

Interview with  
**KENNETH HAMMACK**  
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Mr. Hammack's Office  
Livingston, Texas  
Friday—March 13, 2009

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray  
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Kenneth Hammack, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



## Introduction

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**KENNETH HAMMACK  
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED**

**NANCY RAY:** My name is Nancy Ray. I'm visiting with Kenneth Hammack of Livingston, Texas. Today is Friday, March 13th. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Hammack's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Hammack, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes you do.

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

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes I do.

**NANCY RAY:** And 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 on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum's website?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Let's start with learning a little bit about you by finding out when is your birthdate, where you were born, and where you grew up.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** My birthday is February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1951. I was born in Angelina County in Lufkin and grew up there until I reached the age of 20 until I could move away. And I haven't been back. And I went to high school... my entire school was at Hudson just outside of Lufkin and graduated from high school in 1969. And worked for a couple of years at a mobile home factory and then got accepted in the DPS. That's where it all started.

**NANCY RAY:** That's where it started. Well let me go back ask... what about your parents?  
What are their names?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** My father's name is James Harvey, Senior, and of course everybody called him Jim. And my mother is Edna Sue and her maiden name was Thomas. They are both deceased now. And my father died 30 years ago, a little longer than that. And Mother just died a couple of years ago.

**NANCY RAY:** What about brothers and sisters?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I have ... I have one brother that died in 1999 and an older sister who died about five years ago. And I have another sister that lives in Fort Worth. My youngest sister lives here in an adjoining county at Point Blank.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. We went through Point Blank last night.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Did you?

**NANCY RAY:** We did, we surely did. OK. When did you enter the DPS?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** October of 1971.

**NANCY RAY:** Let me ask... when you were in school, was there anything that stands out in your mind... were there some subjects you liked particularly or teachers who had a big influence on you?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well there were several teachers that I had including the school superintendent there who also happened to be a baseball coach for us. And he had a big influence on how we conducted ourself in school... we didn't want to disappoint him. Also I did not want any paddlings from him... along with the high school principal, Mr. Gus Carraway... and a good man. He owned and helps his son operate the Carraway-Claybar Funeral Home in Lufkin

now. And I've seen him quite often and not always in a good situation. But those are two of the main ones that had a big influence. We had a math teacher, Mr. Jack Hammett, was a positive influence. And that man could use a board (*laughter*)... from personal experience.

**NANCY RAY:** Experienced that one, huh?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** And of course you have... our coaches ... my first basketball coach was a gentleman named Jim Foreman who was originally from Livingston here. And you know he later moved on to Texas A&M Consolidated High School and he coached there for a number of years and came back. I'm not sure where he is now. And also after he left, Mr. Kenneth Barrington was our basketball and baseball coach.

**NANCY RAY:** So those are the sports you played... basketball and baseball?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes. That's all we had.

**NANCY RAY:** All you had... OK. Were you pretty good?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I was pretty decent in basketball... umm a little below average in baseball.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what about ... evidently you married you said something about a grandson. So what about your family?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well my wife and I've been married now... next month will be... if I get this wrong she'll kill me... 39 years.

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

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Winnie. We went to high school together and married shortly after high school when we graduated. Both of us are the same age and both of us graduated at the same time. And then the following year in April we got married.

**NANCY RAY:** All right and what about kids?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Have two. My daughter 38... she lives in Lufkin and has five babies, or five children. They're not all babies anymore. The oldest one is 19 and the youngest one is 5. And she works for a local doctor there in Lufkin. And my son, he lives in Marshall. He's the varsity baseball coach there and has been for the last eight or nine years, maybe ten. Took forever to get him out of college but he finally got out (*laughter*). And they have, he and his wife, Carrie, have three children... two boys and a girl. We don't get to see them quite as much as the ones in Lufkin.

**NANCY RAY:** Well that sounds like a nice-size family though.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well, the last five or six years, we've all been going on vacation during the summer. And when you get all 14 in a crowd, it gets pretty crowded.

**NANCY RAY:** I'll bet it does... a little loud too.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes. I always make sure I've got a private place I can go to (*laughter*)... if need be.

**NANCY RAY:** Well did you go in the military at all?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No. No military.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, so let's go then to your DPS career. did someone influence you? What made you want to be in DPS?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well actually you know... growing up in the rural community I grew up in... of course I had several opportunities to meet the Highway Patrol in different situations (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** Would you like to talk about those? (*laughter*)

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** One of the Highway Patrol lived just up, down the road... maybe three or four miles from our house. And when you went to town, you had to go right by his house... and he did stop me one time and wrote me a warning thankfully. And , we had several who came to school and showed videos and wrecks and different things and had shooting expositions and all at the school. And it was always interesting to watch them and see what they had to say. And one story is... the first date I had with my wife... went to pick her up. And as I pulled in the driveway, a trooper or Highway Patrol stopped me right in her drive... didn't please her daddy too much (*laughter*). Another warning, he wrote me another warning. So and my father-in-law had a big influence... he said it's a good career ... he suggested Motor Vehicle Inspection at that time, said it was a good job and steady. So we applied and went and of course he didn't get to see me graduate from recruit school because he died in November after we started school in October.

**NANCY RAY:** Well you had a story about riding a bus.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well I bought a one-way bus ticket to Austin.

**NANCY RAY:** Is this when you started the school?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** This is when I started the Academy. And we changed buses in Houston. Joe Haralson who's a Ranger in Texas City caught a bus in Beaumont and he also had a one-way ticket. And we got on the same bus in Houston. And sometime during the ride between Houston and Austin we started talking. And then we got off at the bus stop in Austin and neither one of us know where the DPS Academy is. We don't know where 5805 North Lamar Avenue is, or Boulevard or whatever it's called. And so we'll ask somebody. The first gentleman who walked across the street we asked him. We told him who we were, what we were doing there and asked what was the best way to get to the DPS Academy. He started trying to explain to us and he said heck boys, just throw your stuff in the truck and I'll take you. And he happened to be a retired Travis deputy, Travis County deputy. And as we were going to the Academy... you were talking about Ray's book (*Ray Martinez' book about the UT tower shooting*)... he

pointed out everywhere that was shot downtown to us and where everybody was at the time the shooting was taking place before he got us to the Academy. And he just dropped us off there and we went on.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what a coincidence... you picked a good one to give you a ride didn't you?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Absolutely.

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell us a little bit about the school... about the DPS school, the Academy. What did you learn?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Learned you had to get up real early... No, quite a few things. And it was a really interesting little school that you had to go through. And of course they taught you... going through the penal code, traffic codes, history and spelling and report writing and driving and self defense in the boxing part. And so PT was... well when you're 20 it doesn't hurt too bad. Right now I don't think I could do it (*laughter*). Enjoyed that a bunch. the school was nice and it was... actually when I started I weighed 165 pounds... looked like a stick. And unlike some of the others in the school, I put on weight instead of losing weight. I was weighing a whopping 178 when I got out. ... was not used to three meals a day you know. We just never ate three meals a day. We only had a couple and ...

**NANCY RAY:** Were there other Rangers, other people who became Rangers that... other than Joe Haralson?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes, I think we had seven out of our class that became Rangers. Of course Joe Haralson and Ronny Griffith up in Longview, Dick Johnson who was in Wichita Falls, Ray Cano who was in San Antonio, Jimmy Hailey, Richard Benny I think were the ones that were there.

**NANCY RAY:** That's a pretty good percentage. How big was your class?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** We graduated 86.

**NANCY RAY:** And how many started, do you remember?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I think 110 started.

**NANCY RAY:** Some of them have such huge drops in the number who graduate.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well we had some that left when they put the books in the room. They went back to the car to get their clothes and they just left. Matter of fact... like I said I caught a bus down there so I didn't have a way home. I intended to stay the full time and not come back, come home. But we got a little homesick so there was a boy from Nacogdoches, his name was Ballard and I can't remember his first name. And I caught a ride home with him. So on Sunday I called him and said OK, when are we going back? He said I'm not going. I said you gotta go. He said why do I have to go back to Austin? I said I need a ride and besides all your clothes and everything are there. So he came to meet me so I went with him and we went back to Austin. He got his stuff and went back to Nacogdoches.

**NANCY RAY:** He didn't stay?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** He didn't stay. And then of course Joe Haralson and Tim Lucas and a guy by the name of Gary McDaniel, we formed a little carpool and started riding back and forth together.

**NANCY RAY:** Was it six months long... is that how long your school...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It was four and a half months.

**NANCY RAY:** What was the toughest part to you of the Academy?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Spelling (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** Really! Usually people say the physical part.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well the physical part wasn't all that bad. Like I say you know at 20 you're in pretty good shape and... yeah it was pretty strenuous at times but it wasn't all that difficult. The running wasn't bad you know... I was used to running and other things. But no, the worst class was spelling. If I don't have spell-check on the computer and I didn't have a dictionary, I wouldn't be able to make a very intelligent report.

**NANCY RAY:** Well did they get ya'll, your class up during the middle of the night?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes, we had spelling tests routinely. But one time right before we graduated, the PT instructor got to talking to us about being complacent and being lazy and not doing what we was

supposed to be done. So they wake them up in the middle of the night and we come down thinking we were gonna take a spelling test but they were standing at the bottom of the stairs pointing the other way... to the gym. So we worked out for an hour and then he said you've got ten minutes to run laps which was a little over a mile and be showered and be in the bed or we're gonna do some more. So we made it. The shower wasn't very long. You went in and got wet and come out and dried off and you went up and got in bed. You got a couple more hours of sleep and came back down to PT again that morning.

**NANCY RAY:** Um mmm... kind of cut your night short.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It was short, it was short.

**NANCY RAY:** When you graduated, where did you go? What was your first duty station?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** The first duty station was Newton.

**NANCY RAY:** And you were in MVI, is that correct?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, Highway Patrol. And my first partner there was a man named Mack Dillard and called him Matthew. Most of the folks in the country called him Matt Dillon. He was a big guy and I never saw anybody that would backtalk him. He had been there for a long time and had the respect of everybody. I never saw him abuse anybody, never saw him run over anybody or talk bad to people that didn't need to be talked bad to. He was just well respected in the community and everybody respected him. And everybody knew who he was.

**NANCY RAY:** So he was your lead when you first got out, is that right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes. I worked with Mack about four years and then he transferred to Center, Texas. Mack had a son named Randy who went in DPS not long after moved to Newton. And Randy recently retired. He retired with ... I think he was a Narcotics lieutenant when he retired.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what kind of ... work did you do? I know you had to do traffic but in that town... I'm not familiar with Newton, where is that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It's on the Louisiana border. If you'll look at the state of Texas and you'll see it come down and the farthest east point... that's gonna be Newton County. And we were probably 15 miles from the border and there's a little café there called Bonwier and it's just right there at the river.

**NANCY RAY:** And what was the name of it?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Bonwier... BONWIER.

**NANCY RAY:** Thank you, I appreciate that.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** The interesting thing about the café there.... There was a lady that ran the café... her name was Mildred Green. We called her Ma. And she had a lot of young'uns and she was a very religious lady, Pentecostal. And of course she said she was '*postolic*, OK?

**NANCY RAY:** OK.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** And she would let us during that time run a tab at her café until the end of the month until we got paid and we would pay our bill. And she found out my last name was Hammack... her maiden name was Hammock but she spelled it with an "o." I couldn't sign it with an "a" I had to put "o" in my name to be able to sign the ticket. And that was one thing about her, you did not talk bad about the Highway Patrol in her café. She would run you out (*laughter*). And we had a special table we sat at and she called it the deadhead table.

**NANCY RAY:** Deadhead table.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Deadhead table... And we sat at that particular table all the time. It was... a sweet lady.

**NANCY RAY:** Well that was a small town evidently so what kind of um traffic problems did ya'll have or what did ya'll work?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well mainly we worked in the US 190 the one that goes from DeRidder over to Jasper and comes on through here. And of course then State Highway 87 that goes from Toledo Bend, or west of Toledo Bend to Orange. And Highway 63 which goes from Jasper over to Fort Polk, over to

Leesville. And like I say, traffic was not that heavy and you didn't see much traffic at all. And normally after 10 or 11 o'clock at night, you were out there by yourself except on weekends. You'd find something to get into on the weekends.

**NANCY RAY:** Well did you have much trouble with drugs or drug trafficking?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Over there at that time in the early '70s, no. You know you would catch a few drugs but not a whole lot.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. What about fatalities? Did you have a lot through that area?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Considering... we had quite a few. we'd go through spells where we'd have several at a time and then we'd go for a long spell and not have one. I think the first fatality accident I went to was February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1971 or '72. The man's name was... well I could tell you his name but I'm not.

**NANCY RAY:** That's fine, you don't have to.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I don't how... it sticks with you where that first fatality you go to and... it was at milepost 72 on 87 just north of Deweyville. And they called me early in the morning and I went down there.

**NANCY RAY:** Well I understand... a lot of people have told us that they think being a Highway Patrolman is one of the most dangerous jobs. Do you agree with that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It has its... it has its dangers and things you have to look for. Of course you're out there with traffic all day and you stop along the side of the highway and of course you don't know who you're gonna stop. But ... and to think about it all the time you know it doesn't do you any good to think about it. You have to be prepared for it and be ready to do what you need to, to protect yourself or anybody else. But if you dwell on it all the time you might as well go to the house... thinking of it will drive you crazy you know.

**NANCY RAY:** Right. It becomes routine to you.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Well how long were you in Newton?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I was in Newton for a little over eight years. My wife wanted to move the first day we got there and (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** Made a long eight years.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yeah, eight years and three months is how long we were there. And of course I tell her you always wanted to move but when we moved, you were crying. She said yeah, we just built a new home and I didn't want to leave my house. So that's why she was crying when we left. And I worked with ... the only other trooper I worked or was partner with when I was in Newton was a trooper named Chuck Smith, Charles Terry Smith. Matter of fact, he had a birthday just a couple of days ago and he turned 54. Chuck retired as a major out in Midland whenever he retired.

**NANCY RAY:** Well when you left Newton, where did you go?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Went to Crockett and stayed in Crockett for 21 months and then I transferred from there and went back to Buna.

**NANCY RAY:** Where was it?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Buna, it's just north of Beaumont. We stayed there for quite a while... a little over seven years. And Crockett was a nice place to work... it's just the supervisor and I had some conflicts and... He's a good man to work for... he would do anything that you needed and... But like I said, we just had some... I had a lot of admiration for him, he was a good man. And I transferred back to Buna and... which was a little odd. The group that I left from when I left over there came up to help me move back. And of course my wife was sick. She was in bed with the flu so I had to do all the packing. Well not all of it. She did some of it before she got sick. The first thing we moved into the house was a bed. I made it up and put her in it so... it was interesting.

**NANCY RAY:** I guess so.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** But Buna is of course an unincorporated little city. It's a pretty good size little town but it's unincorporated. And we were the police for that area down there.

**NANCY RAY:** You were there seven years, is that right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Seven years, a little over seven.

**NANCY RAY:** At some point you were in Marshall. When was that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I promoted to Highway Patrol sergeant in April of '89 and I moved to Marshall.

**NANCY RAY:** So when you became sergeant then you were not on the road... you were not doing traffic, right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Not routinely. I did go out and ride with... checkride with the troops but I mean as far as working traffic, I did not. It was mainly administrative duties then... supervising the 16 troopers that I had.

**NANCY RAY:** That's hard.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It was a full-time job. It was. And we stayed in Marshall until August of '92. Well, I stayed until August of '92 my wife stayed until August of '93. When I promoted to Ranger in August of '92, my first station was at Brenham. And when I moved to Brenham... Brenham's a nice place down there. The setting is nice, the country is pretty, beautiful and... but when I thought about trying to promote to the Rangers, I got to looking around to see who's around and see who might be leaving in this East Texas area. And of course Tommy Walker was a Ranger here and I said well he's pretty grayheaded, he may be going before long. And Tommy did retire in November of that year but they kept me in exile until August before I could move over here. So after that, we've been here the rest of the time. Let me back up to one thing.

**NANCY RAY:** Sure.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** And this was before I got in the DPS. There was a sergeant in Lufkin, Sergeant Dale Nicholson. He was a Highway Patrol sergeant there. When I first went to get an application, I walked in his office and I asked him for... he never looked up at me. The only thing he said... he was writing and he said what do you want, boy? I said I'd like to have an application to go to work. How old are you? 19. Get out of here and come back when you're 20. So on my 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, I went back and got an application (*laughter*). And he happened to be... when I moved to Newton, the sergeant over there was sick, he had emphysema. And he wasn't working a bunch and Dale was pretty well over that area at that time so he happened to be my first sergeant, one of my first sergeants anyway. And the other sergeant that worked there was , his name was Charles Graham. And I still call him Sergeant. But whenever he retired, he was Chief of Traffic Law Enforcement in Austin.

**NANCY RAY:** Ah, moved on up. Well who influenced you to become a Ranger? What made you want to become a Ranger?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well I never thought I'd be able to get into the Ranger Service. But when I was up in Marshall... of course I worked around several of them. ... one time in Texarkana I had one of my troopers shoot a guy and shot a guy and Howard came down and did the investigation on that. And Ronny Griffith over in Longview... there was another shooting involving a trooper where he killed a guy. And I tagged along with them to do my administrative investigation on it and they did the criminal investigation. I said well it would be nicer to investigate the criminals and try to put them in jail than doing the investigations I do. And so we started studying and consequently passed the examination and also the interviewing and got promoted.

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell us about the interview board. Did you make it the first time you tried?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Well good for you.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I did not on the sergeant's and (*he had a facial expression*)

**NANCY RAY:** I see a story.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It was sort of funny about the sergeant's test because my partner and I studied for that test awful hard and ... the first time. Matter of fact, L. C. Wilson who is captain in Beaumont, no... he's assistant Ranger captain, he's senior in Austin. L. C. was Highway Patrol sergeant in Beaumont at that time and he had study sessions for people wanting to study for Highway Patrol sergeant test. So we go down there and take the test. My partner and I studied very hard and studied together. And made a determination when we were in the classes and taking the test that we had one person to beat and it wasn't one of us. It was another guy. If we can beat him, we'll do well on the test. And we did. And of course David Salmon was captain in Houston, ended up captain in Houston. But I edged him out by one question on the written test and finished... I think I was second on the written test that year. My interview... it was absolutely terrible (*laughter*)... totally terrible. I walk in and sit down. Now I know some of these people who were on the board. But when I sat down, my interpersonal left... I told them I had an out of body experience... totally answered everything completely backwards and I fell flat on my face and did not make it. So I went from number two on the written test and I think I was 27<sup>th</sup> or something like that on the interview and I ended up 19<sup>th</sup> overall. It wasn't very much fun.

**NANCY RAY:** And this was your sergeant test, right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** The sergeant's test. And the next year I made the same score that I made the year before... wasn't quite as high but I ended up, finished up number one overall that time. It was an experience. James Wilson who was director at that time was ... he knew or was born there in the south part of Jasper County in Bessmay and Buna area... and knew the JP there. And of course my partner finished number one on the test the first year that we took the test and the second year I finished number one. So he comes over and says I just need to come over and meet the Buna boys that finishes number one on these tests because people were giving him a bad time about it. (*laughter*) Now of course now he is the sheriff in Williamson County so.... Interesting how things work out.

**NANCY RAY:** It is. You never know when you start out what's gonna happen, do you.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Not at all.

**NANCY RAY:** Well who was on your interview board for the Ranger interview?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I couldn't tell you all of them... I can't remember. Wish I could but...

**NANCY RAY:** That's all right. What stands out... does anything stand out about that interview board... what they asked you or...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well it was a little different from the other boards, the other two boards that I had gone to. It was a little more relaxed. They put you in some situational... practical situations and asked you how you would handle this and that. And particularly about... where the overtime the way it was, if you was in overtime and the captain told you you needed to stay at home and not work anymore for a little while... wasn't able to pay the overtime and you had a call over in another county, what would you do? Captain's gonna be mad (*laughter*) but I'd go. You know you'd answer your call. And it was questions like that and how you would go about handling different situations. I think one of the questions that was asked... during that time I think Rodney King was big in the news. And the question was what do you... do you think he's guilty from what you've seen? And of course my response was well all I'm seeing are short clips of what's going on. I can't form an opinion I'd have to look at it and see and get the full story before I could say whether he was or wasn't beaten unjustly. So there were some good questions.

**NANCY RAY:** You came out OK.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Came out fine.

**NANCY RAY:** Were you put on a list?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Put on a list... there were eight of us put on a list and I think Kyle Dean may have been number one on that list. Can't remember who was second. I think there were five Highway Patrol sergeants that made it that time. Myself, Jimmy Hailey... you go blank.

**NANCY RAY:** I know. But it'll come back to you in a little bit. But... so in August you were given your first duty assignment and that was Brenham.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Right.

**NANCY RAY:** You were able to pick it?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, no they just sort of picked and put you where they thought you needed to go.

**NANCY RAY:** What was the first thing you did when you moved to Brenham?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well the first thing was they had a multiple homicide up in Somerville that was being investigated by three Rangers. Jim Miller, Ray Coffman and also George Turner. And I got to hang with them and go with them on quite a bit of that. And very, very interesting with what they did on it. I can't remember exactly how many arrests but I know they had two arrests out of it. And it was interesting with how they came up with suspects.

**NANCY RAY:** How did they?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well they happened to be taking some pictures at the funeral and came across one that was interesting and I think that may be what started it.

**NANCY RAY:** So the person who committed the murder was at the funeral?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** huh.

**NANCY RAY:** Isn't that something.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** You know we went back to the house, to the crime scene. They had burned the house and of course went through it with them and sat in with them on several, a couple of the interviews. And one with Jim Miller... around a different place there were photo line-ups where you have witnesses pick out, if they could, pick out the suspect and they did. And they spent a lot of time on it and ... I believe Charles Sebastian was the DA in Burleson County that tried that case.

**NANCY RAY:** So what was your first case? Do you remember?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Over there? No, I can tell you the first one here. When I first moved here, I was actually going to Austin to go to a school on a Sunday afternoon and got a call that they'd had a lady who had been murdered here. So I stopped in , I think it was Anderson, and called the captain. I said hey, they've got a murder in Polk County and I'm going to school. Can I go back home and see if I can help? He said go on back home and we'll get you in school later. So I came back. The sheriff here at that time was Billy Ray Nelson and a lady had been killed. A TV and some more stuff had been stolen from her... didn't have a whole lot to go on. It happened the sheriff talked to the guy who committed the murder early on in the investigation and had seen some marks and things on his hand. And we worked the thing and of course we tore the house up trying to secure evidence and we were real... the house was not in disarray. All the dishes were still on the sink and on the cabinets. Nothing was broken. It's just that she had been stabbed multiple times in a corner of the living room. And we'd taken the paneling out and had it sent to Austin to see if they could develop any prints. And so... and came up short on what we were looking for... didn't find anything there and... matter of fact, there was an investigator here named Raymond Edmonds... his wife is my secretary, Miss Alene. And Raymond died several years ago with cancer. Well what was interesting, Raymond and I were working on this thing and we'd gone out to a little marina out here and had looked at this, where we thought this guy may have lived. And as we were coming out, there was a gentleman walking across there... across a part... down the road. I just pulled over and rolled the window down and hollered at him and said Albert, Albert Sylvester. Come mere. That wasn't his name and when he came, he said who are you looking for? I said Albert Sylvester... you're not Albert Sylvester? No sir, my name is Norris Sampson. I said where do you live, Norris? And he told me where he lived. And it turned out Norris was privy to a lot of information on this murder case. And we struck up a conversation and talked to him for a little while and left. And when we came back and run a search warrant on this guy's house, Norris happened to be out in the, in the crowd. And he called us over and give us a lot of information. The guy had come to his house... was bloody... had taken a shower and

he'd given him more clothes to wear. We recovered the clothing that the guy had on and bloody and several other things. But when we added... got him convicted and solved the murder. It's strange the way things work out. And Miss Alene's husband, Raymond, he said why did you call him Albert? There's a story behind that also but ... We had a little Highway Patrol over in Jasper by the name of Danny Barnhart and he worked for... lead investigator for some attorneys over in there and he had stopped a car where the guy's name driving it was named Albert Sylvester. and he... this was before I went to work and he worked with Mack Dillard. And there was another little guy in the car and his name was Henry Dancer. They were gonna arrest Albert and Albert didn't want to go to jail and Henry was telling him said "Albert, get in the car get in the car... better come and go on... better come on here..." They had a little scuffle and Albert ended up getting hurt a little bit and when they put him in the car, Henry went "I told you Albert, I told you you better get in the car." (*laughter*) And that's how the Albert story came along. So...

**NANCY RAY:** And you used it later.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Used it later and it proved... it worked. They don't all work that easy though.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what would be your hardest case? Can you think of something... maybe it's not even solved yet, I don't know.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It's still not solved and it was unsolved before I moved here. And it was a little gal got killed by the name of Natasha Ashley, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 19... I think it was in '92... May of '92. And I think Tommy Walker was the first Ranger to work it and like I say, it's still unsolved. she had been at a party down in a community called Five Acres Independence. Left the party and her car was found burned. It was pulled in and her mother discovers that her body was in the back of the car, you know in the trunk. So lots of people have been interviewed. It took a long time to, for us to get all the information that we

needed to start with. Matter of fact, Barry Caver who was Ranger over in Huntsville, worked quite a bit on it after Tommy left. But it's still unsolved.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, the families of victims... isn't that one of the big parts of your job is working with them or meeting with them? How does... how do you deal with families like that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well the best you can. Of course Karen Woodard was Natasha's mama and... Karen would routinely check in to see what you had and see if anything was going on... and was very consistent about the investigation. And if she ever brought information, we'd go look at it and check on it and see what we could find out. But like I say, she would call routinely and you can't tell her not to call because she was concerned about the case and we're concerned about it also and we want to do the best we can to see if we can help solve... give her some closure to it but we never were able to. Karen died a year or so ago and so...

**NANCY RAY:** Well let's go back to Brenham. What else went on in Brenham? You told us about the case when, you know when you first got there. What kind of cases did you have over there?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I really didn't have that many cases over there. I spent a lot of time in school to start with and I was back and forth to Austin most of the time. But I think... a couple of cases I worked some over in Fayette County which was one of my counties. I had Grimes County, Washington County, and Fayette County. And I worked quite a bit with the sheriff's office over in La Grange. And there were a couple of different cases we worked over there. ... one of them was a little girl got severely beaten at the bus station in Schulenburg and was able to identify the suspect or the person that assaulted her and got on the bus and left you know. And to be honest with you, I couldn't tell you whether he got arrested or not. But arrest warrants were issued for him. And when we went to visit her in the hospital, we put some information together in regard to who we may have thought it was and of course we had a picture... photo line-up. And she didn't hesitate one bit to pick out who had beat her with that trophy and left her for dead

in the bus station. She was an employee there and he had had gone to the local café there and eaten lunch before he went to the bus station. And ...

**NANCY RAY:** And why did he... why did he beat her?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Don't know. Don't know.

**NANCY RAY:** You had to deal with some sorry people.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** they're not the most... pillars of the community I'll put it that way. Of course my DA here that did not run this last time... we'd take him cases and he'd go can't you find me any better witnesses than this? He said you've got crackheads and you've got drunks and you've got this and you've got that... And I go well I can't find any deacons and preachers that run in these circles. *(laughter)* And so we play the hand we're dealt. And there was another one that Brian Taylor and I worked. Brian is a Ranger in Bellville. And we worked at a motel there in , in Schulenburg and I can't remember all the details on this but it was a real bloody scene. The guy almost... he didn't die. He was in very very serious condition for a long time and I think that's one of the bloodiest scenes I've ever been to. And he'd bled all over the room. The crime lab came down and used Luminol and the whole place just lit up.

**NANCY RAY:** Now the Luminol, what does that do?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It interacts with blood and in a dark room it will come off and give a glow. It will react to other things but blood is the main thing it will... it will glow. And like if you have blood on your hand and you put it here *(he made a motion)*, you can't see the blood. But with Luminol, you can see the handprint. And they had the fingerprints so it's a pretty neat tool

**NANCY RAY:** Well what other kinds of tools did you have to investigate... you know like Luminol and fingerprint kits and things like that. You didn't have DNA when you first started, right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It was pretty close, pretty close. There was another interesting case that ... Brian Taylor called me one night. Now this was a 911 call that originated from California that came back

to Waller County that an assault was taking place in Brookshire. A lady was talking to her sister on the telephone and she had been in... in California. Three Hispanics broke in on her, pulled the phone out of the wall, tied her up and raped her. And her sister was calling back 911 here and the officers get there and catch the guys in the, in the house. And Taylor called and I go down and work with him on it and I end up in Houston with fingerprints trying to run these guys through AFIS to determine who they are because they'd given false names. They were able to identify them through the fingerprints so it was interesting.

**NANCY RAY:** To be able to identify them through the fingerprint system, had they committed other crimes before? How were there fingerprints there?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Either that or they had been in Harris County jail or other crimes before. They had been entered into the system or in the AFIS system. Normally after they started putting those into the system, then TDC's fingerprinting a lot of their inmates and then certain ones automatically gone into AFIS for certain violations. And now, everything is electronically transmitted, particularly from here. And most of the agencies... most of the sheriffs offices have what is called Livescan which is hooked into the automated fingerprint system in Austin and all fingerprints are digitally transferred so they're all there to check now... much, much quicker than it used to be. You used to have to go through hundreds and thousands of fingerprint cards looking for somebody. But now you put them into the computer and a lot of times you'll be able to identify fingerprints in it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well you're sheriff now of Polk County so you have access to current technology. What technology do you have now that you didn't have during your Ranger career?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well the Ranger here is more educated (*laughter*). And a lot of it is we are... progression of your fingerprinting and also your DNA and what they can do with DNA... and how much it has advanced since it first came into being. mitochondria DNA is something that they do now to identify person's remains that you find if you can... if you have a missing person and you find remains, you can actually take the parent and extract DNA from the remains and compare it to the parents' to see if

it may be their child. We have one here that remained unidentified for about five years. And finally got some information and finally got those little ladies identified from down there in Pearland in that area.

**NANCY RAY:** Um mmm... they've come a long way. What kind of training did you have? Once you became a Ranger, what kind of training did you have to prepare you to do...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well there were a number of schools that we went to. We went to fingerprint school and how to develop them and what to look for and how to lift fingerprints. we had a lot of crime scene techniques that we went to. And also even went to some report writing classes... where you organize reports. Hypnosis... worked with an investigating hypnotist from DPS which was a good school to go to.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you ever use it?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I used it. We weren't allowed to use it on any of our cases that we were actually involved in. We couldn't... by policy we were prohibited from using hypnosis. We had to call another hypnotist in. If we needed a hypnosis session, we'd call another Ranger to come in and do the hypnosis. Because you have to be detached from the investigation so you don't know any of the particulars about it so you can determine if the information you extract was something you may have implanted into the person. the only knowledge that you'd actually have of the case is what you sat down and talked to the person and get the information that you can at that time... you know while you're developing a rapport with them. And that's basically all you know about the information. And you start there and of course you go into your hypnosis and you put them into their hypnotic state and then you start trying to illicit information from them.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you ever have a case where you called someone in to do that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I had a couple. Joe Haralson was the one that came up and did them. One of them he couldn't ever get the guy... he wouldn't cooperate so he never would go under. The other one was ... nothing panned out... panned out from it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what other training did you have? Anything else stand out in your mind?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** a lot of it was homicide investigation. It was ... we had a lot of violent crimes and investigation schools that we went to to show the difference between organized event and an unorganized. Of course somebody actually prepares to come in and do a murder or whether it's just something that happened and things like that. The interrogation school and interview school that we went to were very good. A gentleman by the name of Stan Humphreys taught kinesic interview interrogation... very interesting course. Have you ever seen a show on TV called *Lie to Me*?

**NANCY RAY:** No.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Watch it and it's... it's not that easy but you know he just looked at several different things and you have to. And it can't be just one thing, it has to be a cluster of things that take place while you're talking to somebody.

**NANCY RAY:** I always feel like I'm being analyzed when I'm talking to you guys (*laughter*). OK... anything else from your training that you want to tell us about?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No.

**NANCY RAY:** You'd go ever couple of years for in-service...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Every two years we went or every year we went to in-service. They changed it and we didn't go for a full week but we'd go for 2 ½ or 3 days. But they changed it from once every two years to once every year. And that way... because a lot of the Rangers are busy and they can't go to those schools you know just can't physically make it because they're tied up on cases and going once every two years sometimes got to be a problem. If you didn't make the school, then you had to make up your training somewhere else. And so they started doing it that way, this way.

**NANCY RAY:** Well how long were you in Brenham?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** One year.

**NANCY RAY:** And then where did you go?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Here (*Livingston*).

**NANCY RAY:** OK so you had two duty stations as a Ranger.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes, um hmm.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what about while you're here. What kind of manhunts... or maybe Brenham too... any kind of manhunts that you did? What did you use? How did you...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** One of the ... this is... they may think this is funny but they had a manhunt over in Grimes County one day. I didn't know anything about it but I happened to be going into the sheriff's office and the sheriff was there and we were talking. I said what's going on. He said we've got a manhunt going on. I said OK, I'll solve it for you and then he gets a telephone call... we've got him. And here, we've had several here. Even ... there were some... I can't remember exactly what the deal was but we were spending a lot of time over in the Lumberton area looking for a guy. I spent several days over there and ...

**NANCY RAY:** Now is this on foot or how are ya'll doing this?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well sometimes it's on foot, sometimes with horses, helicopters, vehicles... we had a wide area we were looking at... TDC dogs, other dogs and things like that. We had one here recently north of town up here. And Highway Patrol stopped a guy. It ended up he was a wanted felon and he bolted into the woods. And we secured the area, put up a perimeter and spent all that day and starting the next day looking for him. And of course we used, utilized four-wheelers, vehicles, horses, you know everything... helicopters, TDC dogs, our dogs, and all. And as it turned out, after we caught him and we got to talking to him, he said the only reason he didn't get away the night before was everywhere he went he'd see red lights on the highway or the county roads... he was always running into an officer somewhere. So we kept him contained and then about 3 o'clock that afternoon or 4 the next day, we shut the operation down because we didn't have any concerns... sightings of him... the dogs weren't tracking anymore. And backed out of the area and we happened to run across somebody who saw him again that

night and one of my Narcotics officers has a little tracking dog and they happened to respond to the area and catch him. And got him into custody... he stayed in the hospital for several days because these East Texas thorns and briars and everything else had ripped him up.

**NANCY RAY:** What about snakes? Isn't that a problem?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** He said he saw lots of snakes. This was a pretty *unknown word* creek he was on. we actually walked on both sides of that creek, five or six on each side, all the way up to the search spot trying to flush him out of his hiding but we didn't go far enough. And his leg was cut up and he had a lot of open wounds. He said he'd never come back to Texas. He said everything sticks you and cuts you. It normally does if you get in the woods. And Louisiana came and got him... he was wanted out of Louisiana. So...

**NANCY RAY:** You have a prison here too. Have you ever had any escapes that you've had to deal with?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** As a Ranger one time they had an escape that we dealt with but they caught the guy just shortly after he escaped. And of course in February 22<sup>nd</sup>, or 21<sup>st</sup>... trying to figure out how old my grandson is. They had a hostage situation here where they took some hostages. I was in Lufkin with my daughter, she was having a baby, so somebody else had to come down and cover for me on that. That's about the only couple of incidences that happened there.

**NANCY RAY:** So what kind of cases did you have here, in Livingston, as a Ranger?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I had several cases here as a Ranger. we had... shortly after I moved here they had a lady in Corrigan, Ms. Berry. She had a little motel and used to run a little motel in Corrigan, it had a couple of rooms there. And she was found dead in her bedroom, tied up, and the place was ransacked. And worked several days on that before things happened and we actually made three arrests out of it. And one of them, two of them were convicted of capital murder and given life in prison.

Another one, one of the co-conspirators, testified against them. So they gave him, he received a 20-year sentence. It was pretty interesting.

**NANCY RAY:** *(short pause to change disc)*. OK, we're back and you were talking about a case in Corrigan.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes, Miss Berry was murdered at her motel. And three suspects were arrested and subsequently convicted of that murder. And ... called and went up early in the morning... mid morning or so when the call came in. I go to Corrigan and contact the Chief of Police up there, Mr. James Riley. We worked the scene, or start working around the scene trying to interview folks around the area. And we called the Montgomery County crime lab to come up and process the actual scene inside the house. And they came up and processed the scene and while we were doing other things trying to develop some leads... and the leads that we developed were, all ended up in Houston County that night. You know at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and we're interviewing folks in Houston County up around Crockett and some of these folks are drunk you know. So... and we were able to rule all these folks out. So we come back home... I don't, it was 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning you go home and the next morning I get up and the meet with the detective here, Mr. Matt Parrish... and we started running leads around the Livingston area... names that may have been there or may have seen something or may have been involved. It turned out that all those didn't prove to be worthwhile. Well then we had, received a call from the Ranger in Lufkin that we have a lady here who may have information about your murder. So OK, he brings her down and we bring her into this office and we're talking to her and laid everything out just like you would with your recorder. I got my recorder on to record the conversation or the statements that she's given and she goes through the entire thing and we got enough to you know see if we could get a warrant. And so I try to play my recorder back and I didn't get the first word recorded.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh no.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** So, we had to go through the whole thing again and talk to her (*laughter*). Anyway, we subsequently got that taken care of, got the arrest warrants written and secured, and worked way into the night getting these three suspects arrested. We recovered the money that was taken from her house, the pistols, and other things. And I think it went down somewhere around 4 o'clock the next afternoon. So it was interesting the way it fell together... and as things come together, it moves rapidly at times and you just have to stay on it and go. While something's hot, you go with it and don't worry about going home. So it's one of those deals that's a good feeling once you get to that point.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, let me ask you this then. What, during your career, gave you the biggest sense of accomplishment? Maybe it was an honor or something you... a case you solved or something, maybe nobody even knows about it. But something that made you feel really, really good.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Umm...

**NANCY RAY:** You can think about it if you want to (*laughter*).

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Let's think about it and we'll come back to it.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, we'll do that. Well did you ever have any kidnappings that you had to deal with?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Can't remember any kidnappings. Like I said we had several murders though. we had a DA one time that said I wish one of you would bring me a murder case and you'd bring me a body. We had two that we didn't have... all we had was ashes and... We had a lady who was killed out here out of town and the suspect burned her, burned her remains in a burn pile. And we had another case where a lady was beaten severely... law enforcement was not contacted and subsequently she was cremated and we had to go back and piece that together.

**NANCY RAY:** Now how do you piece something together after cremation?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** We... of course... first of all we went back with the guy in EMS who picked her up who talked about the injuries that she had. And then we contacted the hospital and contacted the doctors in Houston and interviewed them to see what her injuries were... was this the cause of her death

mainly. Or did something else cause the death. And they were able to explain to the DA about what had transpired and taken place. And then we go back and visit all the family around up there and see if they had seen anything and some of them had. They had seen him whupping her in the yard and then an ambulance came and picked her up... not just one it was several that had seen the ... the abuse he had put on her.

**NANCY RAY:** People are bad.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** People are bad.

**NANCY RAY:** All right... well what about... were you ever drawn on with a gun?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No.

**NANCY RAY:** Good. Did you ever save anybody's life that you can think of? Or feel like they saved yours?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, I... *(laughter)*

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

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** ... no.

**NANCY RAY:** All right. What about bank robberies? Did you ever have any bank robberies?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** We had some bank robberies here. The bank in Shepherd I think got hit twice.

**NANCY RAY:** Shepherd... why do they pick the small towns? Easy to get away or..

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I guess so. they'd done that one and there was one here in town and one over in Coldspring. I think the one in Shepherd they ultimately caught them in some other bank robberies. Of course the FBI came in and worked those and we worked closely with them and then they would do the follow-up on them.

**NANCY RAY:** A lot of details to being a Ranger, is that right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** What was the... on the reports... you were talking about writing reports. Do you still go back... do you have any unsolved cases where you have to go back and look at reports you've written?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yeah, I have a couple that the Ranger here works on from time to time and he goes back and reviews them. like the Natasha Ashley case, I left the entire case file with him and a couple of others. and so the writing of the cases... he writes a longer report than I wrote and but it's not uncommon to have reports a couple or three hundred pages long. And that's not real... it's something that's gonna take a while. We had one here... started out we had an arson up here in Corrigan and it ended up branching from there to a theft ring that went from here to a long way... and involved eight or ten different folks. And when you try to write the report you refer to defendant one, suspect number one, and such and such. And you go along like that and they took exhibit 93 you know. And trying to keep all the numbers straight during the report is a big deal. So... and the details you have to put into the reports, and what you have to do is document how you track your evidence. Sometimes you pick it up or it comes in your possession until you get it to the lab or you get it into an evidence room somewhere. And it's... it can be tedious at times.

**NANCY RAY:** It sounds like it but those details pay off.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes, they do.

**NANCY RAY:** What about any undercover work? Did you ever do that? Did you ever work with informants?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Not informants as such. One time I went to Mississippi and picked one up and tried to work some with him but it didn't work out so he went back to prison.

**NANCY RAY:** Went back to prison (*laughter*). Well the Huntsville prison uprising, were you a Ranger when that went on?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, I was not.

**NANCY RAY:** What about the Branch Davidian?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I was a Ranger but I was over in Brenham at that time and did not ever go up there. They sent several people from Company A but I didn't go to the Branch Davidian.

**NANCY RAY:** Well have you ever been involved in , an incident that involved another law enforcement officer... maybe he was killed or something?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** We investigated a couple of shootings where... one of them was the mayor here several years ago. actually the Highway Patrol in Montgomery County stopped this guy and was gonna write him a warning for not having mud flaps. And ended up he chased him for 43 miles. They ran over him and they deployed the spikes and both front tires were gone. All tires flat on the back and ended up that the trooper shot and killed him... and just south of town here just as you come into Livingston. And I had multiple agencies involved. Lots of spent casings that we looked for from different places where he fired on them by either... he was shot at from and just north of Cleveland where we recovered those spent casings and we recovered to live rounds and two spent casings from a shotgun. After you watch videos, all the videos for a long time, you pinned some stuff down that... I can remember the captain, when I called and told him that I was going out on this... didn't really know exactly what I had. And then he called and he tells me let me know what, when you get there, what you got. Well when I first pulled up it was utter chaos. Everybody is going every direction. When I called him back, he said do you need some help? I said I would appreciate some. And so he comes up... he actually came to the scene also and sent a couple of other Rangers up with him. So we worked the deal it was... had the DPS chopper out of Austin who flew the route and video'd the entire route where the thing took place. and when we finally wound down that afternoon, the captain asked me again said do you need help tomorrow because I was gonna interview a lot of witnesses the next day. I said well, how many can you give me? He said a hundred and something Rangers in the state, how many of them do you want? I said well send me... can I get four? (*laughter*) Well we had four of us went down and interviewed all the witnesses and took statements so it worked out real well.

**NANCY RAY:** What you just said... I understand that if a Ranger calls for help, everybody... you drop what you're doing and you go help that Ranger. Is that true?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** True. Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** And that's an example of one time you had to do it.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yeah. So there were a couple of places we had some retirement functions going on for people I knew that I wasn't able to make and go to but I just... sometimes you just miss out on things that you'd really like to go do. And no... when you're working on something... and I always... and you've touched on it there... is if another Ranger called and needed something in my area, we took care of it then, not later. If we wasn't just completely bogged down in something where we could not absolutely turn loose, we'd go take care of it and then get back... get the information to him.

**NANCY RAY:** Well as a Ranger, you had to work long hours. You didn't... how did you separate what you had on your mind from... you know your day at the job with when you went home to your family?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I'm gonna attribute that to my first Highway Patrol partner. he said you'll fare well if whenever you go home at night, when you shut the door, the patrolman stays in the car and you go in the house. When you get back and get ready to go to work, you go back to the car and you put him back on and you go to work. You don't mix the two. You try not... try to keep it separate.

**NANCY RAY:** It sounds easy.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It sounds easy. Sometimes it's not but it sounds easy but it's really not. But that's something you have to do. You have to separate what you do. My wife, she gets irritated at me all the time because people will ask her what's going on. They hear bits and pieces and she says I don't know. If you want to know, you need to call him. He doesn't *tell* me anything. And I don't. We normally don't discuss what goes on. We try to keep it separated.

**NANCY RAY:** You have to have some kind of normal... normalcy in your life. OK. Well what about the... any kind of unusual responsibilities that you have as a Ranger. I know sometimes you drive the

governor and you do some kind of special details or whatever. Did you ever have to drive the governor? Did they ever come to Livingston?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I've been with the governor several times. Ann Richards, George Bush also, Rick Perry... one of the interesting things about Ann Richards is she is a very impatient lady. And I've had her get out of the car twice on me because we weren't able to move and she'd get out and walk to where she needed to go.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh no.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Oh yes. She was... she was always nice to us, she was always nice to her escorts. And I remember one time Milton Wright who is now sheriff in Fort Bend County... he and I drew governor detail in Houston. And of course any time you draw the detail, you always go down with the front people from her office or their office to run routes to see where you need to go and how to get there. she landed that night. There were actually two flight loads. She landed and Milton was the lead. He took the governor, goes through the terminal, and my plane hadn't landed yet. And the governor comes back and gets in the car and said it's OK, we're ready to go. And Milton said OK Governor, your other plane hasn't landed yet and as soon as they land we'll go. So she talked a little bit and then she goes, "we're still here." Yes Governor, your plane hadn't landed yet and as soon as it does, we'll go. She said "who do you work for?" *(he said)* Just a second, I'll go tell him I'm gone. *(laughter)* So he comes and tells me we're out of here and as they're pulling out of the airport, the plane starts coming down. Of course they're several minutes ahead of us but I don't think I would have found that place if I hadn't ran the route before... to find my way around. And sometimes you get hung out and you stay long hours with the governor. We picked her up one morning Ranger Cheryl Steadman... We picked her up and it was well after a basketball game that the Rockets were playing in a playoff that we got to come home. And went to several fundraisers that she went to and then also we went to this playoff game. I'd never been to

a basketball game, professional game before. But you know I got home around 3 or 4 o'clock that morning. You know you stay until her plane takes off.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what was the most enjoyable thing about being a Ranger to you? (*he gave me a look*)... You're thinking again.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well, it was nice being a Ranger. You got a lot of recognition for maybe not who you were but because of the badge and your position. matter of fact I had... the chief deputy, Kenny Smith, over in Fayette County, he got mad at me one time and says I'm not going off with you anymore. Why, Kenny? He said we go out here to these things and I introduce myself as Chief Deputy of Fayette County and it really doesn't have a whole lot of effect on them. He said you introduce yourself as a Ranger and they just fall down and slobber all over your feet (*laughter*). He said I'm not going with you anywhere else. And that's not... I tell you one thing I did experience after retired. I went to work for Deep East Texas Council of Government as a Homeland Preparedness Planner, Homeland Security. And people who don't recognize you... when I go to places I would normally go as a Ranger, the door's open. You know you don't have to sit in a lobby. And when you're somewhere else, they ask who you are and who you're with and have a seat over there and I'll call the sheriff and see if he wants to talk to you. Where as a Ranger, you just... those doors open for you. And the prestige and the mystique of the Ranger badge and the Ranger Service or Ranger Division is just unbelievable.

**NANCY RAY:** Well can you describe how you felt when you put on that badge... that Ranger badge?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well it was unbelievable to start with. ... I was an old country boy, grew up in the sticks and how he's gonna be a Texas Ranger? And people laugh and say what well would you have been if you weren't in law enforcement? I said I'd probably be in prison you know. That's where a lot of my kinfolks are but you know... But ...

**NANCY RAY:** Well did you think about what made you feel good, made you feel really proud? Have you come up with anything yet? Can you think of a case you solved that you thought I feel really good about that? We'll come back to it.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well I think... one of the ones that we put together and of course I wasn't by myself on this. We had lots of help from folks here. There was an investigator named Dennis Allen who worked for me as a captain until he moved back to Silsbee as chief of police, and a couple other investigators. We worked together a long time and a lot of hours, a lot of tedious hours, sifting through this rubble. And then...

**NANCY RAY:** Is that the one that had the body in it?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes. Yeah, I think that... that was a good one. And the only way we, we assumed it was this lady but she had some unique dental work that was done by a dentist here in Livingston. And when he was in the military, he was a forensic dentist or did forensic work on teeth. And we took that tooth to him and said can... we know she was a patient. Do you have any records of, x-rays of her teeth? He said yes. He goes and pulls them out. He examined them and he said there's no doubt who that is. You know because there was a little uniqueness in the way the filling was put in and he was able to identify it with those fillings. Any case that you worked on that you got positive results out of was invigorating you know. You do the high fives and everything else... whether it was a kidnapping or theft or whatever.

**NANCY RAY:** What about a... of course most criminals if you think about it, what they're doing they're not very smart but do you have any dumb criminal stories that are funny?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** One every day. I probably do but I can't think of one right now.

**NANCY RAY:** That's OK. Well I show that you retired from the Ranger Service January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003. Is that right?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Um hmm.

**NANCY RAY:** Why don't you tell us a little bit about what you've been doing since then?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well the first morning, I was laying in bed and the... I heard this loud boom and the house shudders a little bit. And I got dadgum... they're having a Civil War re-enactment over at the park. And I'm thinking my goodness those are big cannons they're shooting off... it happened to be the shuttle falling out of the sky.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh my.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** And then my daughter calls and says turn the TV on you know. And that's how... I'm retired. I don't have a job and I don't have any responsibility and I have to come down and say can I go with ya'll? (*laughter*) Can I go with ya'll and look? And didn't get to go but one day and went over and helped search there. And before I retired, I stopped and visited with county judge here and he was talking about a position that was coming up with the Deep East Texas Council of Government which was the emergency preparedness planner or Homeland Security planner, whichever title you want to put on it. And they had ... had offered that job was coming up and I had visited with them before I retired. And they called me back and said we can't find your application. OK. The reason you can't find my application is I did not turn one in and I haven't got one. Well, we got an interview set up with you on February 21<sup>st</sup> which again is my birthday. So I go to the interview. And during the interview, we discussed what my plans are which was to run for sheriff in this county and ... and we discussed that. And then got through with the interview and I came home and Walter *unknown name* the Director, called me back that night and said I'd like to offer you the job but we have some stipulations. I said OK, what are they? We understand that you're gonna run for sheriff. I said yes sir. That is true. you can work for us but we don't want you politicing while you're working for us... actively politic as he put it. And once you file for sheriff, your job will be terminated with the COG. OK, I can live with that. He said well come over and get... you know we got signed up and ... it was a good job. Kept you busy, kept you running. Pretty well set your own... normally 8 to 5 but if you had to work over you set your schedule they way

you'd come out with a 40-hour workweek as they put it and ... or work as long as you wanted to going to different entities, different agencies in a 12-county area. And I think that's the only job that I worked for 13 ½ months that I ever worked at that long that I didn't get chewed out for something (*laughter*). It was a good job. It just wasn't what I wanted to do. And when I signed up to run, of course I went and informed them of it. And they said OK you understand your job's over? I said yes sir, sure do... knew that up front. He said well, come back after the first of the year. We need to wait until we find somebody to replace you and we'll hire you back as a consultant. I said OK, we'll do that and I worked another 3 ½ months for them until they filled my slot. And they filled my slot with a Ranger out of Lufkin. He retired before I did and matter of fact, he's still doing the job. He loves it.

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

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Don Morris.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. So what year did you run for sheriff, the first time?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** '04.

**NANCY RAY:** '04, OK, and as you said you just started your second term. And you get chewed out regularly here?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, I normally do the chewing here (*laughter*). They come in and make suggestions (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** I figure you probably still run into a few people.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Let's see. When I quit working for the COG in April of '04, my fulltime job was politicking from then until November, that's what I did every day. Get up and go to another part of the county and visit and talk with folks. I even moved to Corrigan for a few weeks. Took my travel trailer and moved up there so I wouldn't have to come 23 miles home every night. I just stayed there and every day was another day I'd go out and visit and talk. I do not see how somebody who has a fulltime job can run for a county-wide office, that doesn't have a lot of help, ever expects to beat an incumbent. Or ever

expects to win the election. I had a lot of good people working with me. The Republican Club here worked quite hard for me. And a lot of my friends vote in the Democratic Primary but normally when it comes to the general election, they vote for who they think is gonna do the best job. They'll cross party line and vote. But normally they vote in a Democrat... and as there has been for a long time in East Texas, if you don't vote in a Democratic Primary, you don't have any say who's running local government. Now it's a little different, it's pretty well split.

**NANCY RAY:** Well congratulations on your second term anyway.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well thank you.

**NANCY RAY:** Who were your captains... I forgot to ask. Your first captain, who was that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Bob Prince.

**NANCY RAY:** Bob Prince. Was he your only captain?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, Dee Vickers and then Earl Pearson.

**NANCY RAY:** Well do you have any other cases you'd like to tell us about? Let's see, did ya'll ever have cattle thefts here or oilfield thefts?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** We had some cattle... it wasn't when I was a Ranger but since I took office, less than a year ago matter of fact. We had 53 head of cattle taken from a man's place out here. Ended up making an arrest the next day, recovering quite a few of the cattle that had been stolen... 53 or... it was a pretty significant number of cattle. And it was just one of those lucky things you know. We go out there and there's three head of cattle that had died in the field because when they stole the cows, they locked them away from water. They couldn't get to water to they died. And it was just one of those... stroke of luck. I'll just say we got lucky, we were lucky in the case. I happened to be going... left there and just drove up the highway. Drove to the end of it, drove a little further and turned and came back. There were some guys working on a fence out there so I pulled in. I actually stopped and talked to the owner of the land first. He was talking so we visited for a little bit and he pulled off. One of the guys motioned and we

went over and he was telling us well a couple of days ago I saw this pickup with this person driving it, driving up and down through here. I don't know whether there was anything to it or not but there may be. So as it turned out, it was the guy who had stolen the cattle. And we ended up recovering several head over in Trinity County. He, the guy that actually... it's still an open case... well, we're prosecuting him... we had an interstate trailer stolen before that and he was the one that stole the trailer or it was hooked to his pickup in his yard the next day. So... and so we recovered quite a few of the gentleman's cows.

**NANCY RAY:** What was he trying to do with them? Was he trying to sell...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** He was actually taking them... he had taken some to San Saba. He had sold some there. And he sold some in other places and he had these others penned at a place over in Trinity County.

**NANCY RAY:** Well have you ever had any problems from a... racial problems in this area that you had to deal with as a case?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** As a case, no. But as a Ranger, yes.

**NANCY RAY:** How was that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** The one in Jasper, the dragging over there when King and the other drove drug Byrd. I went over several times on riot control and the ... group called New Black Panthers... you know when they marched we'd go over. And of course the Klan was there one time and they were there at the same time and it was a big mess. And during the trial in Jasper, of course I went over and worked courtroom security with lots of folks working courtroom security. My detail was, I was assigned to the jury and stayed with the jury the entire case.

**NANCY RAY:** How long did that last?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** The one I was on lasted a little over a week I think. And they were sequestered one night. So what was ironic about that, there was a lady on the bus who was married to one of the detectives who worked for the Jasper Police Department. We picked them up every morning at the

post office. They'd load the bus and we'd drive them through town and stop at the courthouse and they'd unload and go upstairs and we'd park the bus and stay with them. Well she was trying to be inconspicuous on the bus as to who she is and I look at her in the mirror and I say Mrs. Rector, do you know what your husband's call number is on the radio (*laughter*)? But you know, watching that case and watching the effect it had on the jury and the closeness they built as a group was remarkable. In just a short time, they bonded big time you know. they, some of them developed permanent friendships out of it.

**NANCY RAY:** And what caused that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** I don't know, just everybody... I don't know. It was just a phenomenon... I can't explain it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well the the incident itself had already happened. You weren't involved in investigating that or anything?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, no. Billy Rowles, who was sheriff over there at that time and I had worked with for a number of years on the Highway Patrol. He and I were partners twice. And was sheriff over there at that time.

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

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Rowles, ROWLES. But it was a... to watch the case develop in the court and to listen to it and watch... it was real well put together, very well put together. We've gone to, in the Ranger Service, I've gone to lots of KKK marches.

**NANCY RAY:** Really? Can you tell us a little bit about that? We haven't heard anything about that.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well we've been... even on the Highway Patrol, one of the first encounters we had with, I say encounter, with the Klan was at a demonstration on the Capitol. And on a riot squad, as a group, I was assigned to go to Austin. As luck would have it, they held us in reserve in a building and we were sitting around playing dominoes all day. And then this bunch starts to leave and mayhem breaks

out and they can't get back to the vehicles because the ... I think they were calling themselves the Brown Mexican or the Brown Mafia or something... it was an Hispanic group.

**NANCY RAY:** Brown Berets?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Brown Berets, huh yes... that's it. And so our squad falls out, we take the lead. And we do a wedge formation which Coy Smith, who is a Ranger in Uvalde, was the point of it. Barry Caver was to his left, I was to his right. And then several other troops were manned behind us. And the way this thing works you know, in get in the wedge and you do the little half steps with your little sticks poking it... and they will move out of your way. The other squads came down and filled along the sides and the Klan was in the middle of it. They were in the middle. And in between the bottles and the rocks and the bricks that were being thrown there was some comedy that came out of it. When we first got started, we were marching and we were going at a pretty slow pace. And we have this camera man that had his camera and he squatted... filming as we were coming down toward him and he starts to get up. When he starts to get up, he stumbles and falls and Coy Smith never missed a step. He just stepped right over the top of him and we just kept on... kept going (*laughter*) and they helped him up after he got behind us. But you know, like I say, the rocks and the bricks and bottles and cans and stuff were being thrown over.

**NANCY RAY:** Were you ever injured in something like that?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No. No, we had some that were injured. I think we had a major that had a... that was hit up side the head in the face with something and caused him pretty good pain. I don't know if it broke his jaw or whatever but... But it was so loud during that time, like I said Charlie Graham was our squad leader and you couldn't hear anything. And we'd practiced for a long time. We'd been doing it for years and when you can't hear... he just had to get behind Coy Smith or was it Gerald Caldwell... anyway, one of the... two great big guys. He got behind the point man and just grabbed hold of his belt. And when he needed to slow down, he'd pull on him and if he needed to speed up, he'd push him. And

that's how we moved. And like I say, it's amazing the way it worked. Everybody... you have a big crowd and you're going down and as you're approaching them, nobody wants to get poked with that stick and they peel out of the way. So... I never got close enough to poke anybody with it (*laughter*).

**NANCY RAY:** Well, maybe you missed out.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Good thing, good thing... yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** Well is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your career as a Ranger? I know we can only capture a small portion and you're gonna think of things once we...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Once you leave and shut the thing down, I will.

**NANCY RAY:** You'll say I wish I had told them about that.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** One thing... it was a helicopter. I can tell you one about the helicopter. We have out here out of town... we had two guys come walking up to a house. They said they'd been in a helicopter crash. OK, where was the helicopter? I don't know. It's back out yonder somewhere. And we don't know where the helicopter is. But we call for the helicopter to meet us the next morning so we can go fly the area because they're telling us they're flying highlines you know. So they get here... again the DPS helicopter... and they set down and the pilot asked me what kind of chopper are we looking for? And I told him the number or the name of it and he said hmm, that's just like the one we're in. I go... can I get out? And it wasn't, it wasn't like DPS, it was one of these little small bubble things. And it didn't take long to find it. We found it pretty quickly.

**NANCY RAY:** So there had actually been a crash?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yes, it crashed and both of them walked away from it, a real helicopter crash.

**NANCY RAY:** So you used the helicopter when you were trying to find... when would you call in for a helicopter?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** We'd call them in on searches for missing children, missing adults... manhunts like that and manhunts for criminals. Or manhunt for... looking for stolen property or vehicles that may be stashed somewhere. Any number of things you can use a helicopter for.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you ever have missing children you had to look for?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** No, not that I remember. But my first helicopter ride was pretty interesting. I'd never been off the ground before. Well it was when my father-in-law died. it was... like I say it was November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1971. And they came to me at the Academy and said your father-in-law has died. Do you have your car here? No sir, I'm carpooling this week and I don't have my ride here. OK. Sometime after lunch we'll get you home. We may have to jackrabbit you across the state from here to Lufkin but we'll get you home. Go ahead and get your stuff packed and we'll make arrangements for you. After we got through eating lunch, they came and got me and said OK, we've got you transportation home. I walk out there and this helicopter is sitting out there and they said you're gonna ride in this (*laughter*). I said I've never been in one before. And it was... it was an experience you know to fly in... It was an hour and 45 minutes flying back to Lufkin you know and nearly a four-hour drive. I got home a lot quicker.

**NANCY RAY:** Yeah you did.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** And Earl Swetman was the pilot, I think he ended up being the chief pilot for DPS for years. And... but to fly with these guys now, they're very meticulous about what they do. And I can't remember his first name but the pilot in Beaumont at that time... his name was Moses but I can't remember... Moses was his name. And he was very meticulous. You'd be real comfortable flying with him. Now Paul Creech here, he worked in the East Texas area and he was born and raised in Colmesneil just north of Woodville. But they were a great bunch of guys. They were you know good folks.

**NANCY RAY:** All right. Well looking back over your career, is there someone that you can think of that you considered maybe to be your supporter or somebody who really encouraged you or helped you? Any one person stand out?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Well one person that tried to push most of the guys in our area at the time, I'll say the Highway Patrol area of course was old Charlie Graham. He always wanted you to achieve more than what you were. Or he wanted you to achieve what you felt like what you wanted to do.

**NANCY RAY:** And you said his last name was Graham?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Graham. Yeah, Charles Graham. And he was a big push into... very positive influence. He was a good man to work for... hard man to work for but a good man to work for. And he believed in doing what... in doing your job. As long as you did your job, you didn't have much problem. But when you slacked off, now he would tell you.

**NANCY RAY:** He probably had some high expectations I would think.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** And quite a few of his folks who have worked under him did promote on and move up in the ranks in DPS... and have done well.

**NANCY RAY:** Well before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share with us or you know anything you'd like your legacy to be for somebody a hundred years from now to look back and say... Kenneth Hammack, he was... What would you want people to say about you?

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** (*laughter*) I don't know. He was just an old country boy that found the right track and moved on and pursued what he wanted to do... and continued to do what he wanted to do until he got it completed or until he completed it. I don't know... You know, what do you say? you know... and I maybe I took my position with the state a little nonchalant. I think my kids have more mystique with what I've done over the last 30-something years than I do. you know I'm just a small cog in what's taking place and hoping that as, in my position, that I continue to make the wheel go around and to still get things accomplished.

**NANCY RAY:** Well I guess for those of us who have not been in the Ranger organization, what is so common and routine to you is not to us. And so that's the purpose of this video is to help capture a little bit about you and what you gave to the state. And a lot of the things you take for granted that we really don't. they're just common things to you but to us... a Texas Ranger's bigger than life. It's just kind of like what you said about your kids. So ...

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It's just something that I can't explain what the deal is. you know kids come in here and I give them pencils and I give them cards and lots of things and they just seem to marvel at things you do.

**NANCY RAY:** That's true, yeah.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** It's just something I take for granted you know because it's something I've done all my life.

**NANCY RAY:** Basic and routine to you.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Yeah.

**NANCY RAY:** And it isn't to us. Well, I want to thank you for your time today and for this interview. And thank you for your service to the state of Texas.

**KENNETH HAMMACK:** Thank you and I appreciate it.