

# Captain M. T. "Lone Wolf" Gonzauilas

Interviewers: Captain Bob Mitchell and Alva Stem

Dallas, Texas

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## Interview Begins

**Present:** Capt. Robert Mitchell, Texas Rangers; Alva Stem, Superintendent, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum; Capt. Manuel T. Gonzauillas, Interviewee; Texas Rangers Retired.

**Context:** This interview was done with retired Texas Ranger Capt. M.T. Gonzauillas on the occasion of the release of the 1977 movie *The Town that Dreaded Sundown*. The movie is very loosely based on Capt. Gonzauillas' investigation of the 1946 Texarkana Phantom Killer case. The movie starred Ben Johnson as fictional Texas Ranger Captain J.D. Morales—a character loosely based on Capt. Gonzauillas. The interview was conducted shortly before Capt. Gonzauillas' death.



**MITCHELL:** Can you get a chair around there Alva?

**STEM:** I'll stand up right here with Captain Gonzauillas.

**GONZAULLAS:** Are you recording?

**STEM:** Yes, I'm recording, Cap.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, it's a hell of a place to meet, but under the circumstances I couldn't call this shot. But I'm glad you're all here. You are all my dear friends. I'm not going into any detail in my, complications, because you know it all already.

**STEM:** Your movie concerning the Texarkana situation's in Waco now.

**GONZAULLAS:** It is.

**STEM:** Yes, about the murders they had in Texarkana.

**GONZAULLAS:** The fellow who's playing my part, I understand is Ben Johnson.

**STEM:** Yes, sir. That's correct.

**GONZAULLAS:** And he's playing (pause) Lone—Captain Lone Wolf—some other name.

**STEM and MITCHELL** (together): [J D] Morales.

**GONZAULLAS:** Morales. Well he didn't get too damn far from it. (Laughter). But, you know, they wanted to interview me on that. And I wouldn't interview them. I said "no." (Drawing the word out) I said, now listen, 'I hold a Texas Rangers—Special Ranger badge—commission. And I've had her for many, many years. Since '20 I've had one, either a regular commission or a special commission and all the ranks in the Rangers, except I never was the Senior Captain, because, there was a better man than me, to be senior captain. So, I'm under obligations to the Department of Public Safety. This case has never been completely solved.

**STEM:** That's the Texarkana case?

**GONZAULLAS:** Yes, the Texarkana case. They called it the "Phantom Murderer," up there. Somebody dubbed it that. I hope one thing they put in there—we went up there for two-fold business. We went up to assist the local officers, (and) we never went in there until after the last couple was killed. The boy and girl...

**MITCHELL:** Weren't any killed after we got there. Was there Cap?

**GONZAULLAS:** No. After we arrived there—the people were panicky. They were really panicky. I had never in my life run into anything like it. But we settled them down, quieted them down, got them back to normal. The Highway Patrol boys, they did an excellent job. And (airplane goes overhead) they hired the overcharge, because it was a criminal case. You know that...

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** A case. But these boys worked—Roberson—Sergeant [Lester] Roberson was

there. No paper's ever said anything about after we got there we never had no more killings. No more. No more killings...

**MITCHELL:** Cap, I noticed the advertisement in the paper. It says that this masked man, up there. He never was masked, was he?

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, not to my opinion.

**STEM:** Uh-hum.

**GONZAULLAS:** My opinion was that—that everybody, boys and girls—he killed, he knew 'um. I'm pretty sure he knew 'um, and they knew him. And that was a part of the killing. But he was a sex maniac of the first order, but the paper never did know that. We've never turned it loose to the paper, or that we have a lot of scientific evidence in this case. Thank God we never released it because a man—we've had I guess, four or five people that confessed to it. And you can read in the newspaper and then can go out and make the confession sound pretty good. But we'd broken down on one thing. They didn't know what we had that's never been released. And every one of them just (pause) apologized, but the one that committed suicide. But the case over in Texarkana, Arkansas had nothing to do with these horror killings.

**STEM:** Nothing to do with what?

**GONZAULLAS:** Had nothing to do with the—two boys and two girls on our side.

**MITCHELL:** There was a man sitting in his bedroom reading a paper and he got shot through the window over on the Arkansas side. And it's Cap's opinion that that case has nothing to do...

**GONZAULLAS:** No, I was there—I was there when—I was there with the Sheriff and the FBI agent within an hour. We were there. We were [just] outside the city limits and maybe closer

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than that. And the place that we—(pause) listen, I know evidence—both scientific and in the field, and they had nothing to do with them.

Now the case—the first case that happened in Texas where the couple, where the boy and the girl (someone entering the room)—where the boy and the girl are involved, neither one of them...

**STEM:** Was this in Texarkana (Texas)?

**GONZAULLAS:** Yeah, in Texarkana—neither one—had anything to do with the two girls and two boys that were murdered. They didn't give you much information. One of them said it was a negro and the other said it was a white man.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** He was masked. He had to be masked, because they said his voice—sounded like a negro.

**SEVERAL VOICES:** Oh, he did have a...

**MITCHELL:** You think he did have a mask?

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, he had something on his face, but I think they knew who he was. And I think that they just wanted to stay out of it—they were scared to death. They wouldn't tell you the right time of day.

**STEM:** Who were these people that had this information?

**GONZAULLAS:** The couple who was beat up so bad.

**STEM:** Okay. Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** And she was abused. But not raped.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, what'd he come there for? He didn't rob 'um. Our man is a pure de-raper. So—I don't think they had anything to do with it neither. They left the state and went somewhere else, I think. I don't know. That's what warps the hell out of me—is the fact that we worked hard, night and day, and they never said anything in any paper from all over the United States. I have the clippings. Have you seen my stack of five scrapbooks in there?

**STEM:** I'd like to see them.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, you can't see them today. (laughs)

**STEM:** Well, that's alright. I don't want to look at them today than. (laughter)

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, they're eventually going to be in the [Texas Ranger] Hall of Fame.

**STEM:** That's great, sir. That's great.

**GONZAULLAS:** And I've got a collection of pictures second to none, that I want to put in there.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** And, I have some books you may not have. For instance, *The Last Boom*.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** There's a whole chapter about me. I've got books where there. *The Santa Claus Bank Robbery* is another one and various numerous cases. Borger—Kilgore—I mean Borger and uh...

**MITCHELL:** Mexia [Ma-hay-a].

**GONZAULLAS:** Mexia. First with the Northwest field, up on the Oklahoma line, when we

pretty near went to war with Oklahoma. Nobody wanted it until they struck oil.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** That's right. We had to go up there and they had the National Guard there and so forth. That's not the bridge deal. (telephone rings) There we go again—she'll take care of that. [Mrs. Gonzauillas] And then the next, (telephone rings) the next case, the big thing that happened was Berkland, and Bradley Corners, New Town, (and) K.M.A. And that's when money was plentiful. Whiskey got to \$60 a quart.

**STEM:** That's pretty expensive booze.

**GONZAULLAS:** You bet—you bet that's—and (laughs) the two dollar girls went to ten. (laughter)

**MITCHELL:** Whiskey wasn't the only thing.

**STEM:** Where was this? At Burkeburnet?

**GONZAULLAS:** That was at Burkeburnet, Bradley's Corner, New Town, (and) K.M.A. And...

**STEM:** The inflation got 'um all at that time.

**GONZAULLAS:** Then we went on to the airfield. That was big field that was wild and woolly—that's the uh, Chicken Garden and the Winter Farm. That's the two monstrous gambling establishments. They were really something to behold. How they had gunfighters up in the steel place—hidden.

**STEM:** That to keep it from being robbed?

**GONZAULLAS:** I don't think it was to keep us out, because they wouldn't have kept us out with that. We would have burned them down first probably. (laughter) But they had been caught

in their own trap. Now I'm talking about before all this stuff. So anyway, to get a long story short. That was a rough field and they had a little Juarez there, and that was double-tough.

**STEM:** This was in Mexia?

**GONZAULLAS:** Yeah. Then we put our own Chief of Police in there. We took a Ranger out of the Ranger service and he was appointed Chief of Police. Soon we had Martial Law there.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** There's two counties there, and old Frank Hamer and Tom Hickman and Charlie Miller and E. B. McClure and myself and a whole bunch of those old roughies (laughs) were there. Then we went on to Borger and she was a "hen-billied". (laughs) And finally we left Borger—the same with the Chief of Police there. We put him in as Chief of Police at Borger.

**STEM:** What was his name? Do you remember, off-hand?

**GONZAULLAS:** Yeah. Albert Mace.

**STEM:** Mace?

**GONZAULLAS:** Albert Mace. Mace. M-A-C-E. He was a Ranger—former Ranger. A good one—later became a captain. That Borger was wild and wooly—and full of fleas. That's where Two-Gun Dick Herquit was the Chief of Police. He's the only one we missed. I don't know how in the hell he got out of town. (laughter) But he got out some way or another and went over into New Mexico and set a deal up. But H. Borger built the town up, you know—God it would make a story to behold—the stories behind the story.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** That's never been published, you know. And that's what the newspaper wants.

And then from Mexia, we went to Borger, [then] Kilgore. She was pretty wild and woolly—and all them fields. I always go in two weeks ahead of the men. And work undercover. —I'm pretty good at undercover man.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** And I'm not too big in stature. Bob [Mitchell] here, he couldn't get under a tent. (laughter) You know, they expect to see a Ranger with a ten-gallon hat and all—and the boots and they overlook the little fellow that's just loitering around shooting dominoes and playing a little cards here and there and patting the girls a little (laughter)—out in the 49 dance halls.

**MITCHELL:** I don't believe any Ranger would do anything like that captain.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, undercover agents, you know that. Anyway, it was a rough and tough place—Borger was. And that's where we put the (plane goes over). We turned the old Baptist Church into a jail.

**STEM:** Where was this?

**GONZAULLAS:** That was at Kilgore.

**STEM:** Kilgore. Okay.

**GONZAULLAS:** We chopped a hole in the floor up near where the pulpit is and then a hole down back here—and run a chain. Old Malcolm Crim used to have it in front of the store, where you'd tie your horses up to it—kind of a drooping chain.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** We took that down and wrapped that around and fastened (it). And then we

put a hundred trace chains on it. A trace chain has got a ring on it...

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** . . . on both ends. And then we put a pad—and he [Malcolm Crim] gave us all the padlocks we wanted, with one key. Up where the pulpit is, I put a man up there sitting there with a shotgun. (laughs) and he never let nobody off that line. (laughter) And they...

**MITCHELL:** Preacher, huh?

**GONZAULLAS:** . . . put it [the chain] around their neck—put them along that chain.

I'm talking about when you made a grand—when you made a "stook." Some night like when you bring in a hundred, and then you had to fingerprint them and mug them and so forth and they catch some pretty—well, when you go out fishing, you know, you catch some big ones and little ones too.

Now we didn't put working boys on there. But we did have a way of telling between a working boy and one who wasn't working. We'd say this—we got 'um even so where they'd put their hands out when you stopped 'um like that. And you know, what—I'd just put my hand on there and if he had callouses on there, I'd said, 'Go ahead, boy. and go about your business now and behave yourself.'

**STEM:** What were most of them guilty of?

**GONZAULLAS:** They came in there to expand. They came in there to open joints, a string of girls, or open up gambling houses or...

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** They came to rob the working boys out of their money.

**STEM:** Uh hum.

**GONZAULLAS:** You know what I mean?

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** They just were thugs from all over. And it was the only boom at that time and it was something to behold. They come there from all over the other states.

**STEM:** Who did you get this chain from?

**GONZAULLAS:** Malcolm Crim.

**STEM:** Crim. Malcolm Crim.

**GONZAULLAS:** He owned the, the Crim General Merchandise Store there.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** About that time, about the only store. They had wooden sidewalks and, and mud—wooo—(laughter) you'd have to herd 'um in, these, when you got...

**MITCHELL:** Mr. Stem, I'll bet the captain knows that Ranger, retired Ranger that you was asking about.

**STEM:** We received an inquiry—we're trying to have our retired Ranger's reunion in Waco in May. I'm sure you got some information on it—or you should have.

**GONZAULLAS:** Yeah. Wait a minute.

**STEM:** Alright, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** Are you off?

**STEM:** No, sir. We're still recording, but you go ahead and talk.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, if you had felonies against them, you'd turn them over to the different

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counties that wanted, or states that these people wanted. And, if they didn't have anything on them, I'd give them 30 days—or I'd give them two hours to get out of the state. You could do it in those days. (laughter) And they generally gave me about an hour and a half back. (laughter) As they could be over in Louisiana or Oklahoma in 30 minutes, I guess they could. And I'll tell you one thing, we never had one ever come back. Now what about this.

**STEM:** Did you ever know a Ranger down at Eagle Pass by the name of Larry L. Hall? He's supposed to have served in the Ranger Service from 1919 to about 1921 or '22 or '23.

**GONZAULLAS:** You don't mean old—the old man Hall—the old captain?

**STEM:** I don't know, sir. We've got an inquiry on this retired Ranger's meeting we're trying to have in Waco and I did not know the gentleman.

**GONZAULLAS:** Yeah. Now that's the time there—I came in '20...

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** ... but I never heard of him. But I'll tell you, about at that time there were an awful lot of Special Ranger commissions out. And I doubt whether they even have records of any of them. And you know, whenever the average Special Ranger when he—when he goes anyplace if he's working for a corporation or something—he don't say "I'm a Special Ranger", he says, "I'm a Texas Ranger". We used to get a lot of grief from some people that got out of line. Because there were too damn many Special Ranger commissions out—too many politicians had them. And some of them had red lights on the front of their car and sirens, you know and (unintelligible). I've taken a lot of sirens and, and (unintelligible) take it off them.

**STEM:** Don't let us tire you out by talking now, because...

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**GONZAULLAS:** You ain't going tire me out if you're talking about the Rangers. (laughter) But getting back to this meeting—do you want that recorded?

**STEM:** That's alright, go ahead.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, Clint [Peoples] called me yesterday and I said, "Clint, you do me a favor will ya?" And he says, "What?" I said, "Will you get in touch with this man..."

**GONZAULLAS:** Ham is the last part of his name. What is it?

**SEVERAL VOICES:** Willingham.

**GONZAULLAS:** Willingham.

**STEM:** Willingham.

**GONZAULLAS:** And explain to him, that, under my condition, I couldn't say I could meet in May. Was it the 18th of May?

**STEM:** The 19th of May.

**GONZAULLAS:** Nineteenth of May.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** The 19th of May, I may be nowhere. And then again, on the other hand if the Lord God above us comes to my rescue, why, I may be up on my feet.

**STEM:** That would be great.

**GONZAULLAS:** But, he says to me—Clint says to me, he says—and I don't think it would be appropriate. Clint, I think that if Clint and I—if there would be a recording up here with you, or Mr. what's-his-name?

**STEM:** deGraffenried? Willingham?

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**GONZAULLAS:** Willingham.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** And bring her, and sit right down in my room. Sit right there in our house here—you bring your equipment and set it up and we'll sit there and talk. He's retired, I'm retired, but he was the Senior Captain, and we'd hold a conversation. We'd sit there and hold a conversation and make a recording. And he said, well, he'd take that into view. And I said, "Well understand we can't do it right now. I couldn't get through it. You know what I mean?"

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** Well, when later on—and then again, I may drop off of it—you know what I mean. Like I—I don't know, uh...

**STEM:** Well, we'll...

**GONZAULLAS:** It's like (claps his hands) letting it bounce (laughter) I don't know what way it's going—ball's gonna bounce.

**STEM:** Well, we'll just kinda play it by ear and see how you're feeling.

**GONZAULLAS:** It would be interesting for us to sit there and talk. You think it over.

**STEM:** I certainly shall.

**GONZAULLAS:** And you get with Clint.

**STEM:** I'll get with him—I'll see him today, probably—today, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** Now one more thing and then I'm gonna leave. Now, as soon as I pass away, whether it's a long while or a short while, I don't know. I'll tell you, I've got some pretty good writers that want to write. Well, the one who wrote Frank Hamer, Gordon Frost at El Paso,

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wants to write my book. Well, my God, he's got (a) scrapbook there—he's got everything in the world. He's got pictures. And only one thing I want. There's one thing I do want. And are we on?

**STEM:** Yes, sir. We're on.

**GONZAULLAS:** Alright. And that is this. (pause) You go to the oilfields—now—don't disrespect—Frank Hamer was a great captain. I loved him and he taught me many things. Tom Hickman was a great Ranger. And—I know many other men were great Rangers—captains, I'm talking about. But you know—it's something like the F.B.I. You never hear of the men that really done the hard work. He says, "Agents in charge so-and-so, said," or "Captain Frank Hamer and his Rangers arrived at Borger," or "Captain Tom Hickman did," or out on a place where both would have a made a big raid. They just say, maybe the captain and his Rangers had hell (laughs) last night, or something—do this or do that. I think it's time that these individual boys who was with you and risked his neck, well it's time that—there aren't many of the captains, and don't forget, he's still the captain. But I think that a boy who was with him and risked his neck and worked hard as hell—after all, the captain is only as good as the men he helped to make him good, don't forget that.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** And there—or he has it in him or he don't have it in him. But I think that these boys should be mentioned. Don't you?

**STEM:** I certainly do. Give credit where credit is due.

**GONZAULLAS:** That's right. And through my book, I'd like to get these boys in. And if you was one of these boys with me why should he be left out of that? Because he's entitled to that.

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Public relations is a very fine thing. Now on top of that, I don't know if he'll write it or someone. It may not be wrote when I'm living. It may not be wrote in the—Laura, whether she wants to have it written.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** And if she dies, then the box will probably—the stuff will be turned over to— all that stuff will be turned over to Ernest Daniel.

**STEM:** Ernest Daniels?

**GONZAULLAS:** Ranger Ernest Daniel.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** For disposition. For instance, the guns in the museum down there...

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** The guns that way—Austin and stuff—all that stuff—chaps and all—and spurs and stuff. All those things belong to Ernest Daniel now.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** I gave him an affidavit—I didn't wait till I die. I gave it to him—the stuff. And then he—they were already there—and then he automatically loaned them indefinite to the Hall of Fame, or the museum.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** He's a died-in-the-wool Ranger and he's got to play a big important part, if I die, with Laura. Because Laura's going to have to have certain things. She's going to have to know certain things. We'll have no family. So, with that when it's done, then I want them in the

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museum. Now, you're going to have to figure some way that they don't ruin all this stuff in these—I've got them in there pretty well—I have fragile, fragile, fragile (laughs) because they may tear a sheet out of there when they look at that stuff.

**STEM:** Well, with your permission, we could put them in the library, where they will be under constant care at all times.

**GONZAULLAS:** Yes, that's what I mean.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** But they would—you know, they'll steal.

**STEM:** Yes, sir.

**GONZAULLAS:** You want to see the collection of Mexican pictures. I have a hundred of them, of along the border, and, you know, the finishing the revolution and stuff. And I went and took them with me, and went to Columbia Pictures and Screen Gems in California and, first thing I know, they started drifting away. I ended up with fifty of 'um. They stole half of them—they stole half of my books out there. You know what I mean—so that's why I got them stamped and properly my God, I've even probably got it on Laura, stamped somewhere on Laura—"Property Of"—(laughter) I've got it all over, because, where I went with these books that's why these lawyers all have their names stamped on the lawyer ends with all the books (laughter). And, in the courtroom, when they get up to go, they're in a hurry to go, they just grab two or three books (he fakes a gasp of surprise) accidentally, I got so-and-so's books.

**STEM:** We'd better leave the captain. Thank you, Cap. And if you feel like it at another date, we'd like to come back and visit with you some.

**GONZAULLAS:** All right.

**MITCHELL:** Captain, if you need anything or want us to do anything, you holler.

**GONZAULLAS:** Thanks, buddy. You look awful good. How much do you weigh?

**MITCHELL:** About 220. (long pause)

**GONZAULLAS:** Got too much tummy?

**MITCHELL:** Well, not much. (laughter) Not much. Why don't you see what Laura wants with these, Sergeant? Hang in there. Sitting pretty straight in the saddle.

**GONZAULLAS:** (unintelligible) I tell you, you—I've had a bad one. You know, they give me medicine. And I had a bad medicine—bad one. Oh, the pain was so—until they got this—this pill in me and this mild narcotic.

**STEM:** Well, we gonna get out and let you get some rest.

**MITCHELL:** Thank ya, Cap. We'll see you, Cap. Appreciate it.

[Captain M. T. “Lone Wolf” Gonzauillas lost his battle with cancer and died on February 13, 1977, eighteen days after this interview.]

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