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## Captain James A. Wright, Retired By Robert Nieman

Quite, unassuming, a fine man, a good Ranger—all correctly depict James A. Wright, the former captain of Company "B" in Dallas. Born August 22, 1929, in Hamilton County, Texas, James was the son of Red and Estella Wright. After graduating from Hamilton High School in 1947, he went to work in his hometown at Lawson's John Deere Implement Company. The restless urging of youth caught up with him, however, and he headed to Fort Worth to make his fortune.

It was in Fort Worth that James met the woman he would share his life with, Laura Harcrow. They were married in Hamilton, Texas, on February 19, 1949. In 1952, the couple moved to Waco, where James went to work for the local John Deere dealer. He worked for the tractor company for five years but, with a growing family, he needed better long-term security, and a job with the state offered this protection. The Department of Public Safety was hiring and James applied.

On January 3, 1957, James entered the DPS Academy in Austin. He remembers that time as difficult, starting every day by saying, "Well, I made yesterday, maybe I can make it one more day." He did make it and graduated in ten and a half weeks as one of Texas's newest Highway Patrolmen. He was assigned to Marlin, Falls County, which was a two-man duty station. He was partnered with Moses Eades: "I was really lucky to have him as a partner. Moses was experienced and well adjusted. He taught me a whole lot."

After two years in Falls County, James requested a transfer to Clifton, Bosque County, a one-man duty station. This was quite a challenge. "I was on call twenty-four hours a day every day. At that time, we worked six days a week and were expected to take calls whenever necessary." Bosque County had very few law enforcement officers. The Sheriff's Department consisted of the sheriff and one deputy, and that was twice the size of the Clifton Police Department. James says, "I not only got calls on traffic, I got calls on all other types of law violations." After four years, Harvey Lane, a second highway patrolman, was assigned to Bosque County. As James put it, "I welcomed the relief."

It was during these years in Bosque County that James really got interested in the Rangers and criminal investigation. He really had not thought much about getting into that organization until he became acquainted with some of the Rangers and saw firsthand what they did and the kind of people they were.

The reputation of the Rangers was outstanding, and people looked up to them and their work. George Roach was a Ranger stationed in Stephenville, and he was someone that James really admired. James worked with many other Rangers, including Bill Gunn, Johnny Krumnow, Buddy Hendricks, and Captain Clint Peoples, the commander of Company "F".

As time went on, James began to think more and more about getting off the road and into criminal investigation. In 1969, he applied for the Texas Rangers and was accepted on September 1, 1969. For the next twelve years, he worked every crime imaginable from his duty station at Fort Fisher in Waco. He served three captains: Clint Peoples, E. G. "Butch" Albers, and Bob Mitchell.

On October 15, 1981, James was promoted to sergeant of Company "B" in Dallas. (That rank is now lieutenant.) His first week was eventful, to say the least. On Friday, his new captain, G. W. Burks, told him he had been without a sergeant for several weeks and had been carrying the complete load of running Company "B's" headquarters, so he was going to take a few days off. Little did James imagine that the "few days" would turn out to be six weeks—over the weekend, Captain Burks suffered a heart attack.

For the next five years, James worked at being the best sergeant possible. There can be no question that he succeeded and that he earned the undying respect and admiration of his men. When Captain Burks retired in 1986, James applied for his position. Senior Ranger Captain H. R. "Lefty" Block called several men of Company "B" and asked what they thought of their sergeant. The answers were loud and clear, and James became captain of Company "B" on September 1, 1986. During the next five years, Captain Wright set an example of quiet leadership that made his respect among the men of Company "B" rise to even greater heights.

By 1991, the captain was sixty-two years old and had served the state of Texas for thirty-five years. He took off his Texas Ranger badge for the last time. When asked if he had trouble with retirement, he replied:

*Oh no, not at all. To me it was the thing to do, and I haven't regretted it one bit. I was tickled to death to be a Highway Patrolman, Ranger, Ranger sergeant, and Ranger captain. I had a good career, but I just felt like it had come to the point where it was time to retire. I'm glad I retired; I'm happy being retired. I wouldn't want to go back, but I wouldn't take anything in the world for it.*

Only the best of the best ever become Texas Rangers, and fewer still become captains. James Wright was one of the best of the best. When he retired on October 31, 1991, as the Captain of Company "B", he was still a quiet, unassuming, fine man—and an outstanding Ranger.



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