

Interview with  
**GARY HENDERSON**  
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Hemphill County Sheriff's Office  
Canadian, Texas  
Monday—October 27, 2008

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray  
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Gary Henderson, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



## Introduction

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**GARY HENDERSON**  
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED

**NANCY RAY:** My name is Nancy Ray. I am visiting with Gary Henderson of Canadian, Texas. We are at the Hemphill County Sheriff's Office with... also present is Eddie Ray. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Henderson's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Henderson, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes.

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

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** And Ranger Henderson, 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?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Today is Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. So let's start with asking about your full name.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Gary Steven Henderson.

**NANCY RAY:** Is that STEVEN?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. And where were you born?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Austin, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** And the date?

**GARY HENDERSON:** August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1954.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. And is that where you grew up?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** OK and you went to school in Austin?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Went to McAllen High School in Austin, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** OK and you graduated from there?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I did.

**NANCY RAY:** And what year was that?

**GARY HENDERSON:** 1972.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. What about when you were going to school, did you have any favorite subjects or anything?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I was a music major... something not many people realize.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh, I didn't know.

**GARY HENDERSON:** That was... in high school I could, I played in the band, in the orchestra, and I was in the choir.

**NANCY RAY:** Very good. What instruments?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well my primary instrument was uh trumpet but I could play five brass instruments.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, name those.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, I mean you have a trumpet, baritone bass, French horn, and finger trombone.

**NANCY RAY:** All right, you were pretty ambidextrous, you got both clefs too.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yeah, bass and treble.

**NANCY RAY:** You surely did. All right. And what did you do when you graduated?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well I went to college at Southwest Texas State University. I still have a problem calling it Texas State University.

**NANCY RAY:** I understand that. And did you graduate from there?

**GARY HENDERSON:** No, no. Right after I graduated high school, my idea was go to college and major in music. And in December of my freshman year, I went to work for DPS in the Communications Center at Headquarters in the EOC. And I was a night time security guard at Headquarters which allowed me to study while I was also doing my job. We had to make round periodically throughout the building checking doors, things of that nature. Sign people in and out of the building... but the remainder of the time they allowed us to study. So it worked out really well for me. I made money while still getting to go to college and uh being able to do all my studies.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, and so what changed your mind not to continue with the music?

**GARY HENDERSON:** DPS. You don't know at that age at 18 really where you're gonna end up. You go off doing what you feel like you're very comfortable doing and music was my comfort zone, and still is. I still love music. But being around the troopers and the Rangers and the folks that I knew in DPS just opened a chapter in my life that uh I thoroughly enjoyed.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Well before we move on into the law enforcement, let's talk a little bit more about the music since that's something you enjoy. (laughter) How are you using it now?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh now, I don't use it as much as I used to. I mean I... when I was still with the Rangers out of Pampa I sang in a couple of productions up in Perryton where they did a oh, kind of a dinner theatre type deal uh to raise money for Make-a-Wish or different organizations like that. And they did a deal called "Lawman and the Lady" and I was asked to perform in parts of that so I did for two years running in that. And then it got to be... the guy

that's running it is now the chief deputy in Ochiltree County. It was a lot of work for him so it kind of ended its run I guess you would say just because it was too much work... and then for him to keep doing what he was doing. Uh and I do get asked a lot because of the situation in 2003 where I sang the National Anthem, I get asked repeatedly to do that all over. Uh I mean I have... I do it at the Jail Association Conference every year in Austin. I do it at our local rodeo each year uh I just get asked by lots of organizations to come and sing that for them.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, while we're talking about singing, we might as well talk about the time you sang the National Anthem at the Texas Rangers' game. What year was that?

**GARY HENDERSON:** 2003, just before I retired.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you have the words memorized? I hear there was something about the sign but I'm not sure exactly sure what it was.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I tell you, you know, it's really funny how things work. I had... how it started is I got a call from the gentleman at the museum one day and I'm thinking why in the world am I getting a call from this guy at the museum? I said they don't even know who I am, which is good. I mean anonymity is a wonderful thing. And so I called him back and he said dude, I've got a problem. And I said let me see if I can help you. And he said, tells me about this night at the ballpark, Texas Ranger night at the ballpark. And I thought well that's a great idea. And he said yeah, our suggestion was we have a Ranger captain throw the ball out. And I'm still following this trying to wonder where this is leading to. And he said the Ranger ball club agreed to the night at the ballpark, however, they wanted... if the captain was gonna throw the ball out, a Ranger had to sing the National Anthem. And then I knew I'd been ratted out. And some girls in Austin, and I still blame them to this day, ratted me out because the Christmas before they had asked me to come to Austin and sing at the DPS Christmas party that they have at Headquarters

to represent the Rangers. So I did that and uh... Well I agreed to do it and as it got closer, I got extremely nervous. And I thought wow! This is just gonna be tough. And uh so I had all of my family there. My wife's family was there. There was probably 30 people that came from Canadian, Pampa, Houston, San Antone, Austin, to see me sing. And even some from Lubbock that I knew. And we got there and they put me in this little room downstairs and said OK, go over there and warm up you know. They weren't real... I guess they deal with this ever day you know and I thought they'd have been a little bit more cordial. And they just said OK, there's a room over there, go warm up. And I'm like oh my God, I was nervous. And I thought oh Lord, I don't know that I can face 30,000 people and sing. I don't have a problem talking in front of 30,000 people, I could do that. But singing? And that's really the hardest song in America to sing because it has a very broad range. And I had practiced and practiced and sang in the truck... I mean done everything in the world. Well it came time to walk out to the field and we walk out there. My family's all out on the field and Richard Sweaney, the captain out of Dallas, is there and we're talking. And he says man, he said, I tell you what, he said I'm so happy that all I've gotta do is throw a ball and not sing. And me, I'm kind of a jokester anyway and I'm gonna try to take the heat off of me so I look at him and said Richard, I'd much rather be singing the National Anthem than I would be throwing that ball. And he said why? And I said well, it's not bad being known as the Ranger that missed a note on the hardest song in America to sing. But you can never get over being the Ranger captain that one-hopped the ball to home plate. And he just looked at me and he just had a stroke. He said oh my God, you've screwed me up. (laughter) So then up walks the Rangers folks and they say OK, this is how it will go down. You'll go throw the ball and then they'll do this and they'll announce and you'll sing. So we did... got to that point and they looked at Richard and they said who's catching the ball for you? And totally

wiped him out. He just was not prepared for that. He said I was told just to throw the ball. He said no, you have to supply the catcher. And he was in panic mode. So I said Richard, I'll catch the ball, don't worry about it, I'll catch the ball. So that took a little bit of the sting off of me. And I didn't have to worry about it but I still worried about forgetting the words, always do. And here you're in front of all these people but more importantly, representing the Rangers. As a whole, you don't want to bring any disrespect or anything of that to them. So being the smart fellow that I like to think I am, I put the words in the crown of my hat because I knew I'd take my hat off and I'd have my hat right here. So I'm not gonna forget the words. But then I had to get over this facing the crowd thing. Well then they tell me you walk to home plate and you face centerfield. Well at the ballpark, centerfield is nothing but a vacant lot because it has a waterfall and all that. So I'm thinking, oh this is perfect. Well while you're downstairs getting ready you know, you're gonna say you're little prayer you know... just get me through this you know and I need You with me this time, and... So when I had to face centerfield I'm thinking wow, this is great. Things are coming together. And then just as I started to sing, of course it was a cappella, no music. Just as I start singing, they start rolling the words up on the big jumbotron out in centerfield. So I mean, don't tell me prayers don't get answered. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Just in the nick of time.

**GARY HENDERSON:** But, and they did... And at that point, I totally relaxed and just let rip. And it was, it was a great experience, it really was.

**NANCY RAY:** And you have the distinction I would imagine of being the only Texas Ranger to do that.

**GARY HENDERSON:** As far as I know. I know they're a lot that are qualified to do it, probably more so than myself. But, it was an honor. I mean it really, really was. And uh you know I've got the videotape to this day. So...

**NANCY RAY:** It makes a good memory too.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh, it does. And my brother in all of his infinite wisdom, he's a computer nerd so he takes and makes his own rendition of this thing. And I've only shared it with one group and they just thought it was hilarious. And so I don't let it out of my control very often. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** He did a little editing, right?

**GARY HENDERSON:** He did a *lot* of editing. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Oh goodness, well you mentioned a brother. Tell us about your family. When did you marry?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I married my wife May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1976, so we've been married 32 years. Her name is Sally. Uh, a wonderful girl, absolutely.

**NANCY RAY:** Did you have any children?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I've got two boys. My oldest son, Jeff, lives here in Canadian with his wife, Holly. Jeff just turned 31. And my youngest son, Kevin, is 28, and he lives in College Station. He unfortunately is an Aggie.

**NANCY RAY:** I wondered about that.

**GARY HENDERSON:** And I'm a devout Longhorn so we butt heads at Thanksgiving. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Makes an interesting day.

**GARY HENDERSON:** It does in fact. Because my wife's an Aggie, both my sons are Aggies, and I will *not* relent.

**NANCY RAY:** Well hang in there.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I'm going to.

**NANCY RAY:** What about your parents, what were their names? Or are their names?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well both my parents are deceased, Jack and Violet Henderson. They lived in Austin and retired out to Alpine. And they've both been deceased for some time now.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, and brothers? Sisters?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Two brothers. I have a brother, Jack, that lives in the small community of Tow, which is outside of Austin. And my other brother lives in Austin. His name is Randy. They're both older than I am.

**NANCY RAY:** So you're the baby of the family?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I'm the littlest one.

**NANCY RAY:** All right. Well, you graduated from high school then. And you started to college and then you ended up with the DPS. Is there... are there any other jobs in there before you went to DPS?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Uh, while I was going to high school I worked for the Austin Independent School District, just as a summer job. Uh it was nothing more than distribution of the school books during the summer. Actually, my choir teacher is the one that got me involved with that job and I did that for three years running until I graduated. Then of course I went on to college.

**NANCY RAY:** So who influenced you the most? Is there a person you can name that influenced you into the DPS?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Not, not really in the DPS per se. I mean my neighbor is the one that told me about the job. He already worked there doing what we did as security officers. And we were good friends and he introduced me to that but influence-wise, I think once I got there, just the enjoyment and the passion of that job just took its course uh with me. And I knew the day I went to work for DPS uh that I was going to retire as a Ranger. That was my goal from that day forward. I didn't know when I'd do it or how I would do it but that was my goal from day one.

**NANCY RAY:** So you, you were pretty focused then.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, I like to think I was. I always try to plan at least ten years in advance and uh that was just something that intrigued me. And I think it was more the respect end of it that they gained in the way they conducted themselves and carried themselves that impressed me the most. And little things like that make an impression on a young guy.

**NANCY RAY:** Yeah. So what year did you go through the school?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Through the Academy?

**NANCY RAY:** Yes, the Academy.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I went through in 1975.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, and tell us a little about the school.

**GARY HENDERSON:** *Ohhh.*

**NANCY RAY:** Your monitors and...

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh my. It was nothing I could ever have envisioned. I mean you know you're around the troopers every day and you see what you really want to see but you have no way of absolutely knowing what you're fixing to go into. But I knew one thing... that I would never quit. Uh they could run me to death, they could beat me to death, I would never quit. The only way I'd a left is if they would've just said you're just not the material we're looking for. Uh

because I don't quit, I don't ever quit on anything I do. And the monitors that we had, umm... Sergeant Dwain Cox was one of them. He retired as regional commander of DPS. Then I believe one was a Drivers' License sergeant, I believe his name was Langston. Uh and the other one was Sergeant Harold Emery who was a License and Weight sergeant out of Amarillo. And back in '75, that's all we had. We just had the three platoon sergeants. Nowadays they have corporals and other folks that go down and assist but back then we just had the three platoon sergeants.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Well, what did you learn? What stands out in your mind that you learned that helped you the most in your career?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh wow... gosh. You know you learn everyday of your life. I think during the Academy I was just learning, trying to learn how to get out of there. Uh because it was you know it was very intense. And you know we, we didn't get restricted by the timeframes of overtime. You know we just worked whenever they said work. And which is really how I was brought up. You know you don't punch a clock. You go to work and when the job's done you go home. Uh but...

**NANCY RAY:** Well what about the PT portion? I've heard that it was pretty tough at the Academy.

**GARY HENDERSON:** It was. Uh fortunately for me, I was extremely young. I was only 20 years old. And I was in excellent physical condition. Uh I could run forever and do most things. I mean it was tough, don't get me wrong. I mean there's not a day went by that I just didn't wish that PT was over with. But I could deal with it. I mean, again I was young. At 20 years old, you're just full of energy and uh it's a lot easier for you to adapt and go. But I came in in fairly good shape.

**NANCY RAY:** Well you said you were 20. Didn't you have to be 21 to become uh commissioned officer?

**GARY HENDERSON:** No ma'am. No. Twenty.

**NANCY RAY:** Twenty. All Right.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I was... actually it worked out to where I was 21 before I was commissioned because back when we were going through, it wasn't like today. Because today the Department is uh kind of behind in filling vacancies and it's very hard for them, for whatever reasons, and I don't know all the reasons. But I think a lot of them are monetary.... to keep filled. And back when I went through, we actually graduated more troopers than we had spots for. And they asked for volunteers to go into what they called khakis which means basically you stay in your khaki uniform until a spot opens up. And then at that point you're commissioned. Well we graduated. I believe we graduated on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> if I'm not mistaken. June 13<sup>th</sup> I think was our day. And I actually didn't get commissioned until September 1. But I volunteered for it simply because I wanted to stay in the Austin district and there was not guarantee that I would stay in the Austin district if I didn't volunteer for that. And it didn't bother me either way. I knew I'd graduate and I'd be just like everybody else. And so I opted to be one of the volunteers so that I could stay in Region 6B which they guaranteed me. So uh that's why I did what I did. And it worked out very well.

**NANCY RAY:** Well how many started in your class? And finished?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Ooh. My Alzheimer's will kick in now. I honestly... we graduated 98 I believe... 98 or 96. And I want to think that we started with 130 something like that.

**NANCY RAY:** Some of the others we've interviewed have been about a drop of 50 percent so I was wondering how many.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I don't think we lost as many as maybe they anticipated us losing. Uh but we still lost a lot. We still lost some that uh... and it still happens today. They go down there and the second day they're there, they're tired of filling out paperwork and they just quit. That's not a commitment. And those are not people you really want in the service anyway.

**NANCY RAY:** Right. OK. So your first duty station then, after you got out of your khakis, was in Austin.

**GARY HENDERSON:** No ma'am. While I was in khakis, I was in Austin, stationed right there at Headquarters. Uh the Highway Patrol office used to be on the corner where the Drivers License office is now. They both shared that building. And I stayed there until September 1 and I was stationed in Hearne, HEARNE. And it's just north of Bryan-College Station by about 18 miles.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. And how long were you there?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I was there almost twelve years.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, so you must have had some experiences there.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh my! (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell us about your experiences.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well I grew up there is what I did. You know coming out at 20 years old, I was 21 when I went to Hearne. Uh, that's too young, it really is. If I had it to do over (*short pause*)

**NANCY RAY:** OK, we're back. You were talking about your experiences in Hearne... you said you were too young.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, yeah. At 21, you really in my opinion... now there are exceptions to every rule. There are some very mature 21 year olds out there. In my case, I look

back and I realize that I was entirely too immature to be placed in a situation where you're making life-changing decisions. Uh thank goodness I had a senior partner that was 36 years old. Mature, had been on Highway at least 12 years. Uh and pretty much nurse maided me through the whole process. And uh, oh there were times that I hated him. He ended up being my sergeant at some point but he knew the right buttons to push and the right ways to motivate me to adjust. And it worked out, it did really well. But 21, was just awful tough. I was in a community of about 60 percent black and uh you're gonna get thrown into some situations that you're just at 21 not prepared for. And uh fortunately, like I said, I had a lot of good help. And then before I left Hearne I was the senior trooper in the sergeant area. So at that point, I was able hopefully to hand a little bit back to some others. Uh and I think that prepared me for where I ended up.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what was your lead partner's name?

**GARY HENDERSON:** My first partner was Fred Forsthoff.

**NANCY RAY:** How do you spell the last name?

**GARY HENDERSON:** FORSTHOFF. And he was there for a little over a year and a half before he promoted to sergeant. And then he transferred, he didn't transfer. He promoted and went down to Harlingen down in the Valley. And then he came back after a year or two as a sergeant in Bryan. And my other partner was a gentleman by the name of Haskell Lunsford. And he transferred after, I think, about four years.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, so what did they teach you to help you grow up? What did you take away from them?

**GARY HENDERSON:** (laughter) That if you messed up you're gonna be on your butt! (laughter) Uh, you know, patience probably was the main thing. You know uh having... watching the way he dealt with people. Watching how he uh conducted his traffic stops. You

know the maturity. It teaches you things that you don't realize that you have until a later point. Uh being... remaining calm, learning how to treat people. Uh you know a lot of times you come out of an academy and I'm not saying our academy is that way but you come out ten-foot tall and bulletproof. And you're ready to just slay the world and you think you've got a... when a guy gets tough with you, you think you've really gotta get on him. And that's not the way it is. And that's not the way uh that it should be. And so you pick up these things from those individuals. You still have to develop your own style because I can never be you and you can never be me. And I could never be what he was but I could take what he has to teach me and build my foundation off that and that's what I did.

**NANCY RAY:** OK and then you had to pass that on to younger troopers.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. What about... you were in the A&M area or nearby, right?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** Did that cause any problems or do any incidents stand out related to young Aggies coming through?

**GARY HENDERSON:** (laughter) Uh, well that's where I met my wife. On a blind date and I absolutely refused to go. And I said I don't do blind dates because they have great personalities.... I know how all this works. And finally I got convinced to go and the rest is history. I mean it was just... we knew from day one that we would probably get married. And I've never been able to change her mind from them Aggies and I don't know... That's my only failure.

**NANCY RAY:** Well you need one so you don't have to look for one.

**GARY HENDERSON:** But as far as the Aggies are concerned, there are two instances that probably stand out more than any as far as Aggies. And I have nothing against... and they're funny, everybody should have a good Aggie joke. But uh right after, and actually this story that I'm gonna tell you... America's Dumbest Criminals, a show that we used to have years ago, actually wanted me to drive to Houston from Pampa so they could film me telling the story. And I said there's no way I can get DPS to let me drive to Houston so it never got aired. But in 1984, right after DPS got their first Mustangs, I got one of the first ten that was issued in the state of Texas. And I was just like a child with a new toy. I mean Highway Patrolling was fun to me all over again. And I had a rocket now and I could go have a ball. Well I'm riding down the road one day on a shoulder. And one of my county commissioners, a good friend of mine, is riding with me. And he's just thinking I've got the neatest car in three counties, as did I. And I noticed this fellow coming up behind me. And he's just flying... back when the speed limit was 55 and I thought well... We didn't have the radar back then that could get them coming up behind you so I said well, he'll see me and he'll just go on by and I won't get him and this, that and the other. So he goes by and he just zips right by me. And as he goes by me he turns and looks at me and then he turns back around and then he turns again. And he just keeps a going. I thought this guy can't be this stupid you know. So I get in behind him and he's running about 75 miles an hour. I thought this guy's gotta be crazy so I flipped the lights on. He starts to pull over and I see him up there just shaking his head. And I thought this guy's... oh this is gonna be good. So we pull over and get him out. I do my contact and get him to the back and I said before we get started, I said I've just got to ask you this question. Oh yes sir, yes sir... a very polite young man. And I said did you *not* see me back there? And he goes officer, he said, I'm gonna tell you this funniest thing you've ever seen. He said I went by you and he said I looked and he said I turned around

and looked at you again. He said then I woke my girlfriend up and said Baby, look at this man... got his car painted just like a Highway Patrolman. (laughter) I didn't have the heart to write this boy a ticket, I just couldn't do it. I thought you know he's got troubles far bigger than what I can give him. So I wrote him out a warning and I said I tell you what I'm gonna do. I said you've got some issues to deal with and I'm gonna write you a warning. Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you. And he signed it and he started walking back to the car. And I said I do have one more question for you. And he goes, yes sir? And I said where do you go to school? He said well Texas A&M, why would you ask? And that is honest to goodness exactly how that story went down. And I thought nobody could ever duplicate that story. I mean it's just nobody... And that kid probably still... hadn't caught on to him yet.

**NANCY RAY:** Probably not.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Painted just like a Highway Patrol!

**NANCY RAY:** Well, it's captured now.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well I ask him, I said what did you think when I flipped those lights on? He said *oh shit*. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** You said there's another one. Is it as good as that one?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, uh it's kind of funny. Actually there's several, I could talk all day about this. Right, oh I guess I had been on eleven years and uh I stopped this 18-wheeler for driving pretty fast. And he gets out... now in my younger days, this never would have gotten to this point. But I liked to call myself pretty laid back at that point in my Highway Patrol career. And this truck driver, he gets out of his car and he starts cussing me the minute he gets out of that truck. Cusses me all the way to the back and gets back there and I had this buddy of mine riding with me again. And I said, I said fellow... and I'd already gotten his driver's license. I

said fellow, pardon me, just something's not right here. I said I don't know what it is, maybe it's just me, but I said here's your license. Why don't you go back up in that truck and let's try this again. Well he goes and gets back in his truck. I go get back in the black and white and I get out again and out he comes... and he's just cussing like a sailor. And he hands me his driver's license and I'm not gonna say what he was saying but he was using every word he had in his vocabulary. And I just... it was one of those good days for me because I was not saying things that I shouldn't. And I said guy, I tell you what, I must apologize to you. I said I don't know what it is but something is *just* not right. Take your license back and let's try this one more time and see if we can get it right. And he goes back up to his truck. I go back to the black and white. We get out again and he comes all the way to the back on the third go. And he says, Officer, can you tell me what is going on? And I said you know what, I believe we've got this right this time. Why don't you come over here and let's get out of this traffic and let's just talk. So I write him out a ticket. He's still not happy but he's not cussing. And he gets in his truck and my buddy... he goes I don't know how you did that. And I said well you've got to think about this for just a minute. I said I just called him excuse my... can I use a bad word?

**NANCY RAY:** Yeah.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I said I just called him an asshole and he ain't snapped on it yet. I said he thinks that everything is great and I said he's gonna get about ten miles down that road and realize what I did to him. And I said paybacks are wonderful. I said he's gonna know that I just made a fool out of him and what's he gonna do, call my boss and tell him I was nice? And he actually got in his truck three times and got out. You can have fun in a Highway Patrol uniform.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, that is my next question for you. Because... I think maybe you can give us the answer. We've interviewed several Rangers who said we had to make our own fun being on the Highway Patrol.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us what... how did you make your own fun? I guess that's a good example.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, gosh, I mean... just every traffic situation was different, I mean it really was. And you could go out and have an attitude and have a miserable time. Or you could go out and just have a ball. And it took me a while to learn that and then finally, uh probably with a little persuasion from my ex-partner, sergeant now... I realized that, you know what, I can just go out and have a good time. And I can go out and enjoy what I do every day. So it just really depended upon who you ran across, how you did it, and how you made your contact with people. One instance was I stopped a fellow in an 18-wheeler and uh he was speeding a little bit. And as I walked up there I noticed that his inspection on his trailer was out. Now that inspection's not this big and it's just got a little bitty hole poked out in it. Well we passed each other like this (*motioned with hands*). And it was a black gentleman and uh I walked up there... Highway Patrol, need to see your driver's license, insurance and all that. He gets that and he says sir, he said what'd you stop me for? Well it just hit me like that and I said well I stopped you for that bad inspection on that trailer. And he just stopped and he looked at that inspection and he looked over at me. You saw that little bitty inspection? I said well yeah, that's my job. Yeah, but... we went... you couldn't... that's why I stopped you. And I said look at it, it's out. And he said oh my God, he said you got eyes like an eagle. I said that's right so if you've got anything else wrong with that truck you might oughta go ahead and tell me. He said Lordy, I never seen anybody with eyes like that. So you make your own fun as you go along. And uh we just had a

good time. You know some of my other partners, as we progressed through the years... they called me their drug dog because I have a nose like a \$40,000 coon dog. And I can smell anything. If you smoke dope, I will know it. And so they used to call me. We didn't have drug dogs back then, they just called me. And I'd get to go over there and I'd find their drugs for them. Now of course where we were, I'm sure there was probably a lot... these guys today are way more trained than we were as far as drug recognition. I can't imagine the number of drugs we let go by just because we didn't know how to go beyond that area you know. It wasn't something we dealt with everyday. But we had a good time with it. I mean I would make a lot of arrests and I always got teased about being their drug dog.

**NANCY RAY:** Well what drugs were prevalent during that time?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Mainly cocaine, marijuana, uh meth hadn't hit the mainstream then. Some LSD, uh but mainly cocaine and marijuana is what we would see the most of.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. And you were still in Hearne at this time?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Anything else about Hearne that stands out in your mind? (laughter) I can tell it does... go.

**GARY HENDERSON:** You know the statute of limitations may not run out on some of that stuff. (laughter) No, I mean it was just a good place to learn. I mean I, I developed a very good relationship with my black community because I lived by a real simple rule. I'm gonna treat you just as fair as I treat this gentleman over here... makes no difference to me. If you \$50 or you got \$5 million, it really doesn't matter to me. I'm gonna treat you the same whether you're black, white, pink, green or orange. And that I believe helped me in dealing with my black community. There were several instances where... we had a place in Hearne called the Hill. And the Hill was

about four blocks of nothing but beer joints in the black community. And there were forever being shootings, stabbings, fights, things of that nature. And it was comforting when you'd go up there that when you had to go get somebody out of there that uh the local blacks would stand behind you, you know. And I've had several instances where you know I'd say let's go, you're under arrest. I'm not going! Oh yeah, you're going... you wasn't at the meeting when we talked about this. And there would be two or three behind you that would say Mr. Gary said go get in that car, you better get over there. And you know you could handle it and I'd tell them, guys, I've got this, it's OK. I appreciate it but it's nice to know that you've developed that rapport with them that they will you know back you up. And that comes from treating them the same as I do anybody else. They knew if they messed up, they were going to jail just like everybody else. But they also knew that if the mayor's son got it and did the same thing, that he was gonna be in that cell right beside them. And that's the way you have to do it you know. It deals me a little bit of misery as an elected official but I'm sorry, they can un-elect me if like, and I hope they don't, but I will continue to do things the way they should be done. The right way and that's just the way I believe.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, this had to be dangerous. Uh, I've heard one Ranger say that he thought Highway Patrol was probably the most dangerous position there is.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I would agree.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. You had to have been afraid or scared or frightened at least at times.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I think if you're not, you need to get out of the business. Uh you know I often tell people, and I do it only in passing, that I'm not afraid of the devil. Well I may not be afraid of the devil but I am afraid of dying like everybody else is. But you can't let that show. You can go break down later. You can go wet your pants later, whatever you need to do. You've

gotta stay focused on the task at hand. And the task at hand is I'm gonna go home tonight. And uh oh yeah there's never a day goes by out there that you're not fearful if you're a good law enforcement officer. Now others may disagree with me but uh I think if you don't have a certain degree of fear that you're becoming overconfident or complacent and that's gonna get you killed. Uh but oh yeah, I mean I've been drawn down on three times. Uh but I give a lot of that to God because it wasn't my time. He's got something planned for you in your life and I hope its 50 years down the road but we don't know that. But He's been in my corner since day one and you know I think in all three of those instances uh He was in my corner. But uh my dad was always said I was given the gift gab when I was a child. And I think I could sell the Pope a Jewish handbook. But uh I use that to my advantage. And uh I think it helps.

**NANCY RAY:** It's like a tool.

**GARY HENDERSON:** It is. You know now would I do half the things I told these people I would do? Probably not but I've got to make it to where they think I will. And that's what I did in all three instances.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, you said you had been drawn down on three times? Uh why don't you tell us about one of those?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh my. Well, my partner and I stopped a... we went by in typical just an every day little traffic stop. Guy is parked on the shoulder of the road, no lights on. We thought well let's go check. We're on two-lane roads so your shoulders are very important. No lights, late at night. We thought well, let's turn around and see what the deal is. Maybe it's an abandoned car, run out of gas, we can call the owner. Pull up behind it and we notice there's a gentleman in the driver's seat. I tell my partner, I said OK I'll handle this, I got it. So I walk up there and get the guy out. It's a big, large black man. I get him to the back and he's got a pair of

coveralls on. And they're down around his waist. And it's a little chilly that night so I've got him out there and I'm talking to him and he is just drunker than nine kinds of you know what. And I tell him I say well I'm gonna arrest you for public intox because I said you're not about to get in this car and drive off. And he goes well can I put my coveralls on? Sure, I don't have any objections to that. So he throws his arms in his coveralls, pulls them up. I don't know whether they zipped or whether he had to pull the deals over and hook them. But then he ran his hands in his pockets just like old farmer Brown. Nothing to it. Well I play my sixth sense really, really heavy. And if my sixth sense tells me that you've got a hand grenade in your back pocket I'm fixing to grab your pocket. Now I may be grabbing something I shouldn't grab but I play my sixth sense. And it told me you better grab that right hand. So I reached down and grabbed his right hand as he started out with it. And I pinned his hand inside that pocket and he had his hand on a .25 automatic with his finger in the trigger guard. And when he did, I just was able to convince him that was not the night his mama picked for him to die and that's pretty much exactly what I told him. I *might* have pulled my gun out and stuck it up about three inches up his nostril but that's real foggy. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** You're not gonna say that's fact.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I've heard rumor of it.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh you've heard *rumor*. But you got his attention.

**GARY HENDERSON:** But I did! I flat told him I said you better ask yourself one question... that's if your mama picked tonight for you to die because I said I'm two seconds away from killing you. And he relaxed his hand. I got his hand out of the pocket, flipped him around, took the weapon out, pitched it back on my hood. And about that time is when my partner came to life. I think he was sleeping in the car, I'm not sure. But he came to life and came crawling over

my back when he saw that pistol come out. And uh I had it under control but he felt personally offended that this gentleman would have a gun uh as far as I'm concerned. And he proceeded to tell him that. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** We don't want to put those words on tape, is that right?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well the funny.... Actually the funniest part of that whole story was this gentleman was convinced that we were deputy sheriffs. Because it was cold and we had our jackets on and didn't have the patches on the jackets back then. And he went to telling my little partner who was redheaded... great guy, Richard Brown (*unsure of last name*). He went to just cussing at him saying "you're nothing but a damn deputy sheriff... you blankety blanks" and oh he said everything in the world. Let's get him in the car, let's go to the sheriff's office. All the way, thirteen miles to the sheriff's office in Franklin, these two yow yow back and forth. This guy's telling us we're nothing but sorry dadgum old deputy sheriffs. We pull up in front of the sheriff's office and of course there's a big sign, SHERIFF'S OFFICE. See I told you, "ain't nothing but damned Sheriff's Department people... you bunch of assholes." And this just... I told my partner, just go on inside, I'll get him and it'll be fine. So we get up to the top of the stairs and he's... my partner hasn't gone all the way in the building and he's making note of the sign, this guy is. And my partner grabs hold of him, runs him back down those stairs. Gets right two inches from the emblem on our door explaining to him how he needed to read that sign that said Highway Patrol. Well he's still calling him deputy sheriff and I'm like Richard, go on inside, I've got this, OK? So Richard goes in. He gets his coffee and I come in with this old boy and I set him down. He wants his handcuffs off. I said *no*, sit down. I'll be with you in a second. Well I get over there and I pull my big jacket off. There I am, full regalia, Highway Patrol. And if this man could turn white, he'd turn white. And he looked at me and he started crying. And he

started to get up and I said you need to sit your butt down on that bench over there. Oh no sir, no sir, I'm sorry. I swear to God I'm sorry. And I said *what?* And he goes I'm sorry. I didn't know you was Highway Patrol, I swear to God. I'm so sorry... And he's just in tears. And I'm just about to bust a gut. And I said *sit down* over there and I'll be with you in a minute. And I went back to my partner and I said dude, you've gotta come out here. I ain't coming out there... he was mad all over. I said no, you gotta come out here. I said some Highway Patrolman has whupped this old boy's ass before and I said and they did it right because this boy is petrified that we're Highway Patrol now. And I said somebody has whipped his ass right. And Richard comes out and I thought the guy was gonna kiss him. If he could have got those handcuffs off, he would have hugged him and kissed him and apologized. He was like oh my God, I'm sorry I talked to you like that. Oh my God, I swear to God... And I'm just about to bust a gut. I'm just laughing until I cannot see straight. Because I promise you to this day, I don't know that it happened but some trooper somewhere whupped this boy and whupped him right. And uh he left a resounding impression on this guy. But he knew before the night was over we were not troopers, I mean we were not deputy sheriffs. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what kind... did ya'll have a lot of physical contact when you stopped people?

**GARY HENDERSON:** No, I was very fortunate. And again, I attribute a lot of that to learning some of the right steps early on in my career. Learning how to treat people, how to talk to people. A lot of it's done from your senior partner but a lot of it's done through survival. You have to learn to talk to people. If you don't, you're gonna have a long career and uh I'm sorry, I'm not tough to go out and whup everybody. So I'm gonna beat them in another way. I'm gonna beat them at their own game. Uh I can probably count on two hands in 36 years the number of

physical confrontations I've had to have. Uh just and again I attribute it to learning how to manipulate people with my words and with my voice. I can make you think I'm pretty dadgum mean but that's done for a purpose. I do the same thing back in my jail. Uh I go back and I talk to my inmates every day. And I BS with them just like a brother would but I also let them know who's the boss back there and they don't have a question who the boss is. But they also know they're gonna be treated fairly in my jail.

**NANCY RAY:** That's worth a lot. Well when you left Hearne, where did you go?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I promoted to Highway Patrol sergeant in 1987, was stationed in Brownfield. When they called me from Austin and said congratulations, you're number three on the promotion list. Your choices are Brownfield and Borger. And I'm going... don't really know where either one of those are. And Kenneth Bertling...

**NANCY RAY:** And how do you spell his last name?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Bertling is BERTLING. He actually may have been the assistant chief at that time. I know he was in the chief's office. He was the regional commander in Midland. But anyway, he called me and he used to be my lieutenant. And he goes well Gary, congratulations, Gary made sergeant. He said you got a choice of Brownfield and Borger. I said Chief, I said tell me which one is closest to Hearne. And he goes well Brownfield is. I said I'll take Brownfield. (laughter) And I did not know where either one of them was. I truly had never been north of I-20. I might have as a kid but I had never been up here to know that this part of the world even existed.

**NANCY RAY:** And it was a long way, either one would be a long way from Hearne.

**GARY HENDERSON:** It was because it was three hundred and some odd miles to uh Hearne versus five hundred. So I took the three hundred and something. And it was. It was a good

station. I had some good troopers. I was only there for four months but I had some excellent troopers. I had a great captain, Joe Rhinehart, who retired as regional commander in Houston. And uh after four months, I transferred to Lubbock. The sergeant there made lieutenant and uh so I took his spot in Lubbock and stayed there from September of '07 (*should be '87*) until November of '89.

**NANCY RAY:** Quite a while then.

**GARY HENDERSON:** A little over two years.

**NANCY RAY:** Well tell us a little bit of the differences between being a trooper versus a sergeant.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh wow. Well a trooper, you know, you're pretty much left to do your own thing. If you've got a good boss and you tend to your business, you're pretty much left to do your own thing to a certain degree. Well as the sergeant, you now become responsible for those twelve or fourteen men. And so with that comes responsibility. With that comes "*the public.*" And the complaints and the whining and the crying and that was my first indoctrination into uh the public... and how they want to complain and how they want to say how they were mistreated about such and such. And your job as a sergeant is not to say oh you people are crazy. You have to kind of balance both ends against each other. And uh so you... thank goodness I felt like I had a good base of dealing with that as a trooper so going into the sergeant level I really just had to learn the administrative end of it. You know dealing with employees, dealing with scheduling, evaluations... things of that nature. Making sure all the paperwork... now instead of being only responsible for my paperwork, I am responsible for all the paperwork that goes to the regional office. And then I have to make sure that uh, in a way that's acceptable to all your troops, that you explain to them that how you know they need to improve on certain paperwork. Because on

anything, we all resist change. Well here you get a new sergeant and he's gonna want it his way. And then you've got this so you kind of gotta do it in a tactful way, not always the easiest way. But you know in a way that's acceptable. And you're never gonna please them all, you just can't do it.

**NANCY RAY:** True. Well, did you have to make your own fun as a sergeant too?

**GARY HENDERSON:** No, I had some troopers that helped me with that. (laughter) It's different. I mean as a sergeant... one thing I tried never to do is lose sight of where I came from. Too often, the biggest complaint I ever hear in any organization, but more prevalently in DPS because that's where I did all my time... was the higher you went in rank you lost sight of where you came from. And uh I can see that with some people. I tried not to let that happen. I always tried to factor that into my decisions and stop and think for just a minute... if I was a trooper, how would I have handled that? Not from an administrative standpoint, but from a trooper's standpoint. And I tried to balance those two out while still trying to make some corrections on the part of the trooper or... However, I wasn't always successful in it. And I did ripple some water with administration. Uh but I was one of those that if I felt like my troopers were right, I'd go to hell and back for them. And it didn't always set well with administration.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. What else went on at Lubbock? Did you... is that when you became a Ranger?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, I took the test in 1988. Uh I thought at that point you know that that was the time in my career where I felt like I was really on my upward climb as far as my knowledge of the law, my knowledge of the system, my knowledge of DPS. And I was 34 at the time and I was getting to a point where I felt like if I was gonna make a move, this is when I have to do it. And uh I was fortunate enough that I made the interview board and I thought well

if I don't make it this time, you know, it'll put me in great position to make it the next time. And I went to the interview board and fortunately uh I did make it the first time.

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

**GARY HENDERSON:** Ohhhhh... I know Lefty Block was on the interview board because he was the senior Ranger captain. Gosh... you know I couldn't tell you whether the sun come up that day. I was so nervous that day. It was... wow... I really couldn't. I know it was Lefty Block just because he sat at the opposite end of that table from me. Uh, and I know that it would have been a captain, uh another captain on there. And then there had to be someone of equal rank of the position I was seeking. But I honestly couldn't tell you.

**NANCY RAY:** That's OK. Do you remember any of the questions they asked you?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well they asked some uh... I think that was a political year. Let's see... '88, '92... yeah, it would have been the presidential election. So they did ask a question relative to national news. You know have you kept up with the national news. And I do, I read the paper every day so I said yes, I did. So they asked something relative to that. And just to see if you're BS'ing them or do you really actually know. There were some policy questions that were asked uh regarding recent DPS policy changes. Uh and then there were hypothetical situations you know they'll throw in as a Ranger. You know if you're a Ranger stationed at such and such and this occurs, what are you gonna do? You know and a lot of that is... you're gonna take the bull by the horns. Because you can't be nurse maided and you can't be waited on. You have to go take the bull by the horns. Uh you know... the only question ever sticks out with me in any interview is when I tried for lieutenant one year. And uh Captain Prince out of Waco asked me a question that I had not a clue what the answer was. But again, I'm a bullshitter, excuse my language, and uh of course you can't BS a board. I mean these guys know what

they're doing. But they asked me a deal. They said uh...you've got a situation... a man kidnaps a lady and takes her hostage and ya'll are in pursuit of her and you're down in the Valley and this guy heads across the river. Abandons his car and he has this woman hostage and he gets halfway out in the river. What are you gonna do? I don't have a clue. I mean they're looking for some philosophical answer about well you'll contact the Mexican Consulate and you'll negotiate this and you'll negotiate that. Well, sorry I'm not negotiating anything. I just said Captain, he ain't crossing that river. And he said, well Gary, he said you know there are certain things that uh protocol wise that you have to do. And I said Captain, I don't know what those are, but I can tell you this. That man's not crossing that river with that woman. And then they get into the... well you mean to tell me that you're gonna start an international incident between Mexico and the United States. Captain, I don't know what I'm gonna start but I do know what I'm gonna finish. That man is *not* crossing that river with that woman. And they're like... do you realize what DPS policy is? Do you realize that you're going to create this issue between the United States government and the Mexican Consulate? Captain, I don't have a clue but I promise you, that gentleman is not crossing that river with that woman. And he... he just shook his head and said well Gary, that *ain't* the answer we're looking for but son, you'll do to ride the river with. And that is a huge compliment from a captain. So uh I knew better than to do that. I knew that wasn't the right answer. I didn't win any points on that but uh he knew where I stood.

**NANCY RAY:** No doubt about that. (*pause to change discs*)

**NANCY RAY:** OK, we're back and you were telling us about the interview board and then starting your career as a Ranger.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I came out number four on the interview board and fourth overall. They put five on the eligibility list. And Earl Pearson and Jerry De Los Santos promoted in

March of that year. And then Barry Caver and I were the next two. And there was only really one vacancy that was on the books at the point. And that was uh Pampa. And Captain Casteel who is a Ranger captain in Lubbock came to me and asked me if I would be interested in Pampa at all. And I said, Captain, I'll just go wherever they send me. I said if that's where they want me to go... and I didn't... I mean I'm in Lubbock and I didn't know where Pampa's at. I never... that wasn't part of my sergeant area, I don't know. And I said I will go wherever you send me. And he said I want to know if I send you to Pampa, will you stay a minimum of three years. And I said I will, I'll stay wherever you want me to. So because of that, Barry, I don't think really wanted to go to Pampa. I don't know that but they were looking for somebody to go to Pampa and stay... because it's a hard station to fill. And I said that's fine with me, I don't mind. So what they ended up doing is Wesley Stiles, who was in Huntsville, was due to retire at the end of December. Well our list expired I believe the 12<sup>th</sup> or the 8<sup>th</sup> of November which would have thrown me having to retest if Barry would have taken Pampa. Well, they overfilled Huntsville and sent Barry to Huntsville to work with Wesley for two months. And put me in Pampa. So for that I was grateful because I didn't have to retest. Now the other gentleman that was on the list, he died on the list and that was Jim Denmon, and he's currently I think a lieutenant in San Antonio. And uh so I went to Pampa and Barry went to Huntsville and that's how I got Pampa, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. So tell us a little bit about Pampa then. (laughter) Your career has started in Pampa. What year was this now?

**GARY HENDERSON:** 1989. November 1<sup>st</sup>, and I remember when we drove up there with the kids to look around in October, uh my wife was almost in tears when we got through Pampa. Because if you've been through Pampa, Highway 60 from Amarillo coming east is *not* the

prettiest drive you'll ever take. Matter of fact, it's an ugly drive and it's not a good representation of Pampa. I mean it was old, old, old, nasty, wore down... and my wife was pert near in tears when we got through Pampa. And I said, Sweetheart, there's gotta be more to this than this because they've got a DPS office here. And I said I'm just telling you and so we got back and we had not a clue where we were going. And I came to the intersection of Highway 60 and 70, I looked left and I realized there was nothing down there so I said let's go north and see what we've got. We got north and the kids could see the arches of McDonald's and it was OK then. If they had a McDonald's, it was great with my boys. And uh we got on to the north end of town where the hospital was and such as that and it was you know a much nicer area to be. Uh so we started there November 1 and uh stayed there 'til I retired uh except for one year. And I did transfer for one year and then I decided that uh we were better suited for Pampa so we went back.

**NANCY RAY:** OK so your captain when you were in Pampa was it Captain...

**GARY HENDERSON:** Bruce Casteel. The best captain I've ever had.

**NANCY RAY:** Best captain?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Absolutely.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us... how was he your... what did you learn from him?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I'd like to think that I learned to be a good boss. I'm not near uh the boss Bruce Casteel was. He just has the gift to be able to read people, motivate people, and deal with issues in a way that you like and appreciate. Even when you're wrong. He had a way of chewing your butt out to make you like it. But uh he could motivate people probably better than any I've ever seen. Uh he would call you at least once a week, just to visit. Uh and that's a trait that is hard to pick up. Uh because we get wrapped up in our own little worlds and you forget

sometimes one of the most important things to you and he never lost sight of that. And he would call just to see how you were doing. And then when he'd... right before he'd hang up, he'd just mention something about a report you'd written and would tell you that you know... Hey, I read over this report and you did a really good job on that report. Or... you know, it was a good report but he said you know you might think about doing this. And instead of saying yeah, you really screwed up on that, you might think about this angle and how you could maybe run that in a different way. And, by the time you got off the phone, you're ready to go kill for him. I mean literally if he called me today and said I'm really in a bind and I need some help, I would load up what I had and go help the man. You know I have that much respect for him.

**NANCY RAY:** Would you consider him uh your best supporter in the Rangers? Who would that be?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh gosh. I don't know. I never look at it that way. I didn't look for supporters. I didn't look for uh accolades. You know, I tried never to let that enter my mind. He was my best role model. If you're gonna be a Ranger, to me that's who you need to try to be like, is Bruce Casteel... because you will be successful if you're like that.

**NANCY RAY:** Well that's quite a tribute to him then.

**GARY HENDERSON:** He's an incredible Ranger. And he's a good boss you know. But he often told me, he said the best years of my life were as a rookie Ranger. You know out doing what he enjoyed doing. But he passed along that along with his knowledge of being a good supervisor uh to others that worked for him. And I know there are probably some out there that didn't much care for him. You know everybody's got their opinions. But as far as a rookie Ranger coming in, I could not have asked for a better boss.

**NANCY RAY:** That's great. Well, you are a rookie Ranger.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I am that. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** You're in Pampa. Do you remember your first case?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Gosh. You know, no I don't. And the reason for that is when you're a rookie Ranger coming in, you are looking at establishing yourself with your sheriffs. And that's what Bruce told me. He said you're gonna go out and you're gonna need to meet your sheriffs. And he said don't expect that phone to ring immediately because he said they don't know you. You don't know them. And they don't trust you. And he said your job is to go out and develop that rapport and relationship with them because that's what your job depends on. So that's what I did. I just started going around and introducing myself to my sheriffs and the other folks in law enforcement. Offering my assistance to them and they'll throw little carrots out to you. You know they'll throw uh a hot check deal out that they need help with. Or they'll throw something else out because they want to see how willing you're going to be to help them. And how willing are you going to be to involve them. You know if you go in and just shut them out, and... well I'm the Ranger, I'm gonna take over. I don't need you guys anymore... uhh uhh. I don't work like that. I would go in and I'd tell them I'll be glad to help you but you're walking step by step with me. You know we're gonna do this together. Because again I don't need the accolades and the praise and all that. I'll leave that to my sheriffs because he's an elected official that has to get reelected to him. So more power... if I can make him look good, more power to him. You know and so you just kind of get going and develop those relationships and... probably the first big case that I got called on came from this office. Uh the gentleman that... where'd I put it (*looking at picture on the wall*)... its' right here in the center. Billy Bowen was the sheriff here at that time, a very, very dear friend of mine. And uh jokingly, Billy and I used to tease about the fact that when he retired one day, I would just retire and run for sheriff over here. And uh

unfortunately in 1996 I believe it was... Billy got cancer. And Billy passed away of cancer in 1997, long before I was ready to retire. So his chief deputy was appointed sheriff and uh his wife, Billy's wife reminded me in 2002 that uh Billy and I had talked about me running. And I'm like *nah* you know... I'm not thinking so Cindy. And anyway, through that and some other conversations I had with folks, my wife and I moved over here in 2002 and subsequently ran for sheriff. But uh the case was... Billy called me one morning and said I've got some guys over here that we stopped this morning that were just driving around the neighborhood. And he said the driver doesn't have a driver's license. They're not wanted anywhere but something just doesn't seem right. Could you come over and help us? Sure, I'll be right over there. Uh and my philosophy as a Ranger was, and I got this from other people, was if it's important enough for that sheriff to call you, it's important enough for you to get up off your butt and get over there and go help him. Doesn't matter what it's for. Doesn't matter if it's for running a driver's license check for him... or go talk to some people just because he thinks the Ranger may have more influence on them. It doesn't matter. That's your bread and butter. If it's important enough for him to call you, it's important enough for you to get up right then and go. No matter if there's fourteen inches of snow on the ground, you go over there and help him. And I lived by that philosophy the entire time I was there. And I would like to think I had a great rapport with all of my sheriffs. Uh but anyway, Billy called me and I came over here. And this gentleman, Robert Knighten, 48 years old, and then there was a 17-year old boy and a 25-year old female with them. And when I came in, I asked... sitting in this office, I asked Sheriff Bowen, uh I said what do you need us to do? He said well we need to interview these people back there. And I was very young in my career as an interviewer. Now I would like to think that uh I get about a 95 percent confession rate. But back then I was just starting. But as I'd said earlier in this interview...

learning to talk to people. But I asked Sheriff Bowen what the weakest link was of the three. I said who's the weakest one of the three? He said the boy, the 17 year old. So I went back and talked to him and he ended up confessing to being a part of two murders in Oklahoma. In that conversation, he detailed how him and the older gentleman went in and murdered an elderly couple in Oklahoma. And uh so as a standard question that I'll ask in a real intense interview at the very beginning, I'll say you know, I really appreciate you working with us. And I appreciate your cooperativeness and I appreciate your telling me what's going on. But you know... I just get a sneaking suspicion that there's something you're not telling me. And that's an open-ended question. But to a guy that's already stressed a little bit, he's gonna look at that and go, "oh my God, he knows." And little did I know I didn't know. And I said you know you're not gonna feel better until you just get it all off your chest. Let's get this all, you know you've already aired your dirty laundry, let's just get the little details out of the way. And this kid just bows his head and said "I knew you knew it." I said well of course I do, you know. And you're just... you don't have a clue what you're doing. And I said well of course I do. I said I wouldn't be here if I didn't already know the answer to every question I'm asking you. But what you need to do is dig within yourself and find a way to just go ahead and tell it. And he said I knew you knew about those two folks we killed in Missouri. And how I kept from dropping my jaw, I don't know. And I just looked at him and I said well, I was waiting for you to tell me about it. And he went to telling us about the two they killed in Missouri. And uh we got all the confessions from him. We interviewed the girl, got confessions from her to the point that she was there but she stayed in the car but she knew what had happened. Then I interviewed Robert Knighten and to this day, I would probably tell you that Robert Knighten was the most vicious individual that I ever interviewed as far as his being a cold-hearted killer... just absolutely a cold-hearted killer. He

could look right through you. He had no respect for females. He had no respect for anybody really. Uh but he could look right through you in just a cold, hard dagger stare. And I just didn't let him know that it bothered me. And I kept him at his distance... we sat in an office by ourselves and talked. And I actually got him to, unbeknownst to him, to incriminate himself. And that's all I really wanted him to do because he wasn't going to tell me he killed anybody. But I needed him to incriminate himself to a point to tell me where he got that pickup truck. And he did. He told me... said I got it from some old people over in Oklahoma. And I said what happened to those... I mean where were those folks when you last saw them? He said I really don't think I want to talk to you about that. And I said that's fine, Robert, it's no big deal. I said I just thought you'd want to fill in that... He said I don't want to talk about it. And I said that's great. And uh but it was enough that we convicted him in state court in Oklahoma and he got two death sentences. And probably five or six years ago, they executed him. And so that was really the first big case that I worked as a Ranger for the Panhandle area. And the first one I worked with Billy. But uh, just a great man, absolutely.

**NANCY RAY:** What else happened in Pampa or the area?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh my. Everything. Uh gosh...

**NANCY RAY:** What kind of crimes did you have to deal with?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, in rural America, we're gonna deal with everything. You're gonna deal with hot checks. You're gonna deal with burglaries, robberies, rapes, sexual assaults. You'll deal with the whole gamut of everything up in the Panhandle. Because... now the year that I was in East Texas, you don't have anything to do but... you don't have time to do anything but shootings, killings, and stabbings.

**NANCY RAY:** I've heard that. Now where in East Texas were you?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Palestine.

**NANCY RAY:** Palestine. And that was just a short time, right?

**GARY HENDERSON:** It was only for a year. And then I came back to Pampa. But out in the Panhandle, you've really got to become versatile in investigating a multitude of different types of things. Uh I probably have the curse of uh having computer knowledge and having the white collar crime bug. In other words, I'm good with numbers. So I would do a lot of uh embezzlements and thefts from businesses. If it involved a computer, I would get called on it. Now the guys today, they've hired a bunch of new Rangers that can run circles around me on computers. But at the time, there were only a handful of us that really understood and dealt with computers a lot. And that is a curse. Because you will get calls from the entire world when you know how to mess with a computer.

**NANCY RAY:** And you got them, huh?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I got them. I did. And I still do. I still get lots of calls.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, I've heard a story about a rattlesnake. Where did that come in?

**GARY HENDERSON:** (laughter) Robert Nieman is the one that told you that story. That was at the Four 6s Ranch. I don't remember the year. But uh we used to... the Four 6s Ranch uh is always allowed us to have Company C meetings out there. And I am so grateful that I got to grow up in Company C under what I call the old heads. The guys that to me helped build the Rangers to where they are today. Uh Leo Hickman, Bill Gerth, uh Billy Peterson, Marshall Brown, Jackie Peoples, Warren Yeager... Those guys are what I consider the old heads. They had been in the Rangers for years and years and years. Our sergeant or lieutenant was Carl Weathers. And uh everybody would meet out there and we would just have our meetings and at night, we had this monstrous bonfire. And I mean it just... flames as tall as this building. And we'd just sit

and talk. Now I've heard *rumors* that there might have been some beer drinking but I have no personal knowledge uh or any photographs that will divulge that for fact. But we had a great time. And everybody... to me that's what Rangering is about... Is you get to relax and blow the stress off and the guys get to sit and just tell stories. And I wouldn't trade that for a million dollars, absolutely would not. And I regret they don't do that today. And when I say they don't do that today, we invited our friends. Our sheriffs, Billy went with me many times. Uh our sheriffs, our other officers that were friends of ours, and we had them there with us so it was a great time for everybody. But what happened on the snake story... we had a... there was an old line shack, just an old dilapidated old building out by the lake and that's where we had our meetings. Well they had draped a tarp, it was a little windy that day. They draped a tarp over the outside what used to be an awning on this thing. And then brought that tarp down the side and we kind of all huddled inside this little area which was probably smaller than this room. Quite a bit smaller actually, maybe from here to that far wall over there and three quarters the width here. And we just circled chairs in there. Well I'm sitting up against the blue tarp wall. And there's the building on this side and the tarp's on this end and this is open on this end. And we're all in a circle there and I have a Coke in my hand. Well I go to set my Coke down well Lefty Block is on my left and he goes... he looks over at me and says boy, don't move. And I'm a rookie now. And when I say that, I'd been on the Rangers several years but I'm still the "hey boy." Because I'm still the youngest Ranger in the group, they've not had a new one come in. I was the "hey boy" for five years. And that's OK. But they always mess with the "hey boy." I go to set that down and he looks at me and he said boy, don't move your hand. There's a rattlesnake under your chair. And I go that's pretty good, Captain. That's pretty good right there but I'm not stupid, I ain't falling for that. So I keep moving my hand down. Well Lefty Block... if anybody

knows Lefty, he does not say cuss words. He looked at me square up and his eyes got pointed and he said goddammit boy, I told you there's a rattlesnake under your chair. *That* was a clue. And I snapped on this clue and I froze. And I leaned up in my chair and looked down about the time that rattlesnake went right between my legs. And he got out in the middle of the room and Warren Yeager, who's probably not afraid of anything, jumps up and I think he thought well I'll just wrestle the damn snake. And uh he jumps up and the whole group says simultaneously says Yeager, set your butt down, because that snake stopped and coiled. And he sat down. Everybody relaxed and the snake relaxed and went on up under the building. Well somebody asked me later, they said, how could you just sit there? Said you didn't move. He said you just looked at the snake, he was about that long (*indicated the length with his hands*) maybe. Now in actuality, he was probably about *that* big but he probably wasn't but about a two footer, two and a half maybe, at the most. Obviously not a big mature snake but he could still kill you just the same. And I said well really that's an easy question to answer why I sat there. And they said well we're listening. And I said well, Lefty is sitting to my left and he ain't going nowhere. Larry Gilbreath is sitting on my right and he ain't going nowhere. I said I had a wall to my back and I'm damn sure not gonna go the same direction as that snake goes. So I just sat there. And off goes the snake up under the building. And I hate snakes. I absolutely hate them. But I'm very fortunate I didn't get bit because I went down with my hand twice. And fortunately I did not get bit and fortunately I jus... my feet never moved. They stayed perfectly still and I just leaned up in my chair and off he went.

**NANCY RAY:** That's a good thing.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yeah! I was happy because there were some big snakes out there. They killed some six footers out there. Uh a lot of coontail rattlers out there, I mean just big, big snakes. I mean the heads would be this big (*used hands to indicate size*). I just don't like them.

**NANCY RAY:** I don't blame you. Well when you put on that badge, that Ranger badge, you'd been thinking a long time. That had been your goal to become a Texas Ranger. Can you put into words how you felt when you accomplished that goal... when you got the badge?

**GARY HENDERSON:** You know it still gives you goose bumps today, it really does. And if anything in life that I miss, I do miss that... immensely. Uh I mean it's just something that few people will ever get to experience in their life. They don't have the opportunity for one. And if they have the opportunity, then they have to test for it and reach that pinnacle. And in my opinion, to actually get into the Rangers, you have to accomplish what a lot of others haven't. And that is you have had to lay your career out in such a manner as that you're beyond reproach. You're who they think is the top of the top that they want to represent the Rangers and to maintain that reputation. And I just don't know that there's anything greater in this world. I mean it really is. And I still have folks that come up and... well even Saturday night we had a little function here in town at our local museum. And a gentleman introduced me to a friend he had in from town and the first thing he did was not introduce me as his sheriff, he introduced me as a retired Ranger who was his sheriff. And it's just uh... to me it means a tremendous amount. I mean it's something I will cherish to the day I die and I hope my kids will cherish it. I know my kids will cherish it because they're waiting on all my guns. (laughter) But uh I just... gosh, it's probably the most fantastic thing that could happen to anybody in law enforcement.

**NANCY RAY:** Well the camaraderie that you have with other Rangers... that's a pretty big part of it, or has been. Is that right?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yes ma'am.

**NANCY RAY:** And that still continues today?

**GARY HENDERSON:** It does. Not as you know, if DPS has a failing, and I hate to say it like that because I love DPS. That failing is when you retire... you're a thing of the past to them. You're history. Uh they don't keep in contact with you. They don't talk to you. They don't do anything. You're a forgotten person. And to me that's a failing. Uh and I try to tell these other young guys that I see that... and I've got some troopers here that are good kids. And one of my deputies is in his third week, maybe third, fourth week in Austin right now at the DPS Academy. Uh and I told him, when he left out of here I said I'm gonna tell you one thing. And I said you can forget everything else I told you. But do not ever lose sight of where you started. I don't care how big you get or how strong you get, don't you ever lose sight of where you started from. And don't you ever lose sight of the people who helped you get there. And I said you'll be successful. But I said when you lose that, you'll be a failure. And uh DPS fails to me in that regard. Because I've been retired five years and I hear nothing from them, absolutely nothing. And that, that's not good. I talk to my retired Ranger buddies more than I ever talk to anybody current in DPS. And uh those guys are my friends and they will be until the day I die. And hopefully we'll go to a better place and we'll still be friends. But uh you know that's a real sore subject with me. They don't take care of their retirees too well. And I'm not talking about the Rangers. I'm talking about the DPS as a whole. State employees haven't had a raise in fifteen years, uh retirees. I don't begrudge any of our current employees getting a raise. They deserve every penny they get and I wish they could get more. But the state of Texas is losing sight of the people that built this state to where it is. And I'm not saying I built anything. Uh but there are people out there far beyond me that built this place to the reputation that we enjoy today. Uh and they forget about

them, you know. Its fifteen years and I would hate to think I would live on my salary of fifteen years ago. You can't do that. We've all seen the prices of food and gas and utilities and housing and insurance and everything go up. But yet their salaries have not gone up a nickel. Uh and that is a failing. And that is my pet project.

**NANCY RAY:** That is something you're working on?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, I don't know that I'm working on it. I get real disappointed in my... I met with one of my legislators, I'm not gonna mention names. I was extremely disappointed when I left because of the lack of knowledge that he possessed about it. And the lack of caring. You know it was like well I'll pass this along to the right subcommittee. And I'm like, basically, you're gonna blow it off, you know. Well one day you may be in my shoes and I hope you enjoy it because it could affect you. And it's not me I worry about. We've got people like Glenn Elliott that retired many, many years ago and they're having to live... and I'm sure Glenn is doing fine. But they're having to live on a salary that they gained many, many years ago. Things have changed and you can't ignore people like that. You can't ignore the people that built this system the way it is today. You know we only owe two classes of people anything. We owe our children an education all the way through college. And we owe to take care of our elderly. Outside of that, you're free, white and over 21. You go take care of your own business. But we owe those two classes of people something because our children are our future and our elderly are what built what we enjoy today. And we should take care of them.

**NANCY RAY:** That's a good message.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, it doesn't work. (laughter) I'll get off my soapbox.

**NANCY RAY:** All right, you've stepped down off of that soapbox. So, let's go back to your Ranger career.

**GARY HENDERSON:** OK.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell me about some cases that stand out in your mind.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh my. Well, uh one would be the case we worked against a gentleman by the name of James Loman Huff. Mr. Huff was a con artist, thief. Uh and I got involved in the case through Wheeler County which was one of my counties. And uh it originally started as a complaint through the Tri-State High School Rodeo Association that a gentleman felt like that he had been scammed. Well, my sheriff called me. I went and looked at it and I realized real quick that it was probably going to involve the U.S. Mail and things of that nature. So I called a friend of mine who is a postal inspector in Lubbock named Sam Prose. I said I really want you to come up and look at this thing and tell me if you think you can help me. So he came up and we started together looking at this case. Long story short because this could go on forever... Uh we embarked on a two-year investigation into Mr. Huff. And at the conclusion of that, we had obtained two 27-count Federal indictments -- one against him and one against his son. Uh Mr. Huff has been a career criminal all of his life defrauding people through scams; however never convicted. And uh he's very, very good at what he does. But we were able to devote, and again I attribute a lot of this to Bruce Casteel because he gave me the latitude to go outside of my area and investigate this case. And it, we spent a lot of time in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which was his home base we found. And uh through that, we were able to uncover cases all over the United States where he had defrauded small rodeos. And we got to know him well enough that we could track him no matter where he went. Uh he used fictitious names. One week it may be Jack Russell Feed and Seed. Six months later, it may be Boyd Packaging. He would change his offices every six months because he would never pay his bills. And as soon as things would heat up, he would just overnight, in the middle of the night, pack everything up, go rent a deal under

another name, open it up and away he goes. But he's still doing the same telemarketing scheme. Uh and we were able to track him and we got him arrested out in Albuquerque and the Federal judge in Amarillo released him on a bond because he felt like we couldn't show that he was a flight risk. And we're just thinking Judge, this gentleman's gonna run. We're telling you, we know him better than anybody. And he said well, ya'll haven't shown that. So he had a hearing set for 30 days later and guess what, he didn't show. Well the judge gave us specific orders. He said I want this man in my court... now. So Sam and I set off on a 30-day adventure to find him. And I attribute the work of my postal inspector as well as the fact that we knew this gentleman that well. And we were actually able to track him down in 30 days and we got him arrested out in Albuquerque. One thing that they would do is they would go buy cars under the first-time buyer's program. Because if you're a first-time buyer, you don't have any credit. So if you run my credit, I don't have any. So guess what, I'm gonna get a car and they would use fictitious names that had no credit. So we found out in that 30 days that they had bought another car. I don't even remember how we found that out but we did. So we go to the car dealerships... tell us what you can tell us about this sale. They said we can do one better than that, they haven't picked up the license plates yet. Oh, you gotta be kidding me! Said nope, so we gave them pictures of the boy and the daddy and we said this is the one we want, the daddy. If he comes in here to pick up those tags, you wine and dine him. You treat him like he's the hundred thousandth customer you've ever had and God bless you we're gonna throw balloons up in the air... and you just get him coffee, Cokes, tea, cookies. I don't care, I'll pay the bill. But one of you get on the phone and call 911 because he's a Federal fugitive. Well, fate would have it within a couple of days guess who walks in the dealership. And they wined and dined him and that other old boy was back there dialing 911. And sure enough, here come all the cops. And this

guy panics and takes off to his truck. And when the cops come up, all the salesmen are out there pointing at him. And they arrest him. And when we arrested him in Albuquerque, we missed the one thing we really wanted and that was his briefcase with all of his fake IDs, fake birth certificates, fake everything. They got it when they arrested him there. And subsequently, he was convicted in court and given a five-year sentence on Federal time. So that was an enjoyable case. It was a good white-collar case. And a good one to work and I enjoyed doing that. Uh I did the... myself and one other Ranger, Jimmy Hailey, got involved in the investigation of the Texas A&M Board of Regents uh in 1993 and 1994. During my year in Palestine, that's where I spent all my time was at Texas A&M, except for just a few months. I was five days a week in College Station and my job entirely consisted of investigating Texas A&M University.

**NANCY RAY:** Well now why... why was the investigation needed?

**GARY HENDERSON:** A, an anonymous letter was sent to Governor Ann Richards detailing numerous flagrant violations on the part of the University's Board of Regents and upper management. And Governor Richards contacted the director. The director subsequently talked to the Ranger captain and they selected certain individuals to do that investigation. Part of mine, I assume, was because of my computer skills. And it started out as a task force type situation. We had some Rangers out of Company A, and I think one out of Company B, and F and such as that. And by the time it ended up, it was just Jimmy Hailey and I. Because we had pretty well narrowed to where we were going with it, the vice president and the chairman of the Board of Regents were both indicted. The vice president on misdemeanor counts and the chairman of the Board of Regents on misdemeanor and felony counts. And uh there were a total of twelve people indicted as a result of the investigation. Uh in... how I didn't get fired I don't know because I don't keep my mouth shut sometimes when I should. But we had a meeting one day and the

attorneys representing the University wanted to have this meeting. OK. Well it was the district attorney who was uh Bill Turner, excellent DA... still there. Uh myself and Jimmy Hailey, Joe Cormick who's an FBI agent, and the three system attorneys. And I don't know how I didn't get complained on but we have this meeting and these attorneys are like... well, you know, we know we did a little wrong and we know that we uh got to fix some things, but you know you drew a little blood out there. We just need a message to take back you know. And basically the way I took that is we need you to call off the dogs you know because you're really kind of screwing up our system down there. And this went on and on and they just kept harping on we just need a message to take back to the employees because morale is really, really low right now. And nobody said a word. Nobody said a word. Well I just couldn't stand it. And I said you gentlemen need a message to take back? And I'll apologize ahead of time and I will quote what I said. And they go yes we do, we need a message to take back. And I said well you go back out there and tell them "if they violate the law we're gonna prosecute the shit out of them." And they looked at me and like to have had a stroke. And one of the attorneys said well you know by God if we gotta call our senators and representatives and get them involved in this we certainly will. And I said Sir, you call who you want to call. The governor of this state called and asked us and asked us to do this investigation and if she didn't want it done right, she should never have called me and asked me to do it. So you take that back out there. And the DA almost fell out of his chair. And my partner didn't know what to think. I think he thought I had lost my mind but that's just how I felt you know. Don't ask me to do it if you don't want it done correctly. And I really don't care if you've got \$400 million you know, it really doesn't make a difference with me. If you did wrong, you're gonna have to face the fiddler. You know we'll make this gentleman over here with \$5 face up to it. Well I'm sorry, you're gonna face the same fiddler as he did. And they

didn't believe that but they did at the end of that investigation... because eleven out of the twelve were convicted and the twelfth one turned state's evidence and was granted immunity to do that. And that's because she was so close to the Board of Regents and we really needed her as a witness. So it was different. My son wanted to go to A&M and I told him...

**NANCY RAY:** And they let him in, huh?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well, I told him I said son, I said A&M is a great school and it is. It is a wonderful school. It just had some issues that needed to get tended to. But I said I'm sorry to tell you, you're probably gonna have to go under your mother's maiden name because I'm not sure you need to let them know who your daddy is right now. (laughter) But he was accepted nonetheless. I guess they figured they needed an ally not an enemy. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Probably so. So when you finished that investigation you came back to Pampa?

**GARY HENDERSON:** I did.

**NANCY RAY:** All right. Is there anything else that stands out about Pampa? Any other cases?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh my. There are just... there are so many of them.

**NANCY RAY:** While you're thinking, let me ask you this. Some of the other Rangers we've interviewed uh have health problems. They've had knee replacements... their health is failing... they've lost sleep. What is your take on this? Was it 24x7 or what can you tell us?

**GARY HENDERSON:** It was 24x7. Uh I don't know the answer to that, I mean I really don't. Even in the job that I have today, it's 24x7. I tease with people every once in a while and tell them the one year I was retired was probably the greatest year of my life. And it's kind of funny because uh... and I was just telling this story here a week or two ago. Had some folks at the house that were in from out of town. And I said you know the funniest thing, after I retired I said I was sitting there at the house working out in my shop one day and I said it dawned on me... by

God, I could go have a beer. And I'm not a big drinker but I thought by God, I don't have to answer the damn telephone. I can go have a beer! And that was the greatest day of my life. So by God I went in the house and got a beer and sat right out there in my shop and drank it. And my wife came home and I think she thought I'd lost my ever loving mind but I was excited because I could have a beer. I could relax.

**NANCY RAY:** That's the word I was thinking... relax.

**GARY HENDERSON:** And then I lost my ever loving mind and decided to do this. (*short pause for phone call*) But it's a high demand job. It's very stressful, very high demand and it wears and tears on the body because there's a lot of things that you do that uh you know... I can remember days where I was up for three days. And... or times when I was up for three days on investigations. But part of that is you know... and I think that's what makes the Rangers unique is that "never say quit" attitude. You know if your sheriff needed you or... and I refer to them as your sheriff. Well they refer to you as their Ranger. And that's good. I mean that knows that you're doing something right. But they were my sheriffs too. They were my responsibility to take care of and I tried to do that. Uh but keeping that in mind you know, you go and you go and you go and you go and it wears on you. Uh and... I unfortunately I think we've lost some Rangers at early ages because that stress takes a toll on them. And I told my wife I said I hope that I don't let these jobs kill me.

**NANCY RAY:** Well how did you deal with the stress? When you left and went home, how did you deal with it?

**GARY HENDERSON:** There's my failing. If I have a failing, that's where it is... is separating the job from the house. And thank God my wife raised our children because uh... and in a marriage, and I'm fortunate that I have a very, very good wife that's very understanding of the

situation and understands things. The hardest thing to get her to understand was when I come home, I need that 30 minutes. I've got to have that 30 minutes to come down because you're... you have spent the last eight to twelve to fourteen hours being an attorney, a doctor, a judge, a referee, a marriage counselor, uh you don't know what you've spent all day doing. Uh you're counseling people, you're solving domestic disputes. You're solving financial disputes. You're trying to talk down a gunman. You're trying to investigate the most heinous homicide you've ever seen. You've had to deal with telling a family that their daughter or son has been killed. Uh you're in the zone of that and when you get home, you can't just flip a light switch and walk away from that. There has to be that cool down period and that was the hardest thing for my wife to understand... and any wife because they want to be the good spouse and that means "how was your day? How are things going? Anything happening?" And they just don't understand where we're at in that and how hard that is. And that in its own way creates tension. And there's my failing because I did not learn to adjust to that and adapt to that as well as I have in my later life. Uh and there are often many things I wish I could change about that timeframe in my life. But you can't, you can only work to get better. Uh and I tease people but it's very true. The greatest day in my life will be when I hang up this badge and go because I will actually go to being a person. And I just hope that you know at that point in my life it's not too late.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. You said you weren't out for accolades but inside you, you have to have something that you're really proud of. Think back through your career. What is something that just really makes you feel good about what you've done?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well my family comes first. I mean first and foremost. I mean what better legacy do you have than your family that you're able to leave behind. Uh you know I hope that one day... and I love my kids. And my kids and I have a great relationship but I hope that

someday they will come to understand why things were certain ways. You know that it's just not a switch that you turn on and off. But you know I guess if there's something that I'm most proud of, it's my ability to, to talk to people. My ability to adapt to personalities with people whether you're a serial killer, whether you're a baby rapist... I can sit and talk to you just as you and I are talking. And I can identify eye-to-eye with you. I can make you believe that uh I'm just as much perverted as you are. Or I can make you believe that I totally understand why you killed these five people over here. Uh but in the same breath, I don't treat my suspects or my inmates like anything other than a human being. Uh and I absolutely... and I've told many people, when I die they're gonna be able to write a lot of things about me. About me being the sorriest SOB they ever met but they'll have to put on my marker that I died with integrity and honesty. Uh and that's what I've built my career on. That's what I ran for public office under was honesty and integrity and those are two things that I will not sacrifice for anybody, not even my wife. I will not sacrifice those because those are just the building blocks and the cornerstone of what makes a person successful. Uh and I can talk to anybody. You know I can go talk to the president of the United States and have a one-on-one conversation or I can talk to the most illiterate person in the world and I will treat him the same as I do this gentleman up here.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Well let's change the direction a little bit. Tell me one of the things you liked most and liked least about being a Ranger.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Oh... the most would be just the honor of being Ranger. I mean just the... if you study the history of the Rangers at all, I mean it's just so incredible what the people before us have done. And just to be even associated in the same breath with some of those people is absolutely phenomenal. I mean it's incredible you know. When you... a hundred years from now, you want just be a policeman. You will be – well yeah but he was in the Texas Rangers.

Now when I talk to people I say look, being a Ranger is no different from being any other officer. I just chose a different career path because I don't try to put myself out to being better than anybody else. I'm just a guy that took a career path and my career path led to where I was. But you know it's just a... an honor to be considered in the same boat with the likes of you know McNelly and Ford and uh you know even Glenn... good Lord, I lost my mind there.

**NANCY RAY:** Elliott?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Yeah, Glenn Elliott. I mean people of that stature you know uh it's incredible. You know there's a gentleman from Canadian that was killed in the line of duty as a Ranger that not many people relate to Canadian and that was Stan Guffey. His sister is our district clerk over here, Brenda Perrin. And uh you know being considered associated with someone that would lay his life down like that gentleman did is just an honor that you just can't put a price tag on it. You know the things you like the least... gosh, I don't know if there is one. Probably the hours, I mean and the sacrifice. Uh and you know that going in so it's not that big a deal. But you know the hours away from the house. The hours away from my children and my wife, those are hours you can never get back. Uh you know I'd love to punch a clock eight to five but I've never done it in my life. I've never been off call. I've been on call 36 years but that's OK. You know that's what it's all about.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, what would your thoughts be about what a Ranger might face in the future? If someone is just becoming a Ranger, compared to what you faced when you started out.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Change. I mean the world as we know it is changing every day. You know when I started 36 years ago, we didn't know about terrorism. We didn't know about bombings in the United States. We didn't know about uh sleeper cells. You know they face a whole new aspect of law enforcement that we couldn't even fathom 30 years ago. Uh you know

but the resiliency of the Rangers has always been that they change with the times. And that's that made them special. That's what made them who they are today is that they were able to adapt. You know when they changed from horses to vehicles you know I'm sure there were those guys that thought oh my God the world's gonna cease to exist now. We're all in cars and we've got these cotton picking radios and uh and it didn't happen like that. You know the organization through leadership changed. They made good decisions and set good directions and they built on this. So I think the Rangers of today will continue to do that through leadership and guidance and I think they'll surprise people in the future. They will still be *the* top law enforcement agency in the US.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, well you retired in 2003.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I did.

**NANCY RAY:** And what made you decide to retire... early? (laughter) You're still answering the phone and you're still on call.

**GARY HENDERSON:** I know and I miss it every day. But the... I often told people that the day they paid me more to walk out the door than they do to come in the door I will leave. Uh I love the Rangers, I miss it every day of my life but I'm not married to it. And there is a day that you have to walk away. And I got a \$200 a month take-home pay raise when I left and honestly, Billy Bowens' wife worked on me and convinced me that, that her and some others wanted me to run for sheriff over here to fix some issues that they felt were wrong. And I just made that decision.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, I want to thank you for your time today. Do you have anything else you'd like to say about your career as a Ranger or any advice for somebody who sees this video in the future?

**GARY HENDERSON:** Well just that if you decide to be a Ranger, be a Ranger. Don't try to be something you're not. Look back in history at what built the Rangers and be that person. Be your own person but be what a Ranger is and that is beyond reproach.

**NANCY RAY:** Beyond reproach... that's a good way to think about it. Thank you again for your time.

**GARY HENDERSON:** My pleasure.

**NANCY RAY:** Thanks for your service to the state.

**GARY HENDERSON:** Thank you, ma'am.