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Managing Editors

Robert Nieman 2000-2009; (b.1947-d.2009)

Byron A. Johnson 2009-2011

Publisher & Website Administrator

Byron A. Johnson 2000-2011

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Technical Editor, Layout, and Design

Pam S. Baird



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Captain Jim Miller
(article originally published 2003)
by Robert Nieman

The new captain of Company "C" in Lubbock is truly a credit to the Texas Rangers. Captain James Miller-- Jim to his friends --was born September 7, 1952, in Beaumont, Texas. He is the only child of Bill and the late Mary Miller.

While Jim was still a youngster, his family moved to Woodville. After graduating from the local Kirby High School in 1971, Jim attended Sam Houston State University in Huntsville. In December 1974, he received his bachelor of science degree in criminology.

It was at Sam Houston State that Jim developed an interest in criminal investigative work. Prior to graduation, he sought employment information from state police agencies in Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. He made applications in Oregon and Washington and flew there to complete testing and personal interview processes. Both of those states were wise enough to accept a man that they believed would be a good officer.

However, there was a problem. Neither Oregon nor Washington had a school that started before the autumn of 1975. Jim was graduating in December 1974, and he couldn't wait that long for a job. Texas, however, had a school beginning in February 1975, so Jim applied for employment with the Department of Public Safety there. Thankfully, those in charge were as wise as their counterparts in Oregon and Washington: the DPS accepted his application. For eighteen weeks, Jim Miller attended school number A-75 at the DPS Training Academy in Austin.

In June 1975, Jim was assigned to the Driver's License Service in Houston, where he stayed until January 1977. He then transferred to the Highway Patrol and was stationed twenty-five miles north of Houston in Cleveland. In December 1978, the opportunity arose to transfer to his hometown of Woodville, and Jim took it.

On April 16, 1977, Jim married Cindy Fertitta. He describes their relationship:

She has truly been a blessing in my life. For many years while our children were young, Cindy stayed home to care for them. As the children began school, Cindy obtained a job as a teacher's aide so she could keep the same hours as the kids. While we were in Georgetown, Cindy went back to college and attended the University of Mary Hardin Baylor in Belton, Texas. She did all this while working full-time and caring for her family. In 1997, Cindy graduated from UMHB with a teaching degree. At the age of 40, I watched her walk across the stage to receive her diploma. She was proud, and so were Stacey, Micah [their son and daughter], and myself. Cindy currently teaches science and in Houston.

Only one thing would ever entice Jim to leave Woodville again—the Texas Rangers. He later said that if he had not become a Ranger, “I’d still be a happy Highway Patrolman in Woodville, Texas.” All the time Jim was in the Highway Patrol, his interest in investigative work never waned. At the time, the DPS had four investigative services: the Rangers, Motor Vehicle Theft, Narcotics, and Criminal Intelligence. There was no doubt which he wanted—the Texas Rangers. In 1986, he made application to join this elite group, and the Texas Rangers got what would soon be one their brightest stars.

On January 1, 1987, Jim took his new duty station in Georgetown, with the counties of Bastrop, Caldwell, Lee, and Williamson as his assigned areas. He would remain there until he promoted to lieutenant ten years later. During those ten years in Georgetown, Jim says he was fortunate to have worked for Bob Mitchell, Bob Prince (see *The Meridian Hostage Crisis* in this issue), Joe Wilie, and Kirby Dendy. Jim says, “I could not have had better leadership.” It is this guidance that he is still putting to good use today. While working as a field Ranger in Georgetown, Jim worked numerous cases. Unfortunately, space only allows to briefly overview three of them. In the Line of Duty - Texas Ranger Stan Guffey On January 22, 1987, three weeks after becoming a Ranger, Jim was involved in a Ranger’s worst nightmare—the death of a fellow Ranger.

Captain Mitchell had sent Jim to Marble Falls to assist in a kidnapping case being conducted by Rangers Johnny Waldrip, Johnny Aycock, and Stan Guffey. Kara Lee Whitehead, two years old, had been kidnapped by a man named Brent Beeler, who demanded a ransom of \$30,000 and a getaway car.

An exchange was arranged. The getaway car used was a Lincoln Town Car that belonged to the local district attorney. Unknown to Beeler, Rangers Aycock and Guffey were hiding under a blanket where the backseat had been removed.

After Beeler received the briefcase with the money, he took the little girl and went to the Town Car. Beeler opened the front door, put the child inside, and tossed the case into the backseat.

Just before getting into the car himself, Beeler spotted the Rangers. Guffey identified himself. Beeler whirled and fired his 44-Magnum through the back side window. His shot hit Ranger Guffey in the head and killed him, but not before the Ranger got off a shot. Unfortunately, it was ineffective. Ranger Aycock had also come up firing. While he was returning Beeler's fire, he reached over the front seat and lifted the little girl up and over the seat to a position of safety behind his own body. When he stopped firing, the kidnapper was dead.

For a new Ranger, Jim Miller learned several things: a Ranger's work is serious and dangerous; a day is not done until the job is complete; and, most importantly, life is precious.

For their heroic efforts that day, Rangers Stan Guffey and Johnny Aycock were awarded the Medal of Valor, the highest honor Texas can bestow. Since the Texas Rangers became part of the newly formed Department of Public Safety in 1935, only five Rangers have been awarded this high honor. Walburg State Bank Theft In May 1991, the Walburg State Bank in Georgetown was swindled by a former Williamson County deputy constable, used car salesman, and part time preacher. This man had obtained a line of credit from the bank to purchase vehicles at one of the automobile auctions around the area. After securing the high bids, he paid for the vehicles with bank drafts charged against his line of credit. He then furnished the bank with the original titles to the vehicles as collateral and forged signatures on the necessary papers in order to be able to illegally obtain duplicate titles. To increase the value of the vehicles, he rolled back the odometers. He had buyers waiting in Las Vegas, Nevada. All that the bank had to show for the money they had advanced for the purchases was a handful of original titles. With help from Nevada authorities, Jim was able to gather enough evidence to secure a guilty plea to the Walburg State Bank theft from the former deputy constable, used-car salesman, and part-time preacher.

The Branch Davidian Investigation In 1993, Jim Miller and approximately thirty other Rangers participated in the Branch Davidian investigation in Waco. The Rangers were responsible for the capital murder investigation of the four ATF

Agents killed during the initial raid on the Branch Davidian compound. Jim was assigned the tasks of writing the overall report and receiving custody of the thousands of pieces of evidentiary items seized. Joined by Rangers Ray Coffman, George Turner, and Ronnie Griffith, Jim drove a truck containing approximately 24,000 pounds of evidence to the FBI laboratory in Washington D.C. to be examined and evaluated. At that time, no local, state, or federal agency had undertaken an investigation of that magnitude. A difficult job was successfully completed due to the dedication of Rangers, individuals, and local, state, and federal law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies.

Our twentieth-century shining star in this issue, Captain Bob Mitchell, remembered the day Jim and his wife stopped by his office in Waco. Jim was still a Highway Patrolman, but he told Mitchell that he wanted to be a Ranger and would happily accept assignment anywhere in the state. Mitchell told him that he told everyone who wanted to be a Ranger: "Work hard and hang in there."

Jim followed Captain Mitchell's advice. When the time was right, he applied for the Rangers and was accepted on January 1, 1987. Bob Mitchell had an opening in Georgetown, and he had first choice of the newly accepted candidates to fill that vacancy. One of Captain Mitchell's best traits as a leader is his ability to judge men. He said, "There was no question who I wanted—I wanted Jim Miller." Obviously, Captain Mitchell's instincts once again served him well.

On May 1, 1997, Jim promoted to lieutenant of Company "A" and once again found himself stationed in Houston. On September 1, 2002, he promoted again, this time as the captain of Company "C" in Lubbock.

