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Capt. Manuel Trazazas Gonzauillas

by Bob Stephens

Because I numbered Texas Ranger Captain M. T. "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas among my personal friends for many years and knew him well, I have often been asked to describe his personal traits. To do so is somewhat difficult because he was, in many respects, a complex man of contrasts.

His proud nature and vanity were reflected in his meticulous appearance. A strong, outgoing personality resulted in his practice of dominating a conversation. He was colorful and enjoyed attention. Because of his chosen profession, he was cautious to an extreme and was always armed during his retirement.

Perhaps the most predominant trait Captain Gonzauillas demonstrated was his rigid and uncompromising enforcement of the law. In the course of his lifetime, he killed twenty-two men, was shot seven times, and was knifed on several occasions. He carried brass knuckles and once said, "I'd do anything in a fight." It was an understatement of fact. Because he was somewhat less than average in size, he sometimes had to prove his physical prowess to larger men.

In contrast to his aggressive nature, he was gentle and compassionate toward his wife, Laura, his only relative. They were very devoted. Although secretive by nature, he enjoyed publicity. However, it was his practice never to confirm or deny stories about him that appeared in newspapers. As a result, much inaccurate information has been repeated. One example of this is the story that during the oil boom in Kilgore in 1931, he always sat upright in a barber chair when being shaved so no one could shoot him in the back. When I asked him about this, his candid reply was, "I never had a shave in a barber shop in my life."

My old friend was sensitive about his lack of knowledge about his family background and birthplace. In the month before his death, he confided in me. I learned that the family was in Galveston at the time of the hurricane that destroyed the city in 1900, and that his parents and their other children had perished in the storm. He was left an orphan at the age of eight. It has often been reported that he was born in Cadiz, Spain, based on his statement to a reporter. He also once listed Trinidad as his birthplace. He told me that he knew only that he was born in Spain while his parents were visiting there, but he did not know the exact location.

A man of high principle and good character, Captain Gonzauillas never did things by halves. His full energy and effort went into his undertakings. As a direct opposite, he was witty and enjoyed light humor. Late in life, many of his old friends preceded him in death, causing him to remark to his wife that "there won't be anyone left to come to our funerals." Now he has joined those who went before him, leaving only these recollections of the famous Ranger.

Editor's note:

This information was provided shortly after the death of Capt. Gonzauillas M. T. "Lone Wolf" Gonzauillas died of cancer in Dallas on February 13, 1977. His biography is contained in the Hall of Fame section of this web site.

