



Official State Historical Center of the Texas  
Rangers law enforcement agency.

**The Following Article was Originally Published in the  
*Texas Ranger Dispatch Magazine***

The *Texas Ranger Dispatch* was published by the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum from 2000 to 2011. It has been superseded by this online archive of Texas Ranger history.

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Funded in part by grants from  
the Texas Ranger Association Foundation

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## 21st Century Shining Star: Jay Womack

By Robert Nieman

**J**ay Womack was born in Magee, Mississippi, on March 17, 1964. His mother, Rebecca, is a retired schoolteacher and his father, Captain Johnnie Womack, is a retired Mississippi Highway Patrolman. The rest of his immediate family is also in law enforcement in one capacity or another. A younger brother works for the Office of Inspector General for the state of Mississippi. Sadly, his older brother

recently passed away. At the time of his death, he was a major in the Madison County (Canton), Mississippi, Sheriff's Office.

Jay graduated from Magee High School in 1982 and the University of Southern Mississippi in 1985. With his family background in Mississippi law enforcement, he was disappointed that the Mississippi Department of Public Safety was not hiring in 1985. However, the Dallas (Texas) Police Department had visited Southern Mississippi's campus during Jay's senior year, and he applied for entrance into that organization and was accepted.

In April 1986, Jay began training at the Dallas Police Academy. After graduation, he was assigned to the Dallas PD's Southeast Patrol Station covering South Dallas, Pleasant Grove, and southeast Oakcliff.

After two years, Jay applied for and was accepted into the Texas Department of Public Safety. In January 1988, he was a recruit in Class A-88 at the DPS training academy in Austin. His class graduated in May, and he was assigned to Terrell (near Dallas) as a Highway Patrolman. He remained there until August 1989, when he transferred to the East Texas city of Marshall. In August 1992, he promoted to sergeant investigator in the DPS' Narcotics Service and was stationed on the Gulf Coast in Texas City. In 1993, he transferred to Dallas.

In 1995, while still in Dallas, Jay had the opportunity to become a special agent with the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration. He was stationed first in Dallas, then in New York City. During the 1996 Olympics, he was temporarily assigned to Atlanta, Georgia. New York City didn't appeal to Jay, nor did the federal bureaucracy. He applied for reinstatement with the Texas DPS, and his application was approved. Jay was once again a member of the Texas Department of Public Safety in November 1999, assigned to Houston.

In all truthfulness, Jay never had a lifelong dream or goal to be a Texas Ranger. Once he went to work as a Highway Patrolman, however, he started meeting Rangers and liked what he saw. The cases they worked appealed to him, and he appreciated the responsible and professional way they conducted themselves. Added to this was the esteem which everyone in Texas—especially members of the Texas Department of Public Safety—held for the Texas Rangers.

It wasn't long before Jay became very interested in becoming a Ranger himself. He applied for and was accepted into the organization on November 1, 1999. He was stationed in Houston and quickly gained a well-earned reputation as a working Ranger. When Texarkana's Ranger Howard Dunham retired in April 2003, Jay jumped at the chance to return to East Texas.

Before leaving Houston, Jay had an obligation to meet—one that he welcomed with open arms. A few days before assuming his new duty station in Texarkana, Jay married Janet, a flight attendant with Continental Airlines.

Jay has worked for three different law enforcement agencies and has met people from all over the United States. He is quick to point out that he has received the best training anyone could ever hope for and has met many of the best investigators in the country. He is ever conscious of the reputation he enjoys as a Ranger, saying;

*I am aware that the status we enjoy is a reputation from those who were Rangers ahead of us. I think it is the responsibility of those of us who are currently and also just entering the Rangers to continue to help maintain that reputation. I want to express my gratitude to those individuals who support the Texas Rangers day in and day out. There are too many to mention, but we as Rangers and retired Rangers know who they are. To them, I am truly grateful.*

It is easy to see why we are proud to feature Jay Womack as our 21st Century Shining Star.

Texas Ranger

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