

INTERVIEW WITH

SELWYN DENSON

Texas Ranger, Retired

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PROJECT:
TEXAS RANGERS

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED AT HOME OF
SELWYN DENSON
HILLTOP LAKES, TEXAS
SATURDAY - OCTOBER 5, 1996

INTERVIEWED BY:
ROBERT NIEMAN & GLENN ELLIOTT
LONGVIEW, TEXAS

Present At Interview: Selwyn Denson, Lois Denson, Robert Nieman, & Glenn Elliott



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Selwyn Denson
Texas Ranger, Retired

ROBERT NIEMAN: This is Saturday, October 5, 1996. My name is Robert Nieman and we are at the home of Selwyn Denson, at Hilltop Lakes, Texas. The purpose of this interview is to discuss your Texas Ranger career. Mr. Denson do I have your permission to video tape this interview?

SELWYN DENSON: You do.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Mr. Denson, you understand that this videotape will belong to you and me?

SELWYN DENSON: Yes sir.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And finally Mr. Denson, do we have your permission to present copies of this tape to various historical organizations such as museums, libraries, schools and etc.?

SELWYN DENSON: You do.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Would you please give your full name.

SELWYN DENSON: Selwyn Hogan Denson.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And when were you born and where?

SELWYN DENSON: I was born on November 30, 1909 in Anderson County, Texas in the little community of Solcum.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And where is Anderson County?

SELWYN DENSON: Palestine is the County seat.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Who was your mother and father?

SELWYN DENSON: Beg your pardon?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Who was your mother and father?

SELWYN DENSON: My mother and fatherJoseph Warren Denson was my father and Etta Jalema Hogan was my mother.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

SELWYN DENSON: I hadtwo sisters and one brother.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And chronologically?

SELWYN DENSON: The oldest child was Lamora Denson and I was the second child and the third child was Eva Joanna Denson and the fourth child was Harold Denson. (*Shirley Lowery is a foster daughter that Selwyn inadvertently omitted during the interview and he requested her name to added to the transcript. RN*)

ROBERT NIEMAN: And what is your wife's name?

SELWYN DENSON: My wife's name is Lois Denson.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay, do you have any children?

SELWYN DENSON: Does she have any?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Or do y'all have any children?

SELWYN DENSON: We have one daughter. Etta Connell is her name now, she was Etta Denson.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay. Did you go to school there in Anderson County?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, I went to.... I started to school there in Solcum, went through the third grade, then we moved near Palestine and I went to Palestine High School and finished high school there.

ROBERT NIEMAN:after you got out of high school, what did you do?

SELWYN DENSON: I went to workmy first job was in a five and ten cent store there in Palestine. And I went with them over into central Texas and worked there for....well then I

finally moved to Kerrville in a store there and they went broke and had to down size and I was out of a job then for awhile.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you remember when you went to work there in Palestine, what your pay.....what did you make?

SELWYN DENSON: It was five dollars a week.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And how long did you work....you went to Kerrville, do you remember when?

SELWYN DENSON: When I got through in Kerrville it must of been about a year and a half or two years when they folded.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you remember about what year you went.....moved to Kerr....or what year you went toKerrville.....or when the job played out?

SELWYN DENSON: Must of been 1932.

ROBERT NIEMAN:after that, what did you get into?

SELWYN DENSON: I came back home andand I got a jobin a filling station, (unintelligible)..filling station for awhile. And then up until 19....no I got another job then driving a truck, hauling fruit out of the valley for a grocery store there in Palestine. Then I worked at that until..... in early 1937 and then I had an Uncle that bought out a filling station in El Paso and I went out there to work with him, and that's when I got a notice to come to the Highway Patrol in 1937.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What kind of truck were you driving?

SELWYN DENSON: It was a Chevrolet trailer.....truck and trailer. And we hauled fruit from there.....fruit and vegetables there into Palestine and to Tyler.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What did you.....had you always wanted to be a policeman?

SELWYN DENSON: I kind of always had that in the back of my mind.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Andyou applied for the job while you were in El Paso?

SELWYN DENSON: No, I applied while I was in Palestine but I got the notice when I was in El Paso. I hadn't been out there long when I got the notice.

ROBERT NIEMAN: How long was it after you....you applied....when were you excepted, in 1937?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, '37 andhmm.... I believe it was in August.....no we went to school in August, started in August.....

ROBERT NIEMAN: Where did you go to school?

SELWYN DENSON:so it was in June or July, July I guess. I came from El Paso to Austin to go to the school.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And how long was school?

SELWYN DENSON: It was the recruit school and it lasted seven weeks I believe. Andit run overtime a little bit, they....they didn't have theour uniforms and everything hadn't gotten in and so we stayed just a little longer than that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Where was your first station?

SELWYN DENSON: First station was in Dallas.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And were you in a patrol car or motorcycles or....?

SELWYN DENSON: Motorcycles was.....they had patrol cars and we'd ride motorcyclesprobably two days a week or three and especially if you worked on nights you had the car, but if you worked days you probably rode motorcycles.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay. Whathow long were you in Dallas?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't recall, I was in Dallas a year or so or two and then I think it was then I moved to Terrell and worked in Terrell fora year or two and then a vacancy in Palestine come up and I asked for and got a transfer back to Palestine. And then I had been there to long until you know, the war started and everything and they was drafting so many people, they was having to split up.....close stations and split up stations and I got moved out of Palestine to Marshall.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Yeah.

SELWYN DENSON: And I stayed in Marshall for , several months and then I enlisted in the Navy and was in the Navy two and a half years.

ROBERT NIEMAN: When you were in Marshall, did youever know Mattie Castlebury who had Mattie's Ballroom over in Longview?

SELWYN DENSON: No.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And the Palm Isle.

SELWYN DENSON: No I didn't know that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay.what....did you.....where did you serve in the Navy?

SELWYN DENSON: In Galveston and Corpus Christi and in Kingsville. I was in the shore patrol and I started out there in Corpus Christi and Kingsville and then was moved to Galveston and finished up in Galveston, was discharged in Galveston in 1947.

ROBERT NIEMAN: You got out in '47? You got out of the Navy in '47?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah I believe it was, '46....'46 I guess, '46.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And then you went....what did you do then?

SELWYN DENSON: I went back to the Highway Patrol.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And where was you stationed?

SELWYN DENSON: In I was stationed in McKinney.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Anddid you work any particular difficult cases while you were in the Highway Patrol?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't know....recall as being too difficult, there was some cases that involved some criminal activity.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Such as?

SELWYN DENSON: Such asa robbery andauto theft and things of that nature.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What about I was looking through one of your scrapbooks, I saw there were was a big chase of a guy named Walter Glen Ransom, do you remember any of that, you run him to ground and I think you and it shows this picture of Lone Wolfe Gonzauillas ?

SELWYN DENSON: Vaguely.....vaguely I remember some of the details. I know that he was quite notorious at the time, or had gained a lot of publicity over that, but I can't remember the details right now.

ROBERT NIEMAN:when did you first want to become a Texas Ranger?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't know, several years before that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did you try.....when did you

SELWYN DENSON: I had put in my application for the Rangers on two occasions, in fact right after I came out of the service andand they.....it was an opening came up in Austin, but I just wasn't in a position to take it at that time.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Was it offered to you?

SELWYN DENSON: It was offered to me. Andthen I left my application in and renewed it and then in1947 I guess it was, aboutit must of been the latter part of the year, July or August, somewhere along there, why I was accepted, the latter part of August I think.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And where....where was you stationed?

SELWYN DENSON: The first station was a temporary station in Houstondown there under Hardy Purvis, was Captain down there and I stayed there a short time and I had a problem getting my family moved down and I moved.....he moved me up to San Augustine and I worked up there until a vacancy came open in Dallas that I was supposed to of gotten the first time but something happened that I didn't. And then I was..... I moved to Dallas.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well that was back in the days where, you know, the Ranger Captain just basically said, I want you for a Ranger and it wasn't so much testing back then was there?

SELWYN DENSON: Just about what happened, yeah.

ROBERT NIEMAN: How did you first meet Gonzauillas, cause he would of been the Captain up in Dallas at that time.

SELWYN DENSON: While I was on the Highway Patrol up there I'd met him.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you remember the first Ranger you ever saw? Glenn Elliott, a friend of ours here, said you were the first Ranger he ever saw.

SELWYN DENSON: Well I I I lived you know in Anderson County around Palestine, that was a railroad town.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Uh hum.

SELWYN DENSON: And during a railroad strike or two the Rangers were up there, back when I was just small, I don't recall just when it was. But they had the Rangers there during a strike and that's, I guess, the first Rangers I ever saw.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well do you remember an old railroad Texas Ranger named, Texas Slim, that worked back in the '20's and the '30's, his name was John Spence?

SELWYN DENSON: Just heard of him, just heard of him.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did you ever meet him?

SELWYN DENSON: Not that I know of.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What were....do you remember any of the stories you heard about him?

SELWYN DENSON: No I don't.

ROBERT NIEMAN:do you rem....did you ever meet an old '20's and '30's and '40's
Ranger named Bob Goss, worked out of Kilgore?

SELWYN DENSON: I remember Bob Goss and I think I've met him, but it would of just been
one occasion. I knew nothing much about him.

ROBERT NIEMAN:yeah he worked out of Kilgore, he wasprobably the greatest
pist.....best pistol shot that's ever been a Ranger.

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, uh hum.

ROBERT NIEMAN:didwell....when you came back to Dallas, you were stationed in
Dallas?

SELWYN DENSON: Stationed in Dallas.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well let's talk about Hardy Purvis first, didwhat reflections so you
remember about Purvis?

SELWYN DENSON: Nothing in particular, I justwell I just really don't remember too much
about his activities and everything.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well was he the type that would say, "Here you go do it, you're on your
own", or did he try to supervise everything?

SELWYN DENSON: No he....he....he would more or less turn it over to you to do it, do it like
he wanted it done or how it was right.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Who....what aboutGonzaullas?

SELWYN DENSON:Gonzaullas was more or less the same way, he'dhe'd send you to do a job and he intended for you to do it. I recall one time that I was working on a case and Iit was quite an important case to me and it was rather complicated and a little situation come up and I called and talked to him and asked him about what he thought I should do, and he said, "That's what I sent you up there to do", said, "You take care it". And from then on I did it that way, I didn't have any more problems.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Was there any particular lawman or anything when you was growing up that, you know, you kind of looked up to? I know Gonzaullas used to always say that histhat old....the old border boss, John Hughes, was his inspiration. And I was wondering if there was any that you really

SELWYN DENSON: No, not other than Gonzaullas. Bob Crowder.

ROBERT NIEMAN: You want to talk about Bob Crowder a little bit?

SELWYN DENSON: Well Bob Crowder was Captain after Gonzaullas retired and I worked under him quite awhile. I really enjoyed working under him and he was really a nice person and was very helpful to me.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Was there a big difference in the way Gonzaullas and Crowder ran the company?

SELWYN DENSON: A little bit of difference.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Such as?

SELWYN DENSON: WellGonzaullas you could talk to a little differently from Crowder, he'd listen to your little details and things like that. But still he expected you to take care of the job. He had been trained the same way.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well Gonzauillas I guess, especially by the time.....the late '40's, was already pretty much a legend.

SELWYN DENSON: yeah, uh hum.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did you....was he kind of held in awe?

SELWYN DENSON: Beg your pardon?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did y'all kind of hold him in awe?

SELWYN DENSON: Well not particularly. Hehe was the Captain, we knew that and there was no horse play went on there, but he....otherwise he was.....he was a real nice person.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well diddid he make....you know he was famous for, you know, his love of guns and shooting and what not, diddid he make y'all go to the pistol range a lot?

SELWYN DENSON: No. No, he didn't make us go to thewe'd go occasionally, but didn't.....

ROBERT NIEMAN: Diddid you have to wear two guns under him?

SELWYN DENSON: No.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Cause I've seen a lot pictures and he always had on two guns.

SELWYN DENSON: yeah, uh huh. I never did wear two guns.

ROBERT NIEMAN:whatGlenn, as I said, said that you were the first Ranger he ever met, do you ever remember the first time you ever met Glenn, or did he just all of a sudden appear?

SELWYN DENSON: No I really don'tit might of been after he went in the Rangers, I'm not sure.

ROBERT NIEMAN: In other words, he didn't make a real big impression on you until then, huh? Glenn's here, he's out of....out of camera range, but he's here, so we're teasing him a little too.

SELWYN DENSON: I could of met him and might not of remembered him. But I'm mighty glad I did meet him, because he's been a nice friend ever since.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I was going through some ofold Bob Goss, whom we just mentioned, old records and he served under Hardy Purvis some in the '40's and he keeps.....and he lived in Kilgore, which of course now is part of Company B. But he keeps listing in there part of Company A, do you know if part of East Texas, that is now Company B, may of been part of Company A back in the early '40's?

SELWYN DENSON: No, but quite a bit up the Louisiana coast, up towards Texarkana, was in Company A, but I don't know where thosewhere those borders were back then, don't have any idea.

ROBERT NIEMAN:do you.....do you rememberwhat would you say was your most frustrating case that you ever worked?

SELWYN DENSON: You have to give me a little bit to think about that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay, what aboutwhile you're thinking about it.....what about maybe your most....one of your more difficult cases that came to a good conclusion?

SELWYN DENSON: Well, going back to that most frustrating, I guess was when we was working on that valley strike business, labor business, down in Louisiana valley.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Let's talk about that some.

SELWYN DENSON: Well there's not really too much to talk about, it was just so many people involved andandthe political aspects was mixed in withwork and it was just a little bit

complicated and frustrating. We was trying to keep order down there and I think we did, but we probably made some enemies too while we was at it, because were so divided over it.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well the Rangers came out of that with a pretty bad black eye.

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, I understand they did.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you....what would be your response to that?

SELWYN DENSON: I can't understand why.as far as I know we was just keeping order, but I think there was someoccasions where there was some Rangers accused of using excessive force on some people, but I don't.... I didn't know about it at the time.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well, Allie was the Captain there then?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, he was the Captain.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Andwhat were his....what kind of orders was he giving towards how you handle these strikers? And what kind of man was he to work for?

SELWYN DENSON: He expected you to do the job andhe never instructed me to use any force on anybody or anything.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Were you....you his Sergeant?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, I was his Sergeant.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Andwell do you remember any kind of specific, you know, I mean how..... I mean you was getting some real bad publicity down there, do you remember.....did y'all discuss, you know, how are we going to, you know, try to answer some of this and....or....some kind of

SELWYN DENSON: No, there was no....no discussion on how to handle the thing and that, we just used general common sense and do it was the way itI was instructed and the way I tried to do it.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well do you remember Chavez?

SELWYN DENSON: Who?

ROBERT NIEMAN:Chavez?

SELWYN DENSON: Chavez, yeah.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Chavez,did you have any dealings with him?

SELWYN DENSON: Not particularly.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well did the strikers seem to be looking for trouble, looking for ways to make trouble?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't know whether they was looking for ways or whatthey did trespass on some land down there at times and they were moved and run off, butand as far as I was concerned, in my area, I never saw any abusive treatment of them.

ROBERT NIEMAN:

SELWYN DENSON: Now it could of happened some time when I was not present, but when I was

ROBERT NIEMAN: What was some of your.....well let's go....we'll come back to being a Sergeant, cause there's some more things I want to talk about on that. But you were stationed up in Greenville I think about eight years.

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah.

ROBERT NIEMAN:didwell, let's see, you knew Audie Murphy pretty well.

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Would you share some thoughts on him?

SELWYN DENSON: Beg your pardon?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Would you share some thoughts on Murphy?

SELWYN DENSON: Well Murphy was raised in Hunt County up there, he had lived over near Farmersville, some little place up there. Andand while I was stationed on the Highway Patrol there, why he came back home andthat's when I met him you know andand as I was on the patrol, it was our duty to kind of show him around, that's how I got acquainted with him. And we became friends and were till up until the time he was killed later in an accident.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What kind of person was he?

SELWYN DENSON: He seemed to be a quiet, unassuming person andjust an ordinary country boy.

ROBERT NIEMAN: He had a.....did you ever play cards with him, cause he had a love of cards?

SELWYN DENSON: No I never did play cards with him.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And I know you've been known to shuffle a deck once or twice, haven't you?

SELWYN DENSON: I've heard of it.

ROBERT NIEMAN:you....you....going through your scrapbook, I saw some cases in there that would obviously been I would think difficult. I mean like you was having to investigate some fellow policemen. I don't know, I think this was what in Corpus Christi, some policemen.....

SELWYN DENSON: At Kingsville?

ROBERT NIEMAN: At Kingsville.

SELWYN DENSON: Kingsvillethere was some police accused ofI don't remember just exactly how that evolved, whether they were actually involved or whether they was falsely

reporting some way, but I worked on that quite a little while and I come to the conclusion that it was all false, it was a politics deal.

ROBERT NIEMAN: They were accused of burglary I think.

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, uh hum. But there was no....was no evidence to show that they were guilty of it.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did....but that must of been difficult working on fellow officers.

SELWYN DENSON: Well it is a little bit, it's hard, it's hard to do, but had to be done so went ahead and did it.

ROBERT NIEMAN:back....going back up to Greenville, you ...worked a case....an interesting case on some mules, you want to talk about that?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah that happened up in Fannin County, out northeast of Bonham.we got a report on a murder up there, they found this man dead in the field out there and his team was standinghe was plowing with two mules, you know they used a pair of mules and a turning plow to rake the land. Andthosethose mules had stood there all night long in that one spot and hadn't moved and was standing there the next day when they found the man and the mules.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well had the man been shot or do you.....?

SELWYN DENSON: I can't recall whether he was shot or stabbed, I believe.....yeah, he was shot, he'd been shot I think maybe with a shotgun. Andthe case was solved, we did find out who did it and they was convicted, but I don't remember the details right now. That's been a long time ago.

ROBERT NIEMAN:youin 1962, what were you doing when Kennedy was killed and were you involved in that in any way, in any of the

SELWYN DENSON: No, in 1962.....no I didn't work in anything at all, I wasn't even called in on it , they'd handled that in Dallas there.

ROBERT NIEMAN:you....did you work some of the gamblers down in Corpus and Galveston and some of those areas?

SELWYN DENSON:well, yes. I went to Galveston one timeit was a strange thing that happened down there, it was when I forget who was the Attorney General, anyhow, he all organized this thing and was going to close Galveston down. Andwe came in from all over the state, I was inKingsville, I mean I was stationed in Carrizo Springs I guess at the time. Andwe all was supposed to get into plain clothes and go over there and raid these places and when we got over there well they had shut down and had been just shut down an hour or so before we got there. We later discovered that people were talking about it in the beauty shops days before that there was going to be a raid in Galveston down there. And we come to find out, that apparently somebody in the Attorney General's office had talked to their wives about it and their wives got in the beauty shop.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well one of the things I've read about down there, I know Clint Peoples was down there on some of it. Was you down there when Peoples was there on any?

SELWYN DENSON: No I wasn't there when he made those places.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay. Well Gonzauillas made some raids down there andno this....I'm sorry, this was in Fort Worth that he was raiding a place and they broke in and they couldn't find anything wrong and it turned out what they were doing, they found some holes up in the ceiling(clock starts to chime)

SELWYN DENSON: I wish I should shut that thing off, now it will chime eleven times.

ROBERT NIEMAN: We went off camera there for a second to let the clock.....but what they were doing, they had projectors set up and they were shooting down through the ceiling onto these tables and they'd show a, you know, crap table or whatever, and when they raided it, they'd just turn the projectors off.

SELWYN DENSON: Just turn 'em right off. I wasn't there on that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: But

SELWYN DENSON: I know it was common, a lot of those places would have panels in the walls that would turn and stuff and they could clean 'em out in three minutes, if they had that much time.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Whenone of the questions I meant to ask you on your Highway Patrol days, did the people then....did you like, or especially I guess the kids, did they like to run from you in the cars? I know I visited Max Womack and he said they always wanted to run on 'em.

SELWYN DENSON: Well I never did have too much trouble, maybe one or two, but I never had too much trouble with kids running from me.

ROBERT NIEMAN:you were....when did you become a Sergeant?

SELWYN DENSON: In '56.

ROBERT NIEMAN: 1956?at thethis year at the Ranger reunion they gave aa memorial I think for Johnny Clev.....not Klevenhagen,Van Cleve and they told a funny little story involving you and a car, do you remember.....was you in there when they told that story?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't.....no I wasn't, I don't recall.

ROBERT NIEMAN: About an accident, I can't remember the details of it myself, it was I think Allie had been jumping up and down about too many wrecks or something and you were in a carand I can't remember, do you remember the details of it Glenn?

GLENN ELLIOTT: Selwyn had a little accident and had to call ‘em to come over there to get him and that’s all I remember of it, it was quite humorous.

SELWYN DENSON: What was that?

ROBERT NIEMAN: You had had asomeafter all this Allie going on about not having accidents, you had had one and had to radio to have somebody come and get you and no one was saying a word, just sitting there looking and that you finally said, “All right you smart ex’s.....” you knowJerome Priest was the one telling the story.

SELWYN DENSON: I don’t recall it.

ROBERT NIEMAN:anywaywhen did you toto Lubbock?

SELWYN DENSON: Went to Lubbock in ‘68 I guess.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And your Captain there was Jim Ray?

SELWYN DENSON: ‘67 or ‘68.there was about four or five captains there while I was there.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well one of them was Jim Ray.

SELWYN DENSON: Jim Ray was there at one time and Jim Riddle, and let’s see.....

LOIS DENSON: Jim Paul, no not Jim Paul.

SELWYN DENSON: No Jim Paul died when....that’s.....there that’s before I went up there.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Jim Wilson probably

LOIS DENSON: No Jim wasn’t.....

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well did you work under Jim Riddle, or with Jim Riddle?

SELWYN DENSON: If he was Captain there for a little while.... no I don’t know.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What about Jim Ray?

SELWYN DENSON: Jim Ray, yeah I worked under him.

ROBERT NIEMAN: How was he to work under?

SELWYN DENSON: he was a heck of a nice person to work for. In fact all of 'em, I had no problem with any of them. AndSkippy Rundell was Captain there for awhile andwell I can't think of that other boys name, there was about three, three or four.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well it....I've....I've heard several people say that Allie could be a real difficult person to get along with. Did you ever have any problems getting along with him?

SELWYN DENSON: Not particularly, he was a little demanding sometimes on different things, but II've got nothing ill to say about.....

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well I don't really meant particularly anything negative to say, but I mean justyou know, that he could be, you know, maybe real difficult some times to.....

SELWYN DENSON: Well Allie had some health problems, I don't know exactly what they were, but he never didwhen he moved, transferred everything down to Corpus Christ why....for a little while whyhe persuaded 'em to let him move back to Carrizo Springs and he tried to run it from Carrizo Springs, the company, which is difficult to do and you know there was always some misunderstandings. But I have nonothing to say on that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: How about Jim Ray, how was he?

SELWYN DENSON: Jim Ray was an ideal person to work for.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Didreflect on a few people here we've talked aboutyou worked with Jay Banks, how did you find him?

SELWYN DENSON: Well I worked with Jay Banks while we were Rangers in Dallas.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I knowRigler said Jay Banks and Bob Goss was the two most dangerous men he'd ever known.were you involved in anyway when Banks and Klevenhagen and Jim Ray, you know, run old Gene Paul Norris down and killed him and?

SELWYN DENSON: No I wasn't in it.

ROBERT NIEMAN: And we've talked about Crowder, did you know Frank Hamer?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah I knew him.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Any reflections on him?

SELWYN DENSON: No, I just knew him is about all.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did he ever talk about the Bonnie and Clyde episode?

SELWYN DENSON: Never did talk to him about any of those cases.

ROBERT NIEMAN:what about Tom Hickman?

SELWYN DENSON: I knew Tom Hickman.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did any of those guys ever reflect about their earlier.....their careers?

SELWYN DENSON: Not to me.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did you ever hear Gonzauillas, did he ever talk any about his days in East Texas?

SELWYN DENSON: Not an awful lot. He wouldno he never.....he never did, not around me, he never did make any referrals to any of that.

ROBERT NIEMAN:what about Clint Peoples?

SELWYN DENSON: Clint was all right, hehe'd let you know about what he was doing.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Have a pretty good ego?

SELWYN DENSON: I wouldn't want to say that.

ROBERT NIEMAN:Charlie Miller?

SELWYN DENSON: Charlie Miller was, I guess, one of the old fuzz, cold type Rangers and I didn't know him too well, I knew him but I never did work with him or around him, we was always in different company's and that's about all I knew about Charlie.

ROBERT NIEMAN:Walter Russell?

SELWYN DENSON: I knew Walter Russell.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Know him very well?

SELWYN DENSON: I knew him very well, he was in my company.

ROBERT NIEMAN: How would you describe him as a Ranger?

SELWYN DENSON: I wouldn't want to make any statements on Walter Russell. He was there and he had a reputation down there of being rather strict on some things. But II wouldn't reflect on anything on Walter Russell.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What about Will Fritz, he wasn't a Ranger, he was?

SELWYN DENSON: He was a policeman in Dallas. I just knew him, vaguely knew him, I didn't ever work closely with him on anything.

ROBERT NIEMAN:what was.....you know, after you become a Sergeant, what was some of thethe changes that you had to become. I mean, instead of beingand Rigler the....you know, terms theprivate, the biggest changes you had as a Sergeant?

SELWYN DENSON: I can't really say, except that I

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well how did your duties change?

SELWYN DENSON: Beg your pardon?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Your duties, your responsibilities, how did they change from a Private to a Sergeant?

SELWYN DENSON: Well I had to look at it from two different directions there, what it ought to be and what I wanted it to be and what.....what their expects was. But most of the people that I worked with over there were taking care of the job and doing it and I had no problem with it.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well were you forced sometimes to give, you know, directions that you didn't, as a Private, that you wouldn't have wanted to receive but you had to give as a Sergeant?

SELWYN DENSON: I didn't understand what you said.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well, I mean, like you said, you look at things as a Private and then you look at them as a Sergeant, did the two conflict with you personally sometimes?

SELWYN DENSON: Well if everybody was doing their job there was really no sweat either way on that thing, you just.....it was only.....now I had some mighty good people working. My responsibility was to keep the Captain informed on what's going on in the company andand to assist the Private's sometimes on cases they was working on. But the Ranger force at the time I was in there wasyou give a man a job to do, he was supposed to do it, there was no other way around it. There was nobody looking over and telling him how to do it or what, if he didn't do it right, why you'd suffer consequences later on. But there was not any sweat there on that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Did you ever have to use your gun?

SELWYN DENSON: My gun? On occasion.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Any you'd want to talk about?

SELWYN DENSON: Well there's not anything particular to talk....a couple of cars I stopped one time and just shoot the tires out was the only thing.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I know from talking to you Rangers that the different parts of the state Rangers do different things. Like even today there's more major crime obviously in Dallas and Houston there is say in a Lubbock or Midland where you'd work more oil field and what not. What was the biggest difference you saw in working in East Texas and West Texas?

SELWYN DENSON: Seemed to be in West Texas seemed to be better cooperation between all law enforcement officers than there was in East Texassome parts of East Texas. Most of East

Texas was also good to work on. Of course the Rangers you know worked kind of.....they don't have authority to go into a county and take anything, they mostlythe work we did in there at the invitation of the Sheriffs. The only time that the Rangers ever went into a county to do something was when it got out of hand and the Governor or the Attorney General or something found reason to go in, that's all.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What would you attribute some of the causes to of the police not cooperating as well in East Texas as they did West Texas?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't really know.

ROBERT NIEMAN: How about the citizens, did they look at law differently?

SELWYN DENSON: I don't really know that. I never had any problem with any citizens.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well I meantlet me clarify that a little, did the citizens have more respect in one area for Rangers than they would in another. And I'm not just talk.....I'm just talking about the population as a whole.

SELWYN DENSON: Possibly.

ROBERT NIEMAN:you know in crimes, I'd think maybe we're of a different nature, where I'd think you probably may have, percentage wise, crimes that Rangers work today there's more homicides and what not worked in East Texas today than there is West Texas, where they you know.....

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah, well that's true.see I've been retired over 20 years now and there's all together a lot of difference in what's happening today and what was happening back before that during the time I worked.

ROBERT NIEMAN: What is some of the biggest changes you've seen in the Rangers today?

SELWYN DENSON: I think the attitude of the public has changed a lot. It seems thatin fact now you've got all these gangs, we didn't have any gangs back when I was working, there was maybe some little ones, but now it seems to be around these larger cities the gangs are almost out of hand, from what I read in the papers you know. So I don't really know whatwhat happened.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you think it would be more difficult to be a Ranger today?

SELWYN DENSON: It possibly is. You probably got a littleto be a little more careful and look over you shoulder a little more.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Diddo you rememberwhat would you consider one of the moregruesome crimes you had to work? That really just sticks out to you?

SELWYN DENSON: Well it would have to be a murder and I can't think of the one that would might the most

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well do you just want to talk about some of your, you know, your more.....some of these cases in general and kind of what you had to go through to solve 'em?

SELWYN DENSON: There was two or three but I just can't think of the details right now.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay. Glenn, you want to come over and add some things to us here that maybe I didn't know to ask, if you would.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Well I can't think of anything to ask, but I I can relate to Selwyn, he's been retired a whole lot longer than I have, I've just been retired 9 years and it's hard to remember details.

SELWYN DENSON: I've been 22 years.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Yeah, and then of course he was a Supervisor see and I guessyou worked very few.....you know, supervisors in the Rangers as you well know, they let the Rangers

as Selwyn said, they let them run the business and if they need any help they'll call the Supervisor and then all you're doing then is reading their reports, just about it. So you know, actually Selwyn hadn't been really down to earth, out doing field Ranger work since he made Sergeant in 1956 or whatever it was.

ROBERT NIEMAN: '50's.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Andthat's been a long time ago hasn't Selwyn?

SELWYN DENSON: Yeah it has been '5740 years.

GLENN ELLIOTT: But I tell you what I'd like to add on this tape Bobby, if you don't mind. Selwyn Denson was the type of man and Ranger that made young guys like myself feel like that they were wanted, you know. I've never been around him that he didn't....you know Iand I'll have to say this and like I've told you in my interview, and Bob Badgett was a good friend of mine, but Bob didn't have time for a rookie Ranger, he just.....he was.....he was too busy. But I've never seen Selwyn Denson and I've run into him a bunch of times, that he didn't take time to set and talk with me and offer me some encouragement and he and I had a lot of mutual friends. Andand it's guys like him, as far as I'm concerned, thatthat encourage younger officers to go on and do their job and....and...and you always remember him and your thoughts are always good, becausehe made you feel comfortable, made you feel like you was wanted. And thatand if somebody would say that about me I'd consider it a compliment.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well you know I've hadSergeants tell me, or Lieutenants and Captains tell me, thatyou know when you first come in, that some of the old hands can make or break Sergeant or Lieutenant now, or Captain. That if some of the old hand Rangers they're the type, you know, they could really make it just difficult for a new Lieutenant, or in your case, a new Sergeant. Did you.....you know.....

SELWYN DENSON: I never did experience anything like that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well Iwell I was using that.....trying to use it as a positiveon Glenn's case here, when David Burns who just retired, has told me that when he first made Sergeant there in Dallas, that.....you know, and he was pointing to Glenn specifically, he said, "You know Glenn did everything he could to make me a good Sergeant", and he said, "You know, if he hadn't of wanted to cooperate just as well, I mean I'd still been Sergeant, but it wouldn't of been near as easy".

SELWYN DENSON: Well I guess that's true, that would be if youif you can't get the confidence of the people your working with why you are going have problems.

ROBERT NIEMAN:your card says Admiral of the Texas Navy, where did this come from?

SELWYN DENSON: That's a political deal, it's a friend of mine sent that in.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well what have you been doing since you retired?

SELWYN DENSON: Well when I first retired I came to Hill Top lakes and took the job of Chief of Security here. And I worked at that I guess a couple of years and then I took the job as Bailiff in the District Court over at Centerville, which I liked a little better, it didn't pay quite as much, but there wasn't as much coming out of my check for social security as there was at the other one either. So I really had

ROBERT NIEMAN: Yeah, we'll put that in front of the camera and let thatlet me see if I can get this toGlenn can you hold that back there for me just a little bit and we'll read that off.

GLENN ELLIOTT: I'll tell you something else too thatis that about where you want it?

ROBERT NIEMAN:down just a little, right there. It says, 'The State of Texas, to all whom these presence shall come greetings. Know ye that Selwyn H. Denson is hereby commissioned

Admiral in the Texas Navy. With all rights and privileges pertaining thereto and with the duty of assisting in the preservation of the history, boundaries, water resources and civil defenses of the state. In testimony whereof, I have here unto signed my name and cause the seal of the State to be affixed at the city of Austin this the day of September 20 A.D., 1989, Bill Clements, Governor.

GLENN ELLIOTT: I tell you something else I'd like to add.

SELWYN DENSON: A lot of people didn't know that we had a navy in Texas.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I didn't until I got your card.

SELWYN DENSON: Well there is a Texas navy, that.....what's the name of that ship down there?

ROBERT NIEMAN: USS Texas.

GLENN ELLIOTT: There's something else I'd like to add and I don't think Selwyn would mind, and he wouldn't say anything about it. But I've had a bunch of folks since I've been a Ranger, including Jim Ray who was Chief of Criminal Law Enforcement, say that Selwyn Denson should of been a Captain. And he should of been, there's no question about it. We had....we....and I don'tI don't you mind me discussing it, we had a guy that came in the department as a....as a.....chair.....eventually Chairman of the Commission, his name was Clifford Cassidy. And Clifford Cassidy did a lot during this time, I thought, to tear down the Ranger service, especially the older hands. And in my opinion, and I don't know this is true, he was responsible for Selwyn.....he....he had started kind of trying to run the department is what he was doing, in my opinion, and did a bad job of it as far as the Rangers were concerned. And Selwyn Denson should of been Captain or Chief of Law Enforcement or whatever the highest

rank he wanted to go, that's how far he should of gone and he might not of even wanted to have been Captain, I don't know, cause I didn't choose to promote. But he should of been anyway.

SELWYN DENSON: Well I appreciate your thoughts on that.

GLENN ELLIOTT: They're pretty close to true, wasn't it, part of it?

SELWYN DENSON: All right. But I don't know, my.....my idea of the Ranger force is, it should be run like it was, not by somebody sitting in an office trying to do the work out in the field, it can't be done.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Especially somebody that didn't never have any experience.

SELWYN DENSON: Well yeah, I think so. I think he should be kept apprised of what's going on, that's what his job is and if there's any major flaws anywhere take some action to correct them. But as long as the mules pulling the right way well let 'em go is the way I always.....opinion I always had.

ROBERT NIEMAN: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

SELWYN DENSON: That's right.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well what's your thoughts looking back on having been a Texas Ranger? I mean, there's a lot that goes with that.

SELWYN DENSON: Well....

ROBERT NIEMAN: I sometimes think y'all don't really realize how much goes with it. And I want to give a good example, the other night, Ronny Griffith the man who replaced Glenn as Ranger up in Longview, invited me to go over to Marshall with him to the Harrison County Police and Fireman's Banquet. And when it was over this gentleman stood up and said, "I'm 72 years old and all my life I've wanted to shake the hand of a Texas Ranger". You know, I mean, I sometimes don't think that y'all will admit what being a Texas Ranger is or was, or is.

SELWYN DENSON: Well if he wanted to shake hands, some do and some don't. But I've always had a high regard for police officers.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well, you've got police officers and then you've got Texas Rangers.

SELWYN DENSON: Well, there's not.....

ROBERT NIEMAN: Now Glenn here, and I know

GLENN ELLIOTT: We just count as policemen is all we wanted wasn't it Selwyn?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Glenn here is every bit as proud of his Highway Patrol days as he was his Ranger days.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Well Selwyn is too, I promise you that.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Yeah, but there's still something about being a Ranger that sets you apart.

SELWYN DENSON: Well I enjoyed it a whole lot and I I wouldn't give anything for it, take anything for it I mean.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I know today in the DPS, I don't know if it was true in y'all time, but in today's time I know there's jealousy among some of the other departments in the DPS towards the Rangers. Did you find any of that?

SELWYN DENSON: Well I guess there's always been a little bit of jealousy there, but I don't know what can be done about it or whether it's just as long as you do your best. I've always had some awful good friends that was in the Highway Patrol while I was in the Rangers.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well I don't know as I was speaking of the Highway Patrol as much as I was narcotics and the intelligence divisions.

SELWYN DENSON: Well yeah I understand what you mean there, there's a littlethere's always been a little conflict somewhere there about what the duties were. It might could of been clarified way back and it would of kept some of it from happening.

GLENN ELLIOTT: You know this is something, and I know Selwyn is going to agree with this, even if there was a little bit of jealousy andand of course you.....in law enforcement there's a lot of jealousy anyway.

SELWYN DENSON: Always.

GLENN ELLIOTT: Always through law enforcement, there's just a right smart of jealousy because everybody wants to solve the crime and boy that makes itmore crimes are probably solved that away, cause so many want to do it. But even in the DPS you're going to see, and you listen to this, they might resent the Rangers a little bit and they may talk about it a little bit, but when they retire everyone of them is so proud to get to be a special Texas Ranger that they forget all about that foolishness, don't they Selwyn? They'll wear that special Texas Ranger badge and try to convince everybody in the state that they were once a Ranger themselves, although they were not, but they're now carrying a special Ranger badge. That's enough out of me.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well Mrs. Denson, what was it like to be a Texas Ranger's wife? Fears and pride?

LOIS DENSON: A little bit of both.at timesworried and fearful, but above that, pride I think in what he was doing. I'm just real proud he was a Texas Ranger.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well Selwyn, anything you want to add there that I haven't asked? I have done a very poor job on this.

SELWYN DENSON: I don't think of anything. I think you done a pretty good job.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well, I wished I'd of known more.

SELWYN DENSON: I wish I could remember more. My minds about half gone.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Well I hope mine..... if I make it as long as you do.....have, I hope mine's half as clear as yours. So, Glenn, anything else you want to add?

GLENN ELLIOTT: No, that's it for me.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Mrs. Denson?

LOIS DENSON: Nowell you can't hear me on that can you?

ROBERT NIEMAN: Yeah, yeah we can, we can hear you fine. So go ahead and ask.

GLENN ELLIOTT: She's probably got some comments she wants to make after you turn it off.

LOIS DENSON: No, about the special Texas Ranger, I was thinking about Bob our son-in-law. He was somewhere one time and they introduced him as Texas Ranger Bob Connell and thenin a minute or two they introduced somebody else that was a special Texas Ranger. Well that special Texas Ranger got every bit of the attention after that, they didn't pay any attention to Bob.

ROBERT NIEMAN: They thought he was special huh? Well I tell you, something I think about here, I'm trying to put together a little booklet, called Texas Ranger Humor. Funny stories that peoplethat you would want your grand kids to look at and read and laugh about. Do you

SELWYN DENSON: I see what you're talking about.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Do you....do you have any such stories that you remember off hand?

SELWYN DENSON: Off hand I can't remember. There's been some.

GLENN ELLIOTT: He's got a bunch of 'em if he could remember.

ROBERT NIEMAN: I know one I'm using like on John Wood, him and the.....out around Midland and the skunk, when he lifted up behind a bush and he had a skunk looking at him square face to face and the skunk sprayed him. Stories like that, that you know, that you know you could read to kids.

SELWYN DENSON: Well.....right off hand I can't think of anything.

ROBERT NIEMAN: Okay. Well I really don't have anything else to ask if no one else does. I thank you.