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## Kilgore Rangerettes

By O. Rufus Lovett

Forward by Elliott Erwitt

Introduction by Katy Vine

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.  
11 x 12 inches, 192 pages,  
127 duotone photographs, \$50.00, hardcover.  
ISBN 978-0-292-71673-5

Review by David V. Stroud

For decades, the Texas Rangers have served and protected the Lone Star State. Their dedication, ability, and bravery have not only influenced law and order but also inspired many and diverse groups to adopt the “Ranger” name. Several of these affiliations are well known, among them the Texas Rangers professional baseball team and the Kilgore Rangerettes dance drill team, who represent Texas’s Kilgore College Rangers. The young ladies are known throughout the country for their precision, showmanship, and professionalism. This book, *The Kilgore Rangerettes*, presents a close look into the life and history of this unique group through the photographic lens of Kilgore professor O. Rufus Lovett.

O. Rufus Lovett is a master photographer, and the Kilgore (College) Rangerettes are the best female precision dance drill team there is. Combine the two in a book, and the result is a black-and-white photographic study of the world-famous Rangerettes at practice, in the bleachers, dancing during half-time of Kilgore College Rangers’ football games (Kilgore also has a baseball team), and high-kicking in front of Macy’s during the Thanksgiving Day Parade as only Rangerettes can. Each exceptional photograph is titled and dated, often as a series: New York, 1989; Cotton Bowl 2007; Revels 2003; and Shadows 2005-2006, etc.

I began teaching at Kilgore College more than thirty years ago and met O. Rufus Lovett as another incoming instructor during the meetings required of all new KC personal. After a few years, I signed up for his introduction to black-and-white photography. The first night of that class, he showed some of Ansel Adams’s (1902-1989) black-and-white photographs. Lovett had enjoyed the great fortune of studying under the legend.



## Book Reviews

“There is more to a black and white image than black and white: the shades, the contrasts.” “Think before you take the picture.” “If you can walk around the person or tree or statue or whatever, do it. Look at it from different angles.” “Don’t just take the same photograph everyone else is.” I cannot count how many times Mr. Lovett repeated those mantras as if he were saying them for the first time. He would often use them as he inspected our latest mounted black-and-white photographs displayed on the chalk tray, with the old chalk board serving as background.

Our photos were the completion of a process that had only begun with the snapping of the shutter. The negatives had to be developed by the student and then printed in the darkroom, where we worked on shading and contrasting the blacks and whites. That was when I was often reminded that if something looks easy (Mr. Lovett’s black and white photography), most often, it’s not. Needless to say, I learned volumes in that class, and Kilgore College is very lucky to have their own Ansel Adams to teach young shutterbugs the art he has mastered. As result of that class, my snapshots have been much improved—but not perfect.

Through the years, as I taught history at Kilgore, I also learned about the young freshmen and sophomore ladies who, for only two years, are the Kilgore Rangerettes. I’ve seldom taught a semester without several of them being in my classes. Instead of the red, white, and blue uniforms in which they performed during halftimes at Kilgore College Ranger football games, I saw them sitting at their desks in jeans and T-shirts. (The Rangerettes wear red, white, and blue uniforms in honor of the USA; Kilgore’s colors are silver and grey.)

The Rangerettes are outstanding students, never late to class, and always paying attention and asking good questions. They are polite in the old-fashioned sense of the word, saying “Yes sir,” “No sir,” and “Thank you sir.” They miss class only for required Rangerette trips all over Texas and as far away as Washington DC, New York City, and often overseas.

To become a Rangerette, a girl must try out on the eve of her first fall semester. There are about a hundred others also competing for the honor, most averaging four years of dance classes. After the two-week competition, about thirty girls are chosen to fill the vacancies created by graduating sophomores. Needless to say, there are many more young broken hearts than happy ones that Saturday morning when the Freshman Rangerettes are announced.

Being selected is only the beginning. Rangerettes are required to take a minimum of twelve hours a semester, maintain no lower than 2.5 GPA, and practice Monday through Friday from 1:30 p.m. till 3:30 p.m. (or later), regardless of heat or cold. Once football season ends, they move from the field to Dodson Auditorium and begin practice for Spring Revels, which could compete with any Broadway production.

The Kilgore Rangerettes earn their hats and boots every day they are in the group, and they maintain the pride of being one forever. In fact, former Rettes have their own organization, Rangerettes Forever, and a few of them are featured in Mr. Lovett’s book. The Rangerettes are simply the best, as are Mr. Lovett’s photographic tribute to them.