can identify it when it goes to court. So he did. He got his mark. I got his name and address and everything. And I said now you need to send me a report of what you did here so I can put it into my report also. I never got a thing from him, nothing... from any of them. But anyway, we got that uh situation taken care of without any injuries or deaths and we were plenty happy about that.

**NANCY RAY:** Did that person do time also?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah. I'm sure he did. As a matter of fact, I had both of his pistols and that knife. I never did have to testify but they were fixing to try him up in... up in that county

and one of the sheriff's deputies called me one day and he said you still got those pistols and that old boy's knife? And I said I sure do. He said well we're fixing to try him up here can I come get them? I said you bet'cha I've got them right here in my cabinet. So I had marked them with my name, initials, and date that I obtained them and so forth so on so I could identify them sitting on the witness stand. But I never, they never called me to testify so I really don't know what they did. But uh I'm sure he went to the penitentiary.

**NANCY RAY:** Well was there a time when you did have to go to court?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah, yeah most of the time. We went to court in that kidnapping case. Uh a lot of times and on a lot lesser offenses too.

**NANCY RAY:** If a Ranger needed help, my understanding is that... that became your top priority.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah, well I needed help... I needed help on that kidnapping case. My company was having a meeting in uh, monthly meeting, in Midland at that time. And I called and told them I couldn't make it. And so the sheriff told me, said we need some help. And I said I can get us some help. He said well if you'd call and get us some help... I said OK I will. I called the captain and they uh stopped the meeting and he was sending the whole company down (*laughter*). I didn't want the whole company to come. Well, I'm back on this other case now but I've gotta tell you what happened on that. On one of these... one of these uh times and places where this husband was supposed to take the money to, was a small town outside of Brownwood. And I had stationed myself about halfway between at a roadside park. And uh I'm sitting there and I'm not hearing anything on the radio. No radio traffic. And I've already been told that my whole Company E was on its way down there which was a little embarrassing to me (*laughter*).

But nevertheless, about that time uh the sheriff got on the radio and called me and wanted to know where I was and I told him. He said well I'll be there in just a minute. I said OK. Then I saw one, two, three, four, about five cars... new cars nearly bumper to bumper driving about 80 miles an hour. And I said my god the FBI. I wonder if the FBI is gonna see this? I said... I thought to myself, they go into that little old town up there... if those people are there, they're gonna see those people come in there and they'll know who they are... and they're gone. They never showed up to pick up the money. And I found out that they were driving all over town you know looking for this blue van. But anyway, right after they came by, the sheriff pulled up in that rest area. And I walked up... I got out of my car and walked up to the window, the driver's window, and I said Bill, did you call the FBI? Yes. I said what the hell did you do that for? I said... and I told him what I saw. Man those guys are not gonna show up with that... I got a little hot under the collar and he got to laughing. He said hey, he said I got the media in the back seat here. And I shined my light in and there's a TV man and a... I said well I can't help it. I said I've got to tell you how I feel about it. But nevertheless it's done and we'll work through it. So that ended that. I gotta get off of that.

**NANCY RAY:** They didn't broadcast your comments?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** No, they just grinned... they just grinned.

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell me a little bit about the camaraderie between the Rangers. How did that happen?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** How did it happen... it was going on way there in the 1800s I imagine. And they all felt like they were brothers.

**NANCY RAY:** And it continues even...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Continues even today.

**NANCY RAY:** And I think Company E is pretty strong from the ones that we've interviewed.

So you would have company meetings and what would you do there?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** well we just you know... we had new business, new laws to uh become familiar with, operating uh... how we operated you know. Just internal things that we needed to take care of you know.

**NANCY RAY:** What kind of training did you get?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well not a whole lot. Uh as a matter of fact one day my captain came, Jim Riddle, came down to Brownwood and this was right after I had... you know two or three months... I hadn't been a Ranger but about two or three months and he came down and visited with me. And I'll never forget what he said. He said Autrey, I can't tell you how to be a Texas Ranger. You're just gonna have to figure it out yourself. And that's just about the way it was. You just... you just had to work on your own.

**NANCY RAY:** Well you were the only Ranger in the Brownwood area is that right? What kind of cases did you have? You've told us about a couple but what kind did you have?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well I had... I don't know. A number of murders... murder cases. That one kidnapping, the bank deal up in Breckenridge... had a lot of small, I say small, burglaries. They were felonies but uh you know there were a lot of people that had houses out in the country on their ranches and those houses would get burglarized. And a lot of guns would be stolen or televisions or things like that you know. And then there was, at that time the drug... the drug scene had really come on. And we had to deal with some drugs.

**NANCY RAY:** What drugs were you facing at that time?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Just about everything... cocaine, marijuana, PCP, uh I can't name all of them.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us a little bit about your narcotics cases.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I didn't have any narcotics cases myself. I helped uh DPS Narcotics officers kick in a few doors at 4 o'clock in the morning... 3 o'clock in the morning and you know serving search warrants and things like that. But those cases were not mine per se.

**NANCY RAY:** A Ranger helps on all cases... or helps everybody.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** So that was where most of your cases came from... from other law enforcement agencies?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah, yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** How did you build up the rapport with the other law enforcement that they would call you?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** You just go around and visit with them. Go drink coffee and you know tell a few lies (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** Did you tell a few?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Told a few... sure. Just you know stretching the truth a little bit you know. But you know you get to know people and if they need your help, they'll call you.

**NANCY RAY:** Well is there a dumb criminal case you can tell us about?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** A what?

**NANCY RAY:** A dumb criminal.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** A dumb criminal case... all criminals are dumb.

**NANCY RAY:** Is there one that has kind of a humorous twist to it?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well let's see... you ever heard of Henry Lee Lucas?

**NANCY RAY:** yes. Tell us your... what was your experience with him?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** And Odis Toole. There was a 64-year old lady that owned the boot store in Brownwood that was uh found murdered one morning. And uh the chief of police, bless his heart, he... I don't know where he got his schooling but he didn't know about uh keeping the crime scene from being disturbed. And he and his officers would walk into a place there you know and they'd pick up this and they'd pick up that and they'd move things... you're not supposed to do things like that. And uh anyway, it came to my attention that Henry Lucas was a possibility in that case. So I went up to Montague County to visit with him. He was in jail up there after he killed his 16-year old wife as he called her. And uh got to talking to him and he said yeah, he and Odis did that. And I didn't tell him anything about the investigation. I just said there was a lady murdered there in her store. I didn't say what kind of store it was. And so that... but he didn't, he got some things right but some things just didn't fit you know. And we got through taking his statement and he said well how did I do? And I said not real good, Henry. So we just left it at that. And uh as the case went on, gosh I can't remember the next time that I talked to him. I think what it was, there was uh... have you talked to Brune?

**NANCY RAY:** No sir.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** But Brune was a Company E Ranger and he was having to go to Florida where Toole and Lucas were from. And they wanted, he wanted to talk to them and I wanted to go too but the captain said we don't have enough money. So OK, we'll let Brune go and I'll give him a little bit of the information to talk to those boys about. Well Henry wasn't there but Toole

was still there in jail... in Jacksonville I believe it was. So I told, and I wrote a little note... just ask him about a lady store owner in Brownwood being murdered. Didn't say how or any other circumstances and that's all Brune knew about it. So that's what he did and after... I don't know it was three or four days before he finally called me and told me. He said he talked Toole about it and he said let me ask you a question... he was talking to him then. He said was the front door locked? And I said yeah, the front door was locked. He said well he said that after they killed that lady or while she was being killed they heard somebody knocking on the front door or rattling the front door and one of them went up and locked... they heard somebody rattling the door so Toole went up and locked the front door but didn't turn the closed sign around. The sign still said open and that's what Toole told Brune. Well that was uh... that was information that hadn't been known by anybody but us so that got me a little bit more interested. And called uh and managed to talk to uh Henry again somewhere... I believe it was in Waco and asked him about this. And he said yeah, Toole went up and locked the front door. And uh... this is so fuzzy in my mind.

**NANCY RAY:** My understanding is that Lucas has just a super memory... that he could remember things about the cases.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah he told me the... no the next time I talked to him he was in Georgetown. He was in jail and fixing to go to trial on a case there in Georgetown. So I went to Georgetown and took a video statement of him telling me all about this case and that he did it. I took a... as a matter of fact, I had a friend of mine fly me and this deputy to Georgetown in his twin engine airplane because I didn't want to drive there. And I called the sheriff and he met us at the airport and carried me up there. Anyway, we got it all set up with video equipment and so

forth and so on. It was the first time I'd ever done that. I think the only time I guess I'd ever done that. I've still got those two tapes here. And uh he took the whole thing. He said we went in the back door, which they did. I don't know how he guessed that you know. Uh he said... I asked him what did things look like in the back of that place? He said it was kind of dark... he said it had a little old dim light over a workbench or something. This was a shoe and boot store and she had a guy that resoled shoes and boots and stuff in there. And he had a little... there was a little dim light over that. And then he said that there was a little... there was a swinging door between there and the main part of the store. There was. And he said we went in there and we didn't see anybody. And we made some noise in there and we heard this lady say what do you need? And we said we want to look at some boots. How did he know that was a boot store? And to make a long story short, they got into some kind of argument there and uh it was around the cash register I believe. And right behind the cash register was a wall and she had a big 4 by 8 sheet of paneling... no it was ¾ inch plywood standing up next to the wall in there. And he, he told me that uh... they ran into the wall there. He shoved her into the wall and he heard something fall in the back room. Well that's what we found her laying on. All of that was matching perfect. So we get to... of course the District Attorney had talked to me about trying to make friends with the city police and the sheriff's department and try to have everybody sort of work together you know. I said well I've been trying to do that all... ever since I've been here but it's not working too well but I'll try again. So on that case... the city of Brownwood had a Latin American guy that was supposed to be their detective. So we called him to come up there and I nominated him to be the keeper of the evidence. You know you need to get all the evidence in one... so one person can take care of it and mark it for evidence and so forth and so on. So I nominated him as

the keeper of the evidence. And there was a cardboard box out in the middle of the room there, a boot box. It was empty. It was torn apart... the boots were gone and I know that she, that lady, would not have left that out there in the middle of it because she was very neat. Whoever got those boots is who killed that woman. Anyway, uh we had a meeting after a couple of weeks' time. First, I've got to tell you this. When we got through taking pictures and doing all of the uh things that we needed to do there before we moved the body, we got all of that taken care of and then we called the undertaker to come pick her up. Well they came and I told... I told them I said you take her. Do not do anything to her body until we get there. I said do you understand that? yeah... yeah. Well, the chief of police... every time we had a situation similar to that he had to call this doctor from the hospital. We didn't need a doctor there. Anybody could tell the poor lady was dead. Uh this guy was a clinical pathologist and so uh we found out that before I got there he had called, Dr. Gardner Thomas. So he came in and took a look at her you know and said I'll be down to the funeral home later. I told them, I said don't let nobody touch that body. I don't want her... I want her just like she is right now. So they said OK. Well we got through with what we needed to do and we went to the funeral home. Walked in there and lo and behold... there that poor lady was laying up there without a stitch of clothes on. The body was clean, no blood... no nothing. And I threw a fit. And I said what did I tell you? Well Dr. Thomas called and said to clean her body up and take her old dirty, bloody clothes off and clean her up so we did... washed her body down. Bad, bad, bad... And well, we've gotta live with it. It's history now. And so they had put all of her clothes together in a grocery bag I guess it was. An old brown grocery bag you know. And they put all of her clothes in there. So uh I told the city detective, I said those belong to you... that's evidence. So you snatch them up do what you have

to do with them. And I told uh the doctor... she was stabbed at least twelve times in the left chest area and we needed to know the width and the depth of each stab wound. And he was looking at them you know and measuring them with his little measuring apparatus. I said Doc, I've got a man over there that's wanting to take some notes you know. Said we need to know the length of each wound. , he said I've got it all right here. I said well, let me leave you with one thing. I need a vaginal smear before you leave. He said you've gotta be kidding. I said no sir, I'm not kidding. I said uh I want it done. OK. Well, about three hours later I was sitting in my office working on some reports and he called and he said... god you should see the sperm... enormous! He said I couldn't believe it... 64 year old woman. Anyway, then I'm trying to cut this as short as I can. We had a meeting with the District Attorney... people that had been working on the case you know... sheriff's deputies and city police and the city department. And uh we had found... we had found one uh... she was totally gray headed and we had found one appeared to be a pubic hair, black... on her. So that had to go to the lab also. And the District Attorney wanted to know if I had gotten any of the reports back from the lab. And I said no sir, you're gonna have to talk to that man right over there. Well he turned white. He said... I haven't taken anything to the lab. He threw a fit. And he pointed at me and he said I'm gonna hold you responsible. From now on, you're the lead man in this case. And you go take up wherever the evidence is if you can find it and you get it to the lab. So I did that. It took us three hours to find it in their old dusty room where they had all this stuff... still in that paper bag... nothing written on it or anything. So I carried it to my office and started undoing everything you know. And on her blouse, was a patch of black hair that was still attached to some skin or something that wasn't hers. Man I was happy to find that. Well I rolled that up just as neatly as I could. Of course it was you know blood

soaked and it was already dried and but anyhow, I folded it so it wouldn't lose that hair. It was probably five, six, or seven strands of hair. And there was four or five other people in the office with me when I was doing this so they all saw it too, it wasn't just me. And I got all of that stuff to the lab and uh after so much time I hadn't heard from them so I called the DPS Lab and I talked to the supervisor down there and wanted to know if they had uh done anything with it. And I wanted to know especially about the hair that was in this blood clot on this lady's blouse. He said well just a minute I'll have to get the person that did the work on it so he did. Came back and he said wasn't no hair found. I liked to have fainted... they lost that somehow somehow they lost it. And I threw another fit but it didn't help. Because what's done is done, it's gone, and whoever that person was that opened that bag up they lost it on the floor and never saw it. And you can't go back and retrieve it. So there was really nothing I could do there. But anyway, her blood type was A. Henry Lucas's blood type was A. Odis Toole's blood type was A. And they said the perpetrator of this offense has B-type blood. That's where I stand today.

**NANCY RAY:** I was gonna ask what is your most frustrating case and I think we just heard it.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** That's it... that's it. I dream about it. I think about it often. What could I have done differently that would have prevented some of this stuff you know. Yeah, it works on my mind... that and several others.

**NANCY RAY:** Well that brings up a question about how did you separate your work... I mean at the end of the day or when you got a chance to go home, how did you separate it from your home life?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Uh... you didn't. That's probably why I divorced (*laughter*). I took reports home... took home my work to do my reports at home a lot of time because I didn't have time anywhere else you know.

**NANCY RAY:** Well if there's something you could do over... thinking back over your career... one thing you could go back and change, what would it be?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well... I think probably I would be a little bit more forceful in uh... in making these other officers learn how to do crime scenes. Protect the crime scene. We had a murder one time that... a guy was at a bar and uh they called me one Monday morning and uh I went down there. I drove up in the alley behind the place. And as I drove up, there were three civilian type people that walked out of the thing. And I walked in there and the assistant chief of police was coming out too. He said the first door to your right... he said there's a bunch of people in there. I walked over there and looked and there was I guess seven or eight people in that little office. And I got the city detective... the chief of police was there with his doctor and uh...

**NANCY RAY:** Same doctor?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah, yeah. I think I'd be a little bit more forceful about things you know. But trying to get along with everybody you know. I'm a pretty easygoing guy.

**NANCY RAY:** What about any manhunts? Did you ever go on any?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** How did you go... by car, did you use dogs, on horseback... tell us about one.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah well I was on one horseback. Most of them are by car though. Did you ever talk to Al Mitchell?

**NANCY RAY:** Yes, we have talked to Al Mitchell.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Al and I chased some guy that was riding a horse escaping from Midland to... I don't know, a long way. It was several nights and days you know. And Al... he was a tracker. He'd get down there and he'd look at these horse prints. He'd say that was last night sometime. I don't know whether he was blowing smoke or not but he seemed to know what he was doing. I believe he did because he was a fine Ranger.

**NANCY RAY:** Are there any other cases that you would like to tell us about before we...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I had a Highway Patrol officer come in my office one morning. He said there's a car that's parked in that roadside area I talked to you about when the other thing was going on... the only roadside park between uh Brownwood and this other little town. He said it's been there about three days and he said I put a DPS sticker on there for them to pick it up. If it's not picked up tomorrow what do you want me to do with it? I said well... let's just wait and see if they pick it up. Well he came in the next day and he said it's still there. So we uh... I told him I said just have it towed in to a certain garage place there and we'll check it out. Well uh I had a license number of the car and we checked the registration of it and found out it belonged to a lady just this side of Houston. I can't think of the name of the town but anyway... so uh the DA investigator, we'd just gotten a new DA investigator there, and he and I got to working on that thing. And we decided to call the local police department there and have them go by that residence. Well they did and they called back and said the house is all open. The TV was blaring... all the lights were on, all the doors open, no cars there, nobody at home. So uh then there was a deal on Austin TV station that uh there was a little girl I think three years old that was found in a uh... a church near Pflugerville, Texas. The pastor and his wife had been gone for

several days and they put this little girl's picture on TV and they were telling the story about her being found there by the pastor and his wife. And some people uh at that city where this lady lived recognized that little girl. And so we got together on that and found out through their help down there found out that her husband... they were... He was a convict and he had just been released to a halfway house close by and they were... they had been trying to get back together. Well they checked the halfway house and they said yeah he's been missing. He didn't come back. He left and didn't come back. So with that we obtained a search warrant for the car and uh popped the trunk and there she was in the trunk of the car all wrapped up in black plastic. Had been stabbed and of course that got that going. And this DA investigator and I got to tracking him. We put a piece in the paper down there uh if anybody picked up a hitchhiker about that time and we got a call. A guy said yeah, he picked him up and carried him into Brownwood and let him out on the highway. I don't remember exactly how we found him but we... I suggested that we go to this next little old town up there because he was apparently headed north. So we went north to the other little old town and they had a motel there and he had registered in that motel that night. That's the same night that this guy picked him up and carried him into town. So we knew we had him. And we managed to check with the people there at the motel and they said yeah, he caught a ride with a trucker that was uh... that had stopped in there and filled up with gas. Well we got his name and found him and talked to him. And he uh he identified him with a picture and said yeah it was him. So we got him... found him somewhere in West Texas. I don't remember exactly how we did it but we got him... no, we didn't find him in West Texas. That was wrong. He came back to uh his halfway house and we were notified.

**NANCY RAY:** How did the little girl end up at the church?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** He dropped her off there.

**NANCY RAY:** And it was his daughter?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah. I'm leaving out some stuff here. But when the officers in Travis County found out about this they interviewed the little girl. And he said that she said that uh Daddy put Mommy in the trunk... Daddy put Mommy in the trunk. So that's... the evidence we needed and we got him convicted and sent to the penitentiary.

**NANCY RAY:** Well there is no way we can capture everything about your life and everything about your career in this short time. But I show you retired May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1987.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** That's right.

**NANCY RAY:** And what have you been doing since then?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Painting pictures, going fishing...

**NANCY RAY:** We've been looking at some of these pictures. How did you get interested in painting?

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I was interested in painting when I was a trooper in Taylor. As a matter of fact that picture above the TV there, I painted that when I was in Taylor. I didn't even know how to paint then.

**NANCY RAY:** You did a wonderful job.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I just did it on my own. I scraped off the roof of that house four or five times before I got it the way I wanted it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well it looks right now.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Thank you... it looks pretty good. I can still see things in there I wish I'd have...

**NANCY RAY:** You probably always will.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Billie always fusses at me you know. I'll see something... aw that doesn't look right, I'll change that.

**NANCY RAY:** Well we can see where you've painted on uh saws and uh shaped pictures of the state of Texas and...

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Yeah, you know I sold about 30 of those things to a brewery in San Antonio a number of years ago. It was some guy that was a friend of one of my kids that was visiting down here one time. And he said why don't you let me take those down there and I believe it was Lone Star Brewery. I think his wife worked there and he said they accept stuff like that to sell all the time. And so I said OK I'll do that. So I boxed them up and he took them down there and uh he said... I don't know... this was some time later. He said they sold all of those in one day. I said what did they sell them for? He said they wouldn't tell me but they sent me a check for \$35 a piece for them. *(laughter)* I thought that was pretty good for an old country boy.

**NANCY RAY:** Well if somebody looks at this video or reads your transcript... for what would you like to be remembered? What would your legacy be... Norman Autrey, Texas Ranger.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Just that.

**NANCY RAY:** Just that... that's enough.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Just that. That's all I want to be remembered for. My kids are all very proud that I did what I did. I know that there... I wish that uh I had the expertise that I had when I retired when I first started. It took me a while to teach myself. Like my captain said, I don't know how to teach you to be a Texas Ranger. You have to do it yourself.

**NANCY RAY:** Well you evidently did.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Well I did the best I could at the time.

**NANCY RAY:** We want to say thank you for allowing us to interview you today.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** You're certainly welcome. I uh... it's been a real pleasure meeting you two.

**NANCY RAY:** And you too.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** Maybe if I live long enough our paths will cross again somewhere down the road.

**NANCY RAY:** Well we say thank you for your service to the state of Texas too.

**NORMAN AUTREY:** I appreciate that... I really appreciate that.