

Interview with  
**LARRY GILBREATH**  
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Terry County Municipal Court Building  
Brownfield, Texas  
Wednesday—November 5, 2008

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray  
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Larry Gilbreath, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



## Introduction

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**LARRY GILBREATH**  
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED

**NANCY RAY:** My name is Nancy Ray. I am visiting with Larry Gilbreath of Brownfield, Texas. Today is Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, day after election. So we want to say congratulations to the newly-elected sheriff of Terry County.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Thank you.

**NANCY RAY:** You're welcome (laughter). Hopefully you'll be able to stick with it and finish.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yes, that still don't sound just right.

**NANCY RAY:** The purpose of this interview is to discuss discuss Ranger Gilbreath's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Gilbreath, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yes ma'am, you do.

**NANCY RAY:** And, do you understand that this video will belong to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yes ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** And Ranger Gilbreath, do I have your permission to present copies of this video to various historical organizations such as museums, libraries, schools and once transcribed to place this document on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum's website?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yes ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** Let's start then by finding out what your full name and where were you born and when?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well I'm Larry Dennis Gilbreath. I was born in Lamb County, just north of here, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1948. But I grew up basically in Hockley County, also the first county north of here. My parents farmed out east of Levelland and uh I grew up working on the farm for my dad. And we also ran the little country store out there in the community of Opdike.

Which I could say now at the original townsite, there's an Opdike West over there now that's a package store. So Opdike's original town site is about dried up. Yeah, we uh, if I wasn't chopping cotton or changing pipe, changing water, I was usually in the store working. So I...

**NANCY RAY:** What were your parents' names?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** K. E. and Essie

**NANCY RAY:** ESSIE?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yes ma'am. Gilbreath. And yeah uh they lived there. In fact, we... my mom... my dad died in '71 and mother. I'm sorry, Daddy died in '77 and Mother in '91. And we sold their place after she died. You know I basically, we moved to Hockley County when I was six months old and lived right out there about a mile and a half, you know all of my years of growing up are within a mile and a half of the farm.

**NANCY RAY:** Well traveled.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, I was (laughter).

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell us, did you have brothers and sisters?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Four older brothers and one younger sister. Uh I had two older brothers that were Highway Patrolmen. They went into DPS right ahead of me. One, Donnie, went in recruit school in '68 and then Kennard, or most people just called him Ken, entered recruit school in oh I guess February of '69. Well let me back up. I was in May... Kennard started in March of '69 and I started in... anyway, he was two months ahead of me. And uh so I turned 21 in... he started March, I started in May because I turned 21 and went to recruit school. I'd never been very far east of Lubbock I guess (laughter) when I left for Austin.

**NANCY RAY:** What your other brothers' names and you sister's name?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well uh Ken's the oldest and then there was Bobby. And Bobby worked until he retired from Guiberson Oil Tools there in Odessa a few years ago. And Donnie was the other Highway Patrolman. Donnie, he's five years older than I am. And then Joe was between Donnie and I. Joe retired from the Farmers Home Administration a few years ago. And then I have a younger sister, Rita.

**NANCY RAY:** What was her name?

**RICHARD JOHNSON:** Rita, and uh she is a teacher in Pecos, Texas. She's getting ready to retire this next year. I think she's got close to forty years teaching I think. And she's talking about retiring at the end of this school year in June. And uh...

**NANCY RAY:** Well, when you were in school, did you have... is there somebody who had a big influence on your life or a special friend that you can remember?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** In recruit school? Or when I was growing up?

**NANCY RAY:** No, when you were growing up.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh well you know, uh not I guess... my Dad (*emotional moment*). You know we all grew up working on the farm and...

**NANCY RAY:** A special man, wasn't he?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** (*emotional moment*)

**NANCY RAY:** Well, we'll come back to that.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, he just, you know he taught us to work (*emotional moment*). I'm sorry.

**NANCY RAY:** That is just fine. I think your dad would be proud that he had such an impact on you. We'll come back to that. What about any subjects? Did you like anything in school (laughter)...

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Football. Oh, I uh I really... I wasn't very studious.

**NANCY RAY:** You're not the first one.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well I did enough to get by and that was about it. No I enjoyed the social part of it I guess, the social side of going to school. But uh, and... I never aspired to do anything very great in high school.

**NANCY RAY:** Where did you meet your wife?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, uh I spent about six years with DPS. I graduated in uh, in 1969. Excuse me, I graduated and spent my years as a young Highway Patrolman in Aspermont and Haskell. And in lots of ways, I kind of decided that I needed to something else besides being a Highway Patrolman and anyway I worked in the private sector for about a year and a half. And uh didn't really... always missed the Highway Patrol.

**NANCY RAY:** What were you doing in the private sector (laughter)? Or do you want to talk about it?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I uh got crossways with my... my sergeant and I got crossways and I quit you know. And I knew when I quit that it was a mistake. But I was just a little too hard headed to admit it I guess. But I went to work as a roustabout in the oilfield, worked about three or four months. And then a guy offered me a job as a produce manager in a grocery store there and I told him, man, I don't know anything about produce. He said that's all right, we'll teach you. And uh so I worked for him about a year and then uh the parts manager at the Ford house called me one night. He was needing a uh, an assistant in the Parts Department there and offered me a job so I decided I'd tried that. And I worked him for about a year or a little... like I say, was eighteen months there all together. But uh... and things just wasn't going... I wound up moving to Post and got a job as a deputy sheriff in Post. And uh I met my wife in Post, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** And her name?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Is Gail. And uh while I was in Post, I went to work to reinstate with the Highway Patrol. I worked there six months and uh Major C. W. Bell was... he was the Regional Commander there in Lubbock. And uh I had some personal business I needed to get straightened out and Major Bell told me, he said bring your application in and we'll see what we can do with it. And anyway, he helped me reinstate. And anyway, after of course Gail and I started dating there at Post, and then she lived in Lubbock. She was from Lubbock... still had friends down there and run around down there. Anyway, I went to, reinstated and wound up opening a new station, Highway Patrol station in Crowell, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** Before we go to that, let's talk about when did you marry? (laughter) You're running off and leaving me.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, that's after I moved to Crowell, Gail and I got married. And uh I had to go to Vernon for about six months while we were getting things ready to open that station over there. And then I moved to Crowell February 1<sup>st</sup> of '78. And then Gail and I married on April 17<sup>th</sup>. And uh...

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what about kids?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, we both had previously been married and uh I had a daughter from my first marriage and she had a daughter from her first marriage. They were two months apart.

**NANCY RAY:** That made life interesting.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** It did. And I eventually adopted her daughter, Trinette.

**NANCY RAY:** How do you spell Trinette?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Just like it sounds.

**NANCY RAY:** TRINETTE?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** TRINETTE. But anyway, Trinette's kind of short and red headed. And my daughter was a little taller and dark headed.

**NANCY RAY:** And what's her name?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** She's Brenda. And uh I used tell people they were my twins (laughter).

**NANCY RAY:** You had some fun out of that.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, they'd look at me a little funny. But then, and then after Gail and I married, we had two children. Clint was born in uh '78 and then Danessa in 1980 while we was there in Crowell. And so... But uh, yeah they were all here last night.

**NANCY RAY:** Good, that was a lively place.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** Well let's go back to your uh Patrol school, let's talk about that. Tell me again, what year did you go in?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** '69. I was in May of 1969. I started and graduated in August of '69. We started uh 120 people and graduated 36.

**NANCY RAY:** You had a big reduction.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, we uh... we had a big... well I don't even remember now. We had uh about 20 people quit the first week we started. I'll tell you a funny story about that. Of course like I say, my brother was in the school right ahead of me. I was 20, he was 32. And uh and we... so you know I kind of knew what I was getting into with Donnie had been through it and Kennard had been through. And they was telling me how hard it was and talked about all the PT and this and that. And I just made fun of them... Said they was just old men and too soft to do

that. And which was a mistake I found out (laughter). But yeah, we uh, we had about twenty people quit. That first night we were there, what I was gonna tell you. The first night we were there, we checked in on Tuesday afternoon and uh of course this other school had been there about two months. And recruit school at that time was sixteen weeks, four months. And uh they were halfway through. And so the new school came in like I say, you know I knew really kinda what to expect. In fact, Donnie's sergeant was one of the counselors in my school. And uh and then... but anyway, they had, that evening we were all standing around there you know and the new guys was pumping the old guys about what to expect you know. And of course they were... lots of lies flowing... you know they were really pumping us up. And I just sat there listening you know and kind of snickering under my breath. And Kennard was in, he was standing over there listening to all this. And uh the (*side conversation*)... but anyway, we were all standing there and there was this guy in their school that had got, had got his feet messed up and he was on crutches. He come by as we were talking about boxing. You know everybody was worried about the boxing. We were talking about that and this guy come by on those crutches and somebody in my group said man, what happened to him? Well, he got hurt boxing. Really? Well I guess he didn't have to box anymore then. Oh man, they put him in that ring and propped him up on them crutches and told him to get after it you know. Well, this guy was standing there and didn't say a word. And the stairway to the dorm, we was on the uh third floor of this little old dormitory deal, just about the second or third floor above the classrooms and cafeteria there in the old part of the academy. But anyway, this guy didn't say a word. He just turned around, went up the stairway, and nobody thought anything about it. But it wasn't just a few minutes he came down that stairway with his bags and right out the door he went. So that's kind of where it started you know. We had about twenty quit by that Friday afternoon and they turned them loose and we

went down about twenty people. It was, in four weeks, we started boxing in four weeks and we were down to about forty people by the time we started boxing. And then we boxed two weeks and we were at thirty-six. And that's what we finished with after the boxing.

**NANCY RAY:** So it was the PT that mainly got rid of a lot of them?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, mostly. Uh and you know classroom was, you had to work at the classroom but the PT, I don't know... The PT field at that time was they said was about 330 yards around it. And uh the first day we went outside was Friday afternoon. And uh in May in Austin it's pretty warm. We went out Friday afternoon to work out and uh I don't remember now but you know the two PT instructors and they were... while we were doing stuff, they were just walking around you know. And they'd find somebody that was cheating a little or you now they'd jus accuse somebody of it I think (laughter). But we'd have to run a lap around that PT field and come back and start over you know doing pushups or whatever we were doing. And I really don't remember. I know I wanted to quit so bad I couldn't stand it. But I knew I'd ragged on two brothers so hard I couldn't. But anyway, and Kennard was waiting on me. He was gonna ride home with me that evening. He had a carpool he went with and of course I had come in that week. But he was gonna wait and ride home, back to Levelland, with me. And uh I could see him standing over there, he and another guy up there on one of the outside fire escape landings. I could see him up there watching us. And I said man, there ain't no way. But they, but the reason... he told me later t reason they were up there, they had been standing out in front of the gym by the parking lot waiting for us to quit. And they said there were so many... we ran these eighteen laps and sixteen quit or sixteen laps and eighteen quit. But there were so many that were coming out and they couldn't figure out why I wasn't coming out. They thought it was through because so many people were leaving. And so they went around to the door, went through the

doors and come out there to see what we were doing. But they, man... you know I thought I was a pretty tough old boy but... it was...

**NANCY RAY:** Well, they were trying to break... find out who was...

**LARRY GILBREATH:** No, I think, I don't know if that was the excuse or they were just mad about something. But you know it was one of those things where we had a, we had two or three, you know that was Vietnam... that was during the Vietnam era and we had two or three folks who had served time in Vietnam in the Marine Corps. Matter of fact, we had one man that, that was a drill instructor. He had spent ten years in the Marine Corps. Been to Vietnam twice, he was black, he was a big old boy. Just ... I mean shoulders about three foot wide and waist about a foot wide you know. I mean he was just a picture of... His back was just full of shrapnel scars from Vietnam. And he was the only Marine that finished that school. And uh I asked him down towards the end of it, you know about it and if it compared to the Marine Corps boot camp. And he physically it was very comparable to their boot camp. But it just didn't have the mental end of it though you know. They just didn't work on you mentally the way the service did. But yeah, they was... in fact there was one guy you know I thought he was kind of hurt. And one morning we was all dragging you know after PT. We headed towards the cafeteria you know and this guy was kind of crippled, he had turned an ankle or something you know. And the PT instructor asked him you know, is this as tough as the Marine Corps? He said ain't nothing as tough as the Marine Corps. You know that was a mistake because he gone by the end of the week. That guy got on him and got to riding him and that old boy quit. He... But I don't know... I don't think... I think he just wanted to see how... You know it you know the school helped. I mean that's just the way it was. And you know Donnie and Kennard both you know, under different PT instructors, or well Donnie was. But their's was just as tough as ours. And uh we always said the

next school, they uh... in fact our counselors told us there before we graduated, the next school they didn't do near what we did. One of the sergeants told us one night that the colonel called the PT instructor to the office. Told him if he run off that many again he was gone.

**NANCY RAY:** That's a high percentage.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh yeah. I said I never heard of that many leaving. But and so I don't know what he was mad about... He didn't lighten up until the new school came in. About the time we were about halfway through, well another school came in. And he kind of lightened up on us. But then he was mad because that first couple of weeks was harder on us than it was to begin with because he couldn't persecute the new ones (laughter), he took it out on us. But, you know it wasn't anything... If it had been any tougher I don't know if I would have stayed (laughter).

**NANCY RAY:** But you did.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** But I did.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what did you take away from that school that helped you the most in your career?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, two or three things. Pride.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh great, that's good.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** You know, pride in self and pride in the Department. And, I was tested physically, challenged I guess. Because I found out I could do things I didn't think I could do.

**NANCY RAY:** Boosted your self confidence too.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, tremendously. And uh you know it, with... and I was challenged in the classroom too but not like the physical end of it. You know I just... of course it was a lot different back then. A lot different. I... Clint...

**NANCY RAY:** That's your son?

**RICHARD JOHNSON:** My son, Clint is a Highway Patrolman. And uh I was telling you a while ago about changing the signs (*side conversation about changing election signs*). We were taking care of that. The Department has changed so much and I, it's just not all for the good.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what are some of the changes that are going on? Can you put your finger on anything?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Discipline, they don't have the discipline. The last ten or fifteen years, I see the discipline... You know when I was a Highway Patrolman, a sergeant could fire you and you was fired. And a sergeant doesn't have that authority anymore. And that's not good, you know. They put the sergeant in the first line supervisor's position where uh they really weakened his authority in my opinion. And uh as a result of that, I see uh lots of things going on in the Department now that would not have gone on twenty years ago. And uh I still... I'm still proud of DPS (*emotional moment*).

**NANCY RAY:** That's part of your history.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** I'm proud to have been a part of it. And uh I'm, and I'm proud that my son is there.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you encourage him to go into law enforcement or was that a natural progression?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh well, I just wanted him to get an education. Yeah... no, Clint... you know, of course Kennard quit the DPS, oh in about '70... oh not long after I did. He quit

about '76 I guess. And uh he eventually came back into law enforcement but uh he was too old to reinstate to the Highway Patrol even if he'd wanted to. You know Donnie retired. He was a License and Weight trooper. Uh he retired I guess about a year ahead of me in about '02. You know Clint, that's about all he knew.

**NANCY RAY:** It's probably in his genes (laughter) isn't it.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, pretty much. But you know he always... he never talked about much of anything but law enforcement when he was growing up. You know the various different agencies. And...

**NANCY RAY:** Let me ask you this. When you were growing up, did you ever plan to be a Texas Ranger?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well you know I guess that any young kid in Texas, you know I think that's part of any youngster's dreams. But in reality, no, I never dreamed I'd ever, that I could ever measure up. But uh you know the Lord blessed me and I uh... well you know Bill Wilson was the senior captain when I went... when I promoted. But when I was in recruit school, Bill Wilson was a Ranger sergeant there in Austin. Back then they were sergeants instead of lieutenants. But and uh... he, in fact he received word right before he... he came over to our recruit school and helped do our class, talking about the *unknown word* and stuff. And he found out right before that class started that he had made captain. But and as he talked to our class you know, I thought that would really be something. And I never really dreamed that I could make that step. And uh when I went to the interview board, Bill Wilson was senior captain and he chaired that board. I guess I went to the last board that he chaired... as a matter of fact that he sat on until he retired. Well he was diagnosed with cancer not long after that and he retired there before too long. But he...

**NANCY RAY:** So he had an influence on your life?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well yeah, but you know to tell you truth I never would have even taken the test if it hadn't been for Leo Hickman.

**NANCY RAY:** Well we're gonna come to Leo Hickman in a little while then. OK, you graduated from your school, recruit school. And what was your first duty station as a patrolman? You did go to the Highway Patrol?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yes ma'am. We uh, when we graduated like I said, we graduated 36 people August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1969. And there was one Highway Patrol vacancy in the state at that time. One man out of our class was commissioned coming out of school. And everybody else was sent to the regional and district's regional offices around the state to work in khakis. And I had spent about a month in Lubbock I guess. The month of September I spent in Lubbock working in khakis. I think there was four others, or three others, there's four of us I think. And uh by the first day of October, I had, I was assigned to Aspermont was my station but I had to go to Haskell for my six-month's probation. And uh I went to Haskell.

**NANCY RAY:** Who was your partner?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well uh I started out working with James Davis. And then uh finished up my probation working with Skip Lane before I went... and like I say, I went to Aspermont and Bobby Stone was my partner there in Aspermont. And uh stayed there two and a half years and uh enjoyed it. You know had a good time.

**NANCY RAY:** What did you learn you know during your probation time? How did they education you in the real way (laughter)?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I guess the, one of the biggest things you know is driving. I'd never had anything that rode fast. It, but you know pursuit driving was probably my biggest

challenge as a young Highway Patrolman. Because the first time the sergeant rode with James and I, after I think about the first stop I made, well he told us to take him back to the courthouse and he got out (laughter).

**NANCY RAY:** Well how come? Was it about that ride?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, it was just one of those things that I was a little nervous. You know I made him a little nervous. But that's the way it set with James, you never... I never got anything out of him whether it did or not. But no, I you know... that was probably my biggest challenge. I'd been used to, like I say, I grew up in a little old country store. I knew how to talk to people and I knew how to work and uh, but you know there's not much manual labor to that job. That was the discipline too I guess. But no, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed my time in Aspermont. And went back to Haskell, I transferred back to Haskell for eight years. And I...

**NANCY RAY:** Now what did you say your partner's name was there in Haskell?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well James Davis was the first one I had and that's who I worked with when I moved back over there. And Skip Lane was the Highway Patrol and I worked with him the last month of my probation.

**NANCY RAY:** So what kind of problems did ya'll have to deal with?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh I don't know, just the usual stuff. We wrote a lot of speeding tickets and arrested a lot of DWIs you know.

**NANCY RAY:** Are there any incidents that stand out in your mind that you want to talk about?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, I don't know if I want to talk about them or not (laughter). It's uh... well Frank Jersey was my sergeant there and uh Frank, Sarge, we called him. He was... I guess he was a pretty big influence. He was uh, he... first time when I went to Haskell and got my assignment, they told me when to be there. And I walked up there to the third floor of the

Haskell County Courthouse, and uh found the office up there. And I walked up to the door and Sarge's desk was on one side of the room facing the wall. There was three Highway Patrol there. Gene Barrett was there, he came out of the school right ahead of me and he had been there, he came out in khakis also. And he was a month ahead of me, he got a commission the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and went to, he was gonna open up a new station in Throckmorton but he was breaking in there in Haskell. There's two desks on the other side of the room facing each other. And of course the three, James, Skip and Jimmy were working off those two desks. And I got a drawer out of James' desk. But I walked up there to the door you know and I could hear Sarge talking as I come down the hall. I didn't know what was going on but he was chewing them, something about paperwork you know. It was Monday morning and they were all in there trying to do paperwork. And he was, oh he had his back to the door and kind of looked over his shoulder and he was chewing on them about something. And uh anyway, he noticed them looking at me so he turned around to see who was standing in the doorway. But you know he was a pretty gruff old man but he was... he was a hell of a Highway Patrolman. And uh, he uh like I say, later on he and I got cross ways and I quit over it. And then I later went back and we ironed that out and without his blessing, I would never have got back in the Highway Patrol.

**NANCY RAY:** But you made it. Let's go back to this pursuit driving. I'm still interested in that (laughter).

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, something I was gonna tell you. You were talking about something happened. I guess the first, I hadn't been there very long but we always went to the ballgames. You know Friday night we were... we were at the ballgames, football. And one night after Haskell had played ball there in town and I don't remember who they were playing but they had a good team that year. And uh Bobby had come over from Aspermont, he was at the game.

James and I were at the game and Skip and Jimmy were all at the game. After it was over with, well we uh you know just sort of split up and went... Bobby was working and on his way back towards Aspermont, he got in a high speed pursuit. And uh the car he came... was going east and uh we were there close to town. I don't know, Skip and Jimmy weren't too far. But anyway, as it happened, he chased this car through Haskell with lots of traffic. You know after that ballgame there was lots of kids... and I don't know, just the Lord's hands is the only way we got through there without killing somebody. But Bobby's responded and then we were to aid him. Skip and Jimmy got in the chase and some sheriff's deputies. You know I mean it was one of them deals. We wound up... Sarge was riding with James and I. I'd probably been working a month, less than a month. And Sarge was in the back seat and James was driving, I was in the right front. You know I didn't know what was going on. You know, I was doing what I was told to do. But anyway, we uh, we wound up... Sarge from the back seat got the shotgun and he leaned out the window from the back seat and shot into the back of their car. And as I recall, I think Skip and Jimmy, they were kind of behind the deal and they wound up shooting the tires out. They, we went out... and made a big turn and come back towards town. The bar ditches were muddy, they weren't boggy but they were muddy. This car pulled off the road you know and that was pretty bad you know he slid around. Anyway, we started back passing them and Sarge said we ain't letting them get back, going back through town. That's when he got the shotgun and... But anyway, Skip wound up shooting a ten gauge and shot the tires out of that car. When they come back toward them but they set up on side of the rode as they came by... And when that car came to a stop... of course we could see you know there was four people in there. And the sheriff was there and you know it was kind of a Chinese fire drill type deal like that (laughter)... but anyway, I didn't know what to do. Everybody started around that car and James, James is on the

driver's side... James is in the front, Sarge is behind him and the sheriff is behind him. James reaches in there and he pulls that driver out and he swats him pretty good and he throws him back there. Sarge swats him pretty good and the sheriff, he does the same thing and puts him on the ground. I said well I guess... throw him on the ground then the deputies got the guy back. But anyway, I was just doing what everybody else was doing you know. It wasn't just... they were some minors that were drinking and they wouldn't stop, they didn't want to get tickets. They wound up going to jail over that. But anyway, we had... you know it's uh things like that you know that... it was a different time you know... a kindler gentler world I guess. But yeah, we did some things.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you ever have a crash?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** My partner did. Bobby, he uh, man he uh... that is one reason he was in Aspermont I think. Anyway, Bobby tore up two or three. He crashed two or three. Uh... one or two, I don't know. I'll say this, there were a few times I thought I was going to but I don't know how I didn't a few times but I was pretty lucky all the time I was on the Highway Patrol. I had my patrol car parked in front of my house one day and a neighbor across the street backed out and *smack* (laughter). I wasn't even in it. Yeah, but luckily, or the grace of God, I never, never did.

**NANCY RAY:** Well narcotics a big issue at that time?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, you know marijuana was still a felony. Any amount of marijuana. That's about the time I guess when they started decriminalizing narcotics. And really, uh it was... it was around. It wasn't as prevalent as what you see now. And uh, that's... you'd find somebody with small amounts of marijuana once in a while or you know, or something but it wasn't... alcohol was the big thing in that time period in that area.

**NANCY RAY:** Were you ever afraid to walk up to a car that you stopped?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I never had that much sense I guess. I don't know... you know... the biggest part of my career... the only time I really worked with a partner was when I was there in Aspermont. I moved back to Haskell and we worked one-man units over there... what we called sub-station schedule where we worked weekend nights and you know once in a while I guess things might have happened that I was little bit leery, I don't know.. Like I say, I don't know if I ever had enough sense. I just... when you're young, you don't stop to think about stuff like that I guess. I uh, I'll tell you a little funny thing about that. Rule, a small community there just west of Haskell about ten miles, and uh like I say, I worked a one-man unit while I was there when I went back to Haskell. Well one Sunday afternoon it was in the summer, hot summer time. Rule is a small community. In fact if you ever heard of Art Briles, he's the coach at Baylor now, head coach there at Baylor. But Art was in high school over there, he graduated from Rule. But about the time, at that time period... but anyway, Rule is a little old small community over there. And right out on the north side of Rule they had a little old black café. A lady by the name of, they called her Cat. Cat was probably about five foot tall and nearly that wide. And uh you know they always had barbecue and she did a little bootlegging out of there I'm sure. But they had a constable in Rule, Sonny Pitcock was the constable over there and he'd generally took care of anything in Rule. I was working one Sunday afternoon and uh, they called, City Hall... the night watchman called me from City Hall and you know like I say, it was the middle of the afternoon. And he says we got a call from Cat over there at her café there in Rule. Said she's having problems with this guy and wants somebody over there. Said I can't find the sheriff or the deputy, you know I can't find anybody and would you go over there and Sonny's out of town, would you go over there. You know James was off and I was the only one he could find. So I took off over there. And uh Rule, the hangout was, you had the east and west highway and north south highway with a four-way stop where they intersected there in downtown... metropolitan Rule. And when I went through Rule, Rule had one of the Class A state football championship that previous year I believe. Anyway, when I went through Rule, well Sonny had a boy that played on that team. And uh these kids all kind of hung out... there was a Texaco station at that

intersection and that's where they sort of hung out at night when that station was closed. Anyway, when I made the turn there, I seen Nolan, Sonny's boy and two more high school boys or I guess they had probably graduated, young boys filling up that pickup, big kids. Anyway, I didn't, I really didn't think anything about it. And pulled up out there at Cat's place and there were cars everywhere, literally everywhere. And I thought Lord have mercy this...(laughter) no telling what we're gonna find here. Anyway, I got out of the car and looked around and those three boys pulled in the parking lot, just pulled off the highway you know and they was just sitting there you know. I knew them, you know what they were doing. Nolan had probably taken that call from the City Hall from the night watchman over there at Haskell and he knew somebody would be coming. So when I showed up over there, Sonny used to ride... and I knew them boys. Anyway, they pulled up out there in case I had trouble with anybody, they'd be there to help me. But anyway, and uh I carried a little sawed-off pool queue about eighteen inches long from the big end of a queue in that car and I guess that's the only time I ever got it out. But I pulled that thing out and this little old building, it wasn't probably about as big as half of this room we're sitting in here. And uh when I opened that screen door on it, the inside door was open. And when I went through that screen door and pulled that screen door back, I beat on the door frame with that pool queue you know pretty loud. Of course everybody heard me coming in and Cat was over there behind the counter. I said Cat, you having problems out here? I knew at first glance everybody in there was drunk, it was just a matter of how drunk (laughter). And she said yes suh, that Wally Cox is raising hell and I want him out of here. Well Wally Cox was a regular in our Haskell County jail and he was uh he was generally drunk on Wednesdays... if you saw him he was generally going to jail. And uh but I looked around and Wally wasn't the only drunk. I said well you know, which one... I could carry five I think was about the max. I could put three in the back and two in the front and those two were gonna sit in each other's lap nearly because I had radar and radio equipment in the middle there. I said OK, you, you, you, you, you... and I talked to them. Nobody said anything but old Wally and I knew... But anyway, they seen them boys sitting out whenever I come into that café you know. And I didn't even... back then we didn't even handcuff them so I put all five them... or maybe I put four in the back seat, I don't know how I loaded

them in there. They were packed in there pretty tight. And I told them you're under arrest for being drunk and you're going to jail. And we went out there and loaded up and I put seat belts on them, had to put their seat belts on. And when we pulled up to the four-way stop there going back to Haskell where I'd seen those boys, Wally said I ain't going, I'm getting out here. And I reached over there and he opened the door, I reached over and pulled that door back shut. And I said you ain't getting out of here until I say you are. And I jerked that door back shut and I just took off. You know, we's running a pretty good clip on the way to Haskell and I thought, well when we get out at the jail we're gonna see who's the toughest you know. When I got out at the jail, them boys pulled in right behind me and we went in there and booked them there. They were mouthing... We didn't have anything but mouthing but I come out and those boys were still sitting there. They said well, I said I didn't know if you were gonna need any help or not we just come... (laughter). But living in small communities, you know you don't have that in bigger towns. And so uh you know... I had enjoyed my time there. I had a good time.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you do all your service with the Highway Patrol there at Haskell?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Whenever I quit, like I say Sarge and I got cross ways, and I thought... I knew he was right but I was too hard headed to admit it. And uh I quit in June '75 and I reinstated in August of '77 and I went to Vernon for six months and then went to Crowell and stayed for over five years. Like I say, I promoted into the Rangers from Crowell.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what about those two locations? Anything stand out?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, just good times (laughter).

**NANCY RAY:** That brings up a question. I have heard patrolmen say we made our own fun.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, you know, you got to enjoy what you do.

**NANCY RAY:** What did you do?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I don't know. You just pull pranks on each other and everything. You know, I was... oh out of high school and me and my running buddy, we got to doing a little snake hunting, rattlesnake hunting. So you know I, when I was there... I guess I was in Crowell. But I worked Crowell, it is a small place, there was about 1800 people in the county when I was there and they were

building a dam down there on the Pease River. So we had a lot of construction people in there and in the area at that time. But I worked Vernon and Quanah as much as I worked Crowell. Knew everybody but anyway, I don't know, I was out there one night and I had killed a rattlesnake, a pretty good sized snake. And cut his head off you know and was taking home to skin him, you know keep the skin. But I put him in the trunk of my car. And uh you know, I didn't think anything about it. I was in Vernon that night. We was up there at the PD, that's where we drink coffee at the Police Department. And we, I met a couple, one of the city units and one of the other Highway Patrol units I guess or... at the sheriff's office jail, they always kept a pot of coffee there at the jail. But anyway, I was getting something out of my trunk and I thought... I'm going to show them guys a snake. You know really I didn't even think about with the intent to do anything but I just put that snake up and they was standing over there about fifteen or twenty foot from me talking. And I said look here what I got and I pitched that snake out there on the ground and that city officer like to have had a heart attack. He jumped and run backwards (laughter) and ... and it really wasn't planned, it just happened. But you know, just things like that. You, you... well you know you get out and do your job and you just had a good time. I enjoyed it... like I say, I worked a lot in Vernon. Vernon was a three-man or four-man, I don't know. They had maybe... I guess it was a four-man station. Quanah was a two-man station. And you know...

**NANCY RAY:** You probably had a lot of traffic going through those...

**LARRY GILBREATH:** US 87, it carries lots and lots of traffic. (*short break*)

**NANCY RAY:** OK, we're back. And you were telling us you know about the fun that you have. I was gonna ask, how do the law enforcement people build up this camaraderie that you have?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, you know you've got to depend on each other. And that's part of it. If you can't trust that man to be there when you need him, I mean you're not going to have much to do with him you know. And uh I think I mentioned that the biggest part of career in the Highway Patrol, I worked a one-man unit. I spent five years there in Crowell in a one-man unit. And uh you know of course like I say there was about 1800 people in the county and the sheriff and when he had a deputy, there was three of us in the county. So it was... I worked with him and he worked with me and we just... but you know,

you've just got to trust each other, Nancy. That's the bottom line. And that was one thing, you were talking about the recruit school. That's something, that's another thing we learned in recruit school. The boxing, you know that was the big thing back then. We knew you know if you went through that recruit school, you had been tested, physically, and you would fight. You wasn't... whether you wanted to or you didn't want to wasn't an issue. You would if you got down to it. And that you wasn't gonna to turn and run. You wasn't gonna back out when things got tough. You were gonna be standing there. And uh you know, I... Ted Poland was a Highway Patrolman in Quanah and he was later sergeant there in Childress when I made Ranger, he was my sergeant. But uh Ted and I one night, I guess you heard about Bob Wills Days at Turkey, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** And uh... well back in my Highway Patrol days, Turkey got pretty wild on Bob Wills weekend. And it got to where we were... they brought in a force of Highway Patrolman and I'm talking you know ten, twelve people to work that thing in addition to your local officers. But Ted and I one night, we worked together. We worked together a whole lot even there when he was in Quanah and I was in Crowell. We'd get together and ride together and I'd go to Quanah and we'd get in the same car together and alternate contacts. You know he'd make one and I'd make the next one. And uh but we stopped a bunch of kids one night. Well we didn't know when we stopped them, we'd stopped a car load of drunks up there at Turkey, Texas. We was about ten or twelve miles out of Turkey and uh of course that's not... we didn't really know that territory because it was late at night, we didn't... But anyway, we come up on this car and they looked drunk. You know they was driving all over the road and we didn't have a choice but to stop them you know. Well, we stopped that car. Like I say, there were two of us and they started piling out of that car and they're some of the biggest old boys I'd ever seen. And uh, I mean they was five or six of them. That car was plumb full. And the driver was a little old bitty thing, he wasn't bigger than you. The rest of the guys were as big as that door. And I was driving. I was in the lead so I was driving the unit. Ted and I, we stepped out of the patrol car and them old boys started piling out of that car and we thought you know... we got a car load of drunks here and they're getting out. We're

fixing to see who's toughest. You know we looked at each other over the top of that car but you know neither one of us backed up. We knew got a job to do. And we approached them and we arrested them. And they, they was kind of mouthy but they never really challenged us but we didn't give them an opportunity. We took control of the situation and we let them know we was in charge and they were going to jail, one way or the other. And it was kind of funny the way that deal worked. We had a command post set up at the Fire Department there in Turkey. And uh you know, the judge was set up in there and uh you know all... just the whole operation was running out of there. And of course we called them, and I think it was late, it was probably, I don't know, two o'clock in the morning, I don't know, it was real late. And uh we called and told them we was, we had these five in custody and we was enroute. And we uh of course run the license plate and the driver's license and all that you know. And anyway, we drove up there in front of that fire station and uh you know we split them up. I don't remember, one of us drove their car in and had part of them in the patrol car and part of them in their car you know. And we drove up in front of that fire station and there stood a Highway Patrolman, I think from Shamrock. I can't remember now but one of those stations up to the north there. And uh them old kids started... they was all young, young guys. They started piling out of them two cars to go in there to see the judge and be processed or whatever. And this Highway Patrolman went to chewing on them (laughter). And he, he ate those kids out like they were his own you know. And told them now, get yourself in there and talk to that judge you know. And uh they walked on in and me and Ted were just standing there you know (laughter), we didn't have any idea what... He said that's my all-state football team from last year (laughter). And it was... but you know stuff like that and you don't know when you're gonna... as Highway Patrolman, you don't know, or as a police officer. Not just Highway Patrolman, any police officer. I had a friend there when I was in Ford County, an old rancher. And uh, he used to tell me he said, he'd grown up and never lived anywhere but out there on that ranch. He told me, said you know that's rattlesnake country. Said I'd rather walk up on a barrel of rattlesnakes as to do what you do. And I said what are you talking about? He said, you walk up on that car out there in the middle of the night and he said you never know what you're gonna find. And I said well, you know I never thought about it that way. And he said I know what's in

that barrel of rattlesnakes (laughter). I never really thought about it that way but that's a pretty good analogy.

**NANCY RAY:** Well let's switch to your Ranger career because what you just said... with the Rangers we've interviewed, they said you know, when you're a Highway Patrolman, you don't know what you're dealing with. But when you're a Ranger, you know you're dealing with sorry people. So that's kind of a difference so let's talk about when you became a Ranger. What prompted you or how did you go about doing that?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I mentioned while ago Leo Hickman. And I was there in Crowell, Ford County. And like I say, they'd never had a Highway Patrolman in Ford County when I moved there and opened that station. And uh, you know I went in there and uh got along with those folks and uh did what was asked of me you know. I mean I took care of my business and you know... I'm not trying to pat myself on the back you know that was...but I felt like that when I went there I needed to establish some good relationships but I also had a job to do. But anyway, uh then Leo, that was his county, he worked down there occasionally and like I say, Wilbarger, Vernon and Quanah was... Hardeman County, those were all his counties. And Leo is one of these, one of these guys that you know where you stand with him. He either likes you or he don't have any use for you and there's not too much in between with him. And you're gonna know but uh... And I met Leo pretty quick after I went to Vernon there in the sheriff's office. But anyway, Leo I guess got to watching me and he got to, he started encouraging me to take that test. And you know, quite honestly, I didn't, I didn't have any idea that I could ever make the cut. And, but... I was... I was getting tired of what I was doing. You know I was getting to the point in life that I wanted a change and uh but every time I saw him, he'd tell me you know, you studying? No Leo... Now dang boy, get to studying. And he'd... he told me. He said I don't have much influence but if you can get to the interview board, we'll see, see how much. See if I can help you any, you know. But because of his encouragement, I did go to studying. (*emotional moment*) And uh you know, like I told you while ago, I never was very studious. And I, you know, I read the paper and that's about all the reading I like to do (laughter). You know what I mean? Newspaper and that's about as far as I get. I have read a book or two

here lately though, I found some good ones. But uh, I got to studying. And of course you know it was a challenge because I had kids, had to work, and... But I decided that I wanted to give it a shot because of his encouragement. And I went to studying and I set me up a routine. I worked what we call a sub-station schedule. I worked days during the week with days off during the week. And then on weekends, I worked nights. But I set me... I would study an hour a night during the week. After Gail and the kids would go to bed, I'd get my books out and open them on the living room table and I'd study for an hour. And uh I figured out that after an hour, it didn't do much good. But uh, and I worked at that for close to a year. And when the test came up, uh the way that works and I'm sure you've heard this before from a Ranger. But you got a written test and anybody is eligible to take the written test you know, statewide. And then they take the top so many scores off the written test to go to the oral interview board. And uh I, I made the interview board.

**NANCY RAY:** First time?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, surprised me (laughter). But yeah. And Dick Johnson was a Highway Patrolman in Childress and Dick, Leo was encouraging him. And Dick and I went to the interview board. In fact, there was four out of the Lubbock region that went to the oral interview board. And uh, and you know like I say, I never had made any big splashes. About the only splash I'd ever made was when I jumped up and quit. But, but Leo put in a good word for me. And you know here I was from a little old place that nobody's ever heard of... a one-man station out in West Texas. But anyway, you know the Lord blessed me in a tremendous way.

**NANCY RAY:** Do you remember who all was on the interview board?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, not really. I remember there was Bill Wilson was senior captain and he chaired the board. And uh Maurice Cook who was a brand new... he had just made captain in Midland not very long before that. He was a brand new captain was one the board. And Charlie Moore was the captain in Lubbock. And he was on the board and that was the three Ranger captains. And uh there was a Highway Patrol captain or I think he was in the colonel's office there in Austin and I was trying to think of his name. I never did work for him but my brother worked for him when he was a lieutenant in El Paso.

But my brother, Kennard, was Highway Patrolman in Van Horn. And Kennard had some problems out there when he quit. He uh, he had some problems. I didn't know how that was going to affect me but uh whenever... anyway, this man was there. There were six of them and I can't tell you the other two. But you know whenever this captain I was talking about, this Highway Patrol captain came and got me to take my turn, he come to get me. But... and he asked me about Kennard you know. How he was doing and where he was at and this and that. And he said tell him I said hello (*emotional moment*). But anyway, yeah I uh... you know I was a little nervous.

**NANCY RAY:** I bet you were. Do you remember what they asked you (laughter).

**LARRY GILBREATH:** A couple of things. No, I say I was a little nervous but I didn't expect to make it you know. There was some of them guys up there that were nervous. I had no idea. And my thought process was I'm gonna go down there and let them see me and try to go back to the next board and maybe I'll have a shot then. But no, the questions, I remember a couple of questions. Uh Bill Wilson asked me about officers wearing mustaches. That was his pet peeve. He did not like mustaches, facial hair on police officers. And uh I didn't know that at the time and that two years I was out of the Department, I wore a mustache. And uh, I don't know if he was aware of that or not. But uh he asked me, you know, what do you think about police officers wearing mustaches. And I told him, I said well Captain, quite honestly, I kind of liked that mustache when I had it but I think on a police officer, it looks very ragged. You know I just don't think they look... it distracts from their appearance. And he didn't say anything. I found out when I got home, Leo called me you know and I was talking about it. I told him about that question. He laughed and he said Bill Wilson, of course the other criminal investigation services allows facial hair but Bill Wilson did not like it and he'd had a couple of Rangers that had kind of contested him on that and bucked him on that. That was, that peeved him. And Leo said you gave him the right answer. Well I said I didn't like it on officers. And oh I don't know, the only other question I really remember is I think it was Captain Moore asked me what was most important in my life. (*emotional moment*) And you know, I told him God was. And I said but let me extend that a little bit, Captain. I said you know its God, family, job. And uh you I don't know if that's right or wrong but that's the way I felt, and I still do. There's a, there's

lots of times that the job interfered with family. But there was lots of time that you could put it in the right frame and still take care of the job. That's the way I tried to approach my job, even today. And I think that goes back to my dad (*emotional moment*).

**NANCY RAY:** Your dad was a wise man, huh? (*emotional moment*) Had his hands full with all those boys too (laughter).

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, he did. But we knew who was boss too.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, how long did you have to wait before you found out that you were a Ranger?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I'll tell you a funny story about that too. And I, like I said, there was four of us that went to that interview board from Lubbock district, or the Lubbock region, what would be Company C. But uh Dick and I rode down there together. We studied together. We uh, on the way to Austin, you know, we asked each other questions and talked about you know what might be asked on the interview board. And tried to help each other. And neither one of us really anticipated that we would promote. And uh the other two guys, both really thought they were in. They had no doubt that they were gonna promote off this list. They, it was an odd deal. The uh, I don't remember. They interviewed twenty people I believe it was from across the state. And uh Region 5, which is Lubbock, was the last to interview. And uh we interviewed on a morning. We was the last four down there. Everybody else was already through. And the four of us reported down there and interviewed and we were through by noon. And they were going to promote four people off that interview board the next day. This was the last day of September, I believe, and they were gonna promote four people, four vacancies, the next day. And they didn't anticipate any other vacancies for the next year. But, they, since they were giving, they were going through the process, they were gonna put two on the list. You know promote four and put two on the list and the list is good for twelve months. If you don't promote within that twelve-month period, they throw that in the trashcan and you start over. You know the process, you go through the whole process again. Anyway, we knew that the list, they told us, the list is coming out that afternoon. And it, Dick and I like I say, we rode down there together. And I think these other two guys, they were from pretty close stations, maybe the same. I don't know. But anyway, I think they rode down there together. But uh we got through

and uh I don't know, I don't remember if we ate, I don't think we did. I think we had left there about 8 o'clock that morning but we went to the cafeteria before we left. We went in the cafeteria to get us some coffee before we left and here sat these other two guys at the table there drinking coffee. They said what are ya'll doing? Well, we're loading up, we're fixing to head home. You not gonna wait for this list to come out? I said we're not gonna be on it, why do we need to wait around here? Oh, we're gonna wait. We'll wait for it. Well, good luck, you know. We're gone. And uh we walked out the door and got in the car and headed north. And we stopped in Abilene and filled up with gas at the DPS office there. And of course we went in, filled out a ticket, went to the restroom, and stopped and talked to the dispatcher. The office was... there wasn't anybody there, I guess it was not open. But anyway, we walked in there. Wasn't anybody else around there. Stopped by the radio and visited with the dispatcher there. And you know, headed on north. And before we got to Anson which is thirty miles north of Abilene, the radio operator called us. And said you want to hear... the Rangers' list is out, do you want to hear it? Yeah, go ahead. And uh said I was sixth on the list (*emotional moment*). And you know, I was stunned, I couldn't believe it. And anyway, I told Dick, I said there ain't gonna be any openings anyway.

**NANCY RAY:** There goes that negative talk (laughter).

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, I fuss at... but you know of course my ego. You know man, this is something. But anyway, never expected to make it. I was, had already back studying again, getting ready for the next year. And uh my uh phone rang one morning and it was Captain Moore there in Lubbock. And he said Larry, well he thanks me that... oh let me finish that story on the other deal. Those other two guys never went back and took the test again (laughter). They went on to bigger and better things. They went to different directions but I always say that you know, when they made me a Ranger, them two... they uh decided that they didn't want it.

**NANCY RAY:** Their loss.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** But no, they uh... I'd already started back studying for the next test and uh that Thanksgiving. Like I say, that was October 1<sup>st</sup> they promoted those four and a guy in Auto Theft down around in the Houston area and I were the two on the eligibility list. He was first and I was second. And

uh that Thanksgiving, a Ranger and his wife went to California to see their kids. And on the way home, had an accident and he was killed.

**NANCY RAY:** What is his name, I've heard about it.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** I'm sorry, I went blank... Troy... I'll tell you in a minute maybe. I think it'll come to me. But he was killed in that accident. Well that you know was a slot for the first man on the deal. Of course they didn't, you know because of the way it occurred, you know they weren't in any hurry to fill the vacancy. But uh January, I was... the phone rang on Saturday, Friday morning. And it was Captain Moore. And uh he said Larry, Bud Howell was the sergeant there in Lubbock and he said... not Bud Howell, golly. He was game warden in Post (laughter). Bud Newberry... Bud Newberry was sergeant there in Lubbock. This was about 10 o'clock in the morning, you know about middle of the morning. And he says, Captain Moore, he said Larry, Bud walked in here this morning and said he and his wife decided over breakfast it was time for him to retire. He said uh, looks like a vacancy is gonna be in Bay City. What do you think about that? I said that's great, Captain. You know, I said what am I supposed to do? When? What?... He said well, we don't know that for sure yet because they still hadn't filled the other vacancy. And he said they'll probably just fill them at the same time. Said I don't know what Austin's gonna do but the first man on the sergeant's list is in Bay City and he said that's probably gonna be one of the vacancies if somebody don't transfer in there. And uh you know we talked a few minutes and we got off the phone. I told my wife what, told Gail, about the conversation. I said where's a road map, I need to find out where Bay City is (laughter). Knew it had to be on the coast but had no idea where it was at but I was ready to go. We went down there and stayed three years and loved every minute of it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well do you remember, what was your first case?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, no, I really don't. I, you know, in... that was kind of a unique situation down there. I office'd with the sheriff's office and Carl Weathers was, was the Ranger in Bay City who came to Lubbock as sergeant. And uh of course, Carl had been there seven or eight years and uh you know, I mean... in fact he stayed down there and worked and kind of showed me the area for a couple of

weeks. But uh oh, you know we office'd, I office'd with the sheriff's office there in Bay City, Matagorda County. Had a wonderful three years... tremendous learning experience. They had some good guys there in the office to you know... I'll tell you what one of the other questions on my interview was, it just come to me.

**NANCY RAY:** What was that?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** What's the biggest criminal case I ever worked? Maurice Cook asked me, what's the biggest criminal investigation you ever worked? And when I left Crowell... of course in every station I was ever at I worked close with the sheriff's office and local officers. I mean I thought that's the way it's supposed to be. Found out later on that most places wasn't that a way. But uh, I said well Captain, you know, wasn't real big in your, in most people's eyes it's not real big but you know the sheriff and I got eleven baggies of marijuana off of an old boy there in Crowell. And the sheriff had information and he was supplying our local dealer and we hit that guy just right. And we drove out of the, we arrested him and uh he turned into an alley there behind some businesses on one end of the block. And we went out the other end with him on the way to jail and there sat our local dealer. So you know we figured the information was pretty good. But uh we got eleven baggies of marijuana off that guy and I said I know there ain't very many people think that's a big deal but in Crowell, Texas, that was pretty good.

**NANCY RAY:** Big deal. Got you started in your criminal investigation, didn't it.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I'd done a whole lot. The sheriff and I there worked very close there. In fact, he uh... well that's another story but... yeah we... but anyway that was another, as far as first case, Lord I don't have any idea.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what's the first one that stands out in your mind?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** (laughter) Well, you're gonna think this is kind of off the wall probably which most people will that, if they ever watche this tape. But uh, I hadn't been there very long and uh when, when they had interview boards for Ranger applicants, people trying to get in the Rangers, Rangers always a background investigation. And over the years, that thing has evolved in, and that time nobody in

the Department was doing it but the Rangers. But uh you know when somebody went to the Ranger interview board, we wanted to know something about them. Wanted to know what kind of person they were, what their work ethic was, you know, morals, and uh I was... Dan North was our captain there in Houston. And uh the interview board, the next board after I promoted I guess. I guess the next board that came up, there was a Highway Patrolman over there in Galveston County that was going to the board. And this was gonna be about his, I don't know, four or five times he had been. And uh every Ranger in the Houston area had done a background on him. And uh it was getting to the point they was afraid he probably was gonna try to sue them. You know if he didn't promote. And uh Captain North gave me that background to do. And like I say, I was a pretty new Ranger but I thought Lord have mercy, what is he doing to me (laughter). And, but as it turned out, it wasn't... I mean that was a gimme. That guy had lots of personal problems. He had some, well he just had some pretty obvious to the casual observer that we didn't need him in the Rangers. But you know, I labored over that report because I wanted it, first of all, I wanted it right for the board. You know I wanted them to have information that was correct. Because like I say, he had got to the, this guy had got to the point where he was complaining about the background investigations and that he was getting blackballed for no reason. And I knew that these, some of these older Rangers had done a lot better job than what I could probably do. But uh, anyway, I labored over that report and I think I rewrote it about three times.

**NANCY RAY:** You were thorough.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I wanted it right. And when I turned it in, Captain North read over it and complimented me on it. But you know I don't think that guy ever went back to the board either after that. But yeah, he, we never heard anything else from him after that. But you know I guess that's probably, that first year there, that's the one that sticks out in my mind.

**NANCY RAY:** Is there anything you want to tell us about that first year?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** (*emotional moment*) Well that first six months, I don't know how many times I started to reach for that telephone and see if I could go back to Crowell (laughter). I, of course, the worst part of it, I had to, I spent about six weeks down there by myself because we couldn't find a place to live

and had a house in Crowell to sell. And uh you know separated from my family I guess that was probably about the toughest part of it from a personal aspect. From the professional aspect, I just you know that first six months or a year, I just didn't know if I could ever measure up.

**NANCY RAY:** And who was your first captain did you say?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Dan North. Yeah, Dan was there and Jim Gant, Jim Gant was a sergeant and uh I was you know... in the Highway Patrol, you had pretty close supervision. I mean you'd see your sergeant or talk to him pretty regular you know. When I went to Bay City, you know, like I say if I didn't go to Houston, I didn't hear from the guys. Unless they had something they wanted me to do, I didn't hear from either one of them. And you know I was in there one day and I was, I guess one of them times when I was feeling inadequate and I was telling Jim, I said man you know, what do I need to be... you know am I doing anything... need to be doing something different you know or whatever? And he was sitting at his desk doing paperwork whenever I walked in. He pushed back from his desk and he said Larry, quit your worrying now. If we didn't think you could handle it, you wouldn't be there. He said you go down there and take care of it. If you need any help, you call us (laughter).

**NANCY RAY:** Good advice.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, you know, like I say, I just... for somebody that was feeling inadequate, that was, that was probably one of the best things he could have said to me. Not just him but Dan, and Bill Wilson you know and the whole chain of command had the confidence in me that I didn't have. And, but uh, yeah it uh, I guess that was one of the big steps for me when you know, to know that they had the confidence.

**NANCY RAY:** So once you found out they had the confidence, there you are. You're supposed to be working as Ranger. What did you do then?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, I didn't do anything different. Went back and went to work. But no, you know I mean I was doing it I just didn't know if I was doing enough. But he told me I was and that was the key.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what kind of cases did you have in Bay City?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh Lord, I don't know. A lot of burglaries and thefts. You know I worked real close, I worked a lot with the uh... there was an old investigator named Jack Brock there in Bay City. Jack uh, he'd been a Highway Patrolman about ten years. And Jack would tell you he was a reformed alcoholic and uh good, good investigator. But Jack, he'd tell you real quick you know. They fired him once illegally. He said the chief hired me back so they could do it legally (laughter). Yeah, he said I stayed drunk all the time and needed to be fired. But what they fired me for the first time wasn't right. He said the chief hired him back so they could do it right. But Jack taught me a lot. And there was another investigator in Brazoria County named John Barnes. And John, of course he had been around a long time. I learned a lot from John. And uh we worked in and out of Houston. I mean I never had been to Houston, never had seen the coast. Spent three years down there and it took me a couple of years to get kind of comfortable driving in Houston. And after that you know... but I uh made friends down there, lifelong. You know I still visit with some of them once in a while. But we did a lot of murder investigations, you know in Houston, Angleton, Brazoria County was right south of Houston and the Houston city limits came up to the county line. And uh oh, we worked, we worked a lot of murder cases. Unidentified bodies, you know...

**NANCY RAY:** Were they drug related or...

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, a lot of times, they were... some... two or three of them. We found, or they found, we had a farm... they raised a lot of rice down in that country. And like I say I grew up on the farm but I had never seen a rice paddy. Or canals, we call them ditches in West Texas. But uh John called me, got involved in a case that John was working. A farmer was cutting his soybeans. He had soybeans in that field that particular year. But anyway, he was combining his soybeans and he had a Labrador Retriever dog that went with him to the field. And like I said, he made a round with that combine and he seen that dog out there with bluejean pants. And he thought man, that's odd, and he went over there to look. Well he picked them pants up and bones fell out of them. And found a body in that canal in the brush where they was, of course it had been dry. But like I say, he hadn't used it that year. But uh you know we spent gosh, I don't know how long now. John and I worked that thing, worked on trying to

identify that body I don't know, six months I guess. And uh you know all the, with all the technology even in, I don't know, '83 or '84, even with the technology at time, we couldn't identify that body. The way we identified him, we did all kinds of stuff but he had a pretty distinctive gold cap on one of his front teeth. And you could tell it wasn't, it was rough enough it wasn't a professional deal but it was still pretty distinctive. And we wound up, I think we did a composite sketch you know one we had a forensic take the features you know and as I recall, we may have just used the teeth, I'm not sure. But anyway, that cap, we ran it, we ran that thing. But there was a black newspaper down there in Houston and we ran a picture of that in that newspaper.

**NANCY RAY:** Just the cap?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well no, I think we did a composite on the, did a reconstruction of the skull. But anyway, that tooth is what some family seen that and they, we identified that thing with that because of that cap on his tooth. And it wasn't anything wrong with the cap, just a gold cap that he put on there for decoration, that's how we identified him. And of course like I say, his skeletal remains, we didn't even have a cause of death of anything. But uh we always figured that it was drug related. But we, in talking to that farmer that found him, he said you know, when I was sowing, planting these soybeans back in the spring, I noticed a terrible odor in this area at that time. He said you know I just figured it was an animal, never did look or anything. And, but it was that body is what it was. But anyway, some things like that. And uh you know worked with a polygraph operator there in Houston. And I never had been around polygraph. I knew of it, knew about it.

**NANCY RAY:** What was his name?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** His name was Hilton Kennedy. He was a black polygraph operator there in Houston. Worked for DPS and uh whenever he went to work, of course, we used polygraph quite a bit over a year's time. But uh you know Dan, in a meeting one day after they'd had hired Hilton, Dan was telling the company who the new polygraph man was and this and that. And he uh had been in private practice as a polygraph operator. And somebody asked Dan said well why is he, why did he come to work for DPS and leave his private business? Said well, couldn't make a living. What do you mean he couldn't

make a living as a private polygraph? And he said you know, running employment with 7-11, all those convenience stores with polygraph applicants. And that's what... Dan said he's too thorough, said he took too much time and they didn't like that. They didn't like him because he took too much time on those tests. But uh Hilton, Hilton taught me a lot too. He had been chief of police at Rice University at one time and he was a very educated, super, super individual.

**NANCY RAY:** So you were kind of like a cowboy, I mean a concrete Ranger. We've heard concrete and cowboy Rangers... you're concrete.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, a little... I guess I'm kind of a hybrid. But uh I took one of the biggest lessons that I learned from Hilton. But I took this guy to uh, down there to run him on polygraph one time. A black guy, young guy, for Jack Brock. Jack was off and I hadn't even worked on this deal. Jack had this old boy in jail for burglarizing a motel room out there at the edge of Bay City. There was a little bar right beside this motel and uh these patrons of the motel would go over to the bar and stay until it closed. And then they'd wake up the next morning well somebody had pilfered their room you know, emptied their billfolds and that sort of thing. And uh Jack called me one morning and says he wanted to know if I had anything real pressing that day. I said no, not really, didn't have anything planned, Jack. He said well, something had come up and he had to take off. He had scheduled a polygraph for this old boy in Houston there with Hilton. He'd scheduled a polygraph. He had this black guy in jail for burglarizing these motel rooms you know. He said I sent to the penitentiary once for the very same thing at the very same motel. And he says I know he did it but he won't give me a statement. And uh, he uh, but he agreed to take the polygraph. He said I think all he wants to do is get out and go eat a hamburger. But I got it set up with Hilton and I can't do, can you take him down there? I said yeah, I'll take him down there. Had a 1 o'clock appointment. Hilton didn't schedule but two polygraphs a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. That's all he did. Well we had the afternoon appointment so I loaded this old boy up. Like I say, he was in his early twenties, black buy. You know he was pretty jovial. We uh, we had a pretty talk going to Houston. But anyway, bought him a hamburger and that tickled him. That's all he wanted, a hamburger. Anyway, carried him in there and Hilton run him on that polygraph. And Hilton used to tell

me I don't even look at those graphs until I get at least through the fourth or fifth one. He said it takes him at least three to get them warmed up, the guy's he's polygraphing warmed up. Said I don't even look at those. After about three, I start looking you know, or four. But anyway, he run and he had a stack of papers out there. You know he'd run them graphs and they'd come out and he shut that machine off and unhooked that guy. And of course I was watching you know through the one-way mirror. And he said I'll be back in a minute. He come in there in that room and you know we were standing there watching him while we talked. But he told me, said Larry, says this boy is lying to me. I know he is but I ain't never gonna prove it and I can't show you on them graphs. Says let me tell you about polygraph. He says whoever is sitting in that chair has to know that they did something wrong in order for that polygraph to work. If they don't have a conscience or if they don't believe they did something wrong, it won't show up on that polygraph. And he says you know I run into, every great once in a while, I run into one like this. He said this boy don't have a conscience. He'd cut your head off, walk away, and not feel one bit of guilt about it. He don't have any conscience. He said I'm sure he did exactly what Jack's accusing him of but you know I ain't never gonna be able to show it. But I had never thought about that. And you stop and think you know, it don't make any difference what it is. If you don't think it's wrong, then you didn't do anything wrong in your mind and uh, but he... over the years I have found out that that's right. You know when you're talking to these people, if they don't think they did anything wrong, you're gonna have a hard time with them.

**NANCY RAY:** You really dealt with some sorry people, didn't you?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Why yeah. I think so (laughter). You know another deal that stands out in my mind about Bay City. Jack and I worked this arson where uh a trailer house burned and the occupant died in that fire. We had a brand new, young DA there in Bay City. Good kid but he just was inexperienced. And he had been practicing privately as a defense attorney for a couple of years I guess and a super good guy. He was really pro-law enforcement and we wanted him when he ran for DA you know we wanted him in that office. But Jack and I worked this trailer house fire where this guy died. And he was a supervisor at a cable TV place. And I you know arson is probably one of the hardest things in the world to

prove as far as who did it. You know you can prove that it was a questionable fire or whatever pretty easy but you know when you go to trying to pin it down to who did, a lot of times it gets pretty tough. But we had this guy, was in a trailer park. And those trailers were close. They wasn't five feet between them and people in the next trailer had seen, they knew this guy, and they seen this... we identified another man that as there five minutes before they saw this fire start. And uh we uh worked this thing. We worked on that thing and we put this old boy in jail. He told us you know I was there... I didn't have anything to do with that fire... I left you know. And uh we had a fuss. The old boy was drunk. I can't remember, I guess he passed out. I can't remember... or I don't think there was... I think he had been... a blow to the head or something. But anyway, and then died... of course drunk, probably unconscious. But anyway, we put the guy at the scene five minutes before the same neighbor saw the curtains on fire. And uh we put him in jail. We went to the JP and got a warrant. We went and talked to him, couldn't get anything out of him. He wouldn't admit nothing. And uh Jack said we'll get him in jail. We'll get a statement out of him. We'll get a confession. Let him sit in jail a few days (laughter). We went to the JP and got a warrant for him. We had the probable cause. I mean it wasn't a jacked-up deal we had, we had everything except the match. You know we could put him there and him and this guy argued and they had had problems at work and different things. And we put him in jail and had him in there about a week. You know we wanted to go to the Grand Jury. We went to the DA and the DA wouldn't take it. And he made us turn him loose. And anyway, we knew he did it. It wasn't a doubt in either one of our minds that he did it but we just couldn't put it on him. And after I came to Brownfield, I don't know... it's probably been... I was in Amarillo... it's probably five or six years later. I just happened to see it in the newspaper. This very same man, suspect, was in custody in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, somewhere down there, for killing and robbing these two elderly women. And uh I seen that in the paper and I told Gail about it... and I guess it was the same article. But anyway, they had him dead to rights on the deal you know. I mean they put him in the house and they... he stole their car and some other things. But anyway, they had him dead to rights on their case well he confessed to killing this guy, this arson in Bay City, Matagorda County. Went back... and (*short pause*)

**NANCY RAY:** We're back. You just mentioned coming to Brownfield. Is that where you went after Bay City?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** No, I made a trip through Amarillo for about two and a half years. Yeah... you know we, we was talking about that a few days ago. Of course my wife's from Post as I mentioned and I grew up over here at Levelland. And that's a long way from Bay City.

**NANCY RAY:** Yeah, pretty different.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah, we uh, oh I loved it down there. I've always said if it had been a little closer to West Texas, I'd probably still be there. But uh other than that water, I don't care about those hurricanes. But we uh, Amarillo opened up or was opening up and I knew that Pampa was gonna open up six months later. And I wanted to wait and go to Pampa but Gail didn't want to go to Pampa so we went ahead and came to Amarillo. And uh stayed there two and a half years and when this station opened up, they moved a slot from Lubbock over here to Brownfield. And uh you know, that put us right back... And my mother was still living at that time and she was getting up at the age that she needed more and more help. And I was the closest one to her at that time you know, in Amarillo. And of course Gail's folks were there in Post and so I'd been waiting for Leo... I wanted to go back to Childress but I decided Leo was gonna work forever so I give up on that (laughter). Anyway, we came to Brownfield and uh you know I wasn't gonna move from Amarillo to Lubbock but I like the idea of Brownfield.

**NANCY RAY:** What year was that, you came to Brownfield?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** That was uh, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1988, when we came here. And yeah, we went to Amarillo. Went to Bay City and stayed three years to the day. Then Amarillo for two and a half years, and then we came here in August of '88.

**NANCY RAY:** Well how was life as a Ranger in Brownfield compared to life as a Ranger in Bay City?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Other than the fact that I didn't have to go to Houston two or three days a week, it wasn't a whole lot different. You know, I found a long time ago Nancy, as a young Highway Patrolman, you know I left Aspermont and I was tired of dealing with the same old people... day in and day out you know. On weekends I'm talking about, your folks that you dealt with. And I thought man, I'll

move over to Haskell and I'll get away from them and we'll be all right. All I did was change faces. You had the same problems. You had the same problems at Vernon, in Crowell. You know you change faces. That's all you change. It's the same way with the Rangers. You know you work the same kind of cases, same uh... and you think, and I did too, and at times Brownfield's pretty slow. Uh I'd have to get out and hunt something to do. But as a rule, there was always plenty to do, you know you just have to get up and go do it. But uh like I say, about... not as many murders, not as many... but you know you're still dealing with the same kind of people. And uh whether it's Houston, Texas or whether it's Brownfield, Texas. It's the same, the same kind of folks. And on the other side of that coin, you can find the same kind of folks, you find the good ones. You can get as involved in the community as you want to. Like I say, out at... Clint was I guess fourth grade and Danessa was second grade when we moved here. Trinetta was a senior. Brenda was a Levelland then. She graduated the year before at Levelland. But uh you know we got involved in school and church activities over there. And I worked out of Brownfield here. Of course at that time I only worked three counties. I worked Yoakum County which is Plains and Denver City and Terry County and then Lynn County at Tahoka. And I was kind of the backup, they couldn't find anybody else or everybody was busy you know, I was assigned to Lubbock County also. Of course they had two guys stationed there plus the captain and lieutenant. And, but you know I was kind of the safety net for Lubbock. I didn't really get... I worked up there a lot because everything out of these three counties, a lot of that stuff fed into Lubbock. But as far as working Lubbock County cases, I didn't do a whole lot of that. But you know it's uh... we're dealing with the same type of folks anywhere you go.

**NANCY RAY:** Well is there one case that you were never able to solve that really just sticks with you and you wish you could?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, there again you know, I probably to most folks... was probably off the wall in my thoughts on that. But you know I worked on lots of murder cases everywhere I've been. There on the coast and in the Panhandle and right here in this county you know. You want to solve every one of them and I think and I hope I'm right that I did everything possible, everything within my capabilities and my... you know you expended all avenues to solve those cases. And uh just never got them done you

know. And some of them, like the guy I was talking about on the fire, you know you got it... you just can't put it on him. And, but I say that to say this. I did what I could do. And I would have liked to have solved every one of them but I don't look back and say "what if." And I feel like it makes no difference what I do over here in this courthouse or what transpires over here in this courthouse over here down the street. It makes no difference whatever what goes on in that courthouse. You know these people that I would have liked to have brought them to justice, but for whatever reason I didn't, couldn't, but they're still gonna stand before their Maker one of these days and answer for that. But they... and what I do here in this courthouse has, is not even a shadow of what that's going to be you know. And that's the way I look at that (*emotional moment*) and that's the way I'm able to handle those things.

**NANCY RAY:** I wanted to ask, is that how you separate it from... you know your career and your personal life?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Yeah. And you know, sexual assault victims is where that really hurts me because you know... of course I know anytime you've got a victim, you've got a family. And where there's death, there's family that's traumatized over that death. But that person doesn't have to live with that. That murder victim... and uh but you take a sexual assault victim, they have to live with that. And uh I'm thinking that a lot of times that's worth than death. And uh even on the family you know, having to live with that pain and knowing and even if it was solved, they still have to live with that. And I've always said you know that I think some of these sexual assault cases are a whole lot worse than some murder cases that I worked.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, there is no way we can capture everything about your career. I know you said that, you told us about yourself at the first and you didn't think there'd be much to say but we know there is. So since we can't capture everything, is there something that you would like to share and you'd like to uh, for people to remember about you?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, I don't know. You know as even as a Highway Patrol, but especially in the Rangers, you know uh and there again that goes back to that pressure I guess that I put on myself. You know there is a tradition. And I tried to, every day, I tried to do my part to uphold that tradition. And I

know sometimes that I didn't quite make it you know but... I don't feel like I quite toed the mark. But it wasn't because I wasn't trying. And I'm just, I'm thankful for the opportunity. I think it is a tremendous honor to have served in the Rangers. And uh I just hope that uh when people look back on my career that they won't say well that guy tore that tradition... you know. And but, you know, that's I guess... I'd like if I'm gonna be remembered for something, that I fit the tradition.

**NANCY RAY:** I'd say that's a good thing to be remembered for. Well is there anything else, before we end this?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Oh, I don't know. I appreciate, I'm honored that you asked me to do this. You know I think that's a tremendous compliment in itself.

**NANCY RAY:** Well every Ranger has a story to tell and we wanted to hear your story.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well, you know I don't, I know these uh... there are guys that are a lot more, worked a lot more of these big cases. And a lot more colorful cases and got a lot more notoriety, but you know I just hope I did my part.

**NANCY RAY:** I'm sure you did. Well let me say thank you for your time today and thank you for your service to the state of Texas. And good luck as you start your new position as uh... you're moving from what is your current role?

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well I'm Municipal Judge. I've been Municipal Judge for four years, waiting for this opportunity.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, now you're to be the Sheriff of Terry County. So good luck.

**LARRY GILBREATH:** Well thank you, Nancy, I appreciate your time.

**NANCY RAY:** You're welcome.