

Interview with
RICHARD (DICK) JOHNSON
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at Texas DPS Office
Wichita Falls, Texas
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Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Richard Johnson, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



Introduction

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**RICHARD (DICK) JOHNSON
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED**

NANCY RAY: My name is Nancy Ray and I am visiting with Richard (Dick) Johnson of Wichita Falls. Today is Wednesday, November 12th and we are at the Texas Department of Public Safety where Ranger Johnson used to have his office. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Johnson's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger Johnson, do I have your permission to record this interview?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

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

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

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

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: OK. Let's begin then with telling me your full name, where were you born and your birth date.

RICHARD JOHNSON: My name is Richard Keith Johnson and my date of birth is 08/05 of 1946, and I was born in Amarillo, Texas.

NANCY RAY: In the Panhandle.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: Well what about your family, your parents. What were their names?

RICHARD JOHNSON: My dad was Alan Johnson.

NANCY RAY: ALLEN?

RICHARD JOHNSON: ALAN. And my mother was Dixie Coker Johnson. And my dad worked for the Department of Public Safety for 40 years.

NANCY RAY: So you were the second generation law enforcement then?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am, that's correct. My sister is also.

NANCY RAY: Oh really, what does she do?

RICHARD JOHNSON: She uh has, my sister is Montee Kay Cross and she has been in law enforcement for 37 years.

NANCY RAY: OK. Spell her name before we go too far.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Its MONTEE and Kay. And she's present a lieutenant with the Midland County's Sheriff Department. And she uh went to Sul Ross University in Alpine and she got a degree in criminal justice. She went to work for the Midland Police, well Alpine Police Department first and then Midland Police Department and she worked for the constable's office down there. And she's been with the sheriff's office about eighteen years... and so 37 years for her and 37 years for myself and 40 years for my father.

NANCY RAY: Well my goodness. Do you have other brothers and sisters?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I have another brother in Houston. He's not in law enforcement.

NANCY RAY: What is his name?

RICHARD JOHNSON: His name is Gene.

NANCY RAY: All right, where did you go to school?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh we lived in Amarillo, I was born and we lived in Amarillo. And they reorganized the Department of Public Safety in 1957. And when they reorganized the Department, my dad was working with the Motor Vehicle Inspection service and he was a captain. And they transferred, or they created regional headquarters and the one up in the Panhandle went to Lubbock on the South Plains. And so we moved to Lubbock. So most of my schooling was in Lubbock and I graduated from high school in Lubbock. And I also went to Texas Tech University.

NANCY RAY: Oh my. We have been in the Texas Tech country during the two...

RICHARD JOHNSON: It's pretty exciting right now.

NANCY RAY: It is. It really was. What year did you graduate from high school?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I graduated from high school in 1964.

NANCY RAY: OK. What about any favorite subjects or extracurricular activities when you were in high school?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, I had a lot of interests but nothing particular. You know I played sports when I... in junior high and the first part of my high school career. And then that kind of faded away and uh you know just typical high school deal.

NANCY RAY: OK. Any teachers who had a big influence on you that stand out?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, not really. I wasn't really that great a student.

NANCY RAY: That's OK. What about when you graduated. What did you do?

RICHARD JOHNSON: From high school?

NANCY RAY: Um huh.

RICHARD JOHNSON: I uh went and I attended Texas A&M. I went down to Junction the first summer I got out of high school and to the Texas A&M at Junction. And this is where they had the Junction Boys if you ever watched that movie where the, Paul Bryant was the coach at A&M and he took all these kids to Junction and recruited them for football and took them there and taught them how to play football. And they made a movie about this a couple of years ago. But anyway, I went to school down there the first summer I was out of high school and then I spent a little time there at Texas A&M and then I transferred back to Tech.

NANCY RAY: OK. Did you graduate from Tech?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I did graduate from Texas Tech in 1969. I crammed four hard years into five.

NANCY RAY: Somebody has to work hard. Well what is your degree?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I have a degree in uh, I have a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in personnel management. And I later got a uh criminal justice degree or an associate's degree in criminal justice.

NANCY RAY: Also from Tech?

RICHARD JOHNSON: No, it is from Midland College.

NANCY RAY: Well what about your wife. When did you marry?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Ah, my wife is Connie. And uh we have been married since 1982. Let me get that day right.

NANCY RAY: You're thinking, aren't you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes. Because like I have a previous marriage and so I usually don't go into that.

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

RICHARD JOHNSON: But been married to Connie for 26 and a half years. It was kind of interesting because we had our 25th wedding anniversary last year and so my daughter, Sarah, she decided she's gonna do this surprise deal. Of course it's kind of hard for her to surprise her mother so her mother found out about it and then it's like it always is, it's two against one. So then I found out about it you know the afternoon before they had it. And they were having little organizational problems and then I made a few comments. And Connie said you know, we made it 25 years and I go yes ma'am. And she says the way you're going, we're not gonna make it 25 more minutes (laughter). I said OK I get it.

NANCY RAY: So you knew it was time to hush?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: Smart man. And tell us your daughter's name, Sarah, is that what you said?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Sarah Beth Johnson.

NANCY RAY: And is she in high school here?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes, she goes to Wichita Falls Rider. She's a junior.

NANCY RAY: OK. All right, let's go back to when you graduated from Tech. What did you do then?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I graduated from Tech in 1969 and while I was going to school, I was in Army ROTC. And so when I graduated, I was commissioned in the Army as a second lieutenant. And uh of course I, the way that worked back then. Your junior year you went to basic training during the summer

between your junior and senior years. So I'd been to basic training and then when I graduated, I was commissioned and I was stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso with the Air Defense Artillery Unit.

NANCY RAY: OK, so tell us what your job was.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh, I was a uh platoon leader with the Air Defense Artillery Unit and I was in a self-propelled Hawk missile battalion. And I, this was kind of the forerunner of what they have now, the Patriot missiles. And this, these things were on track vehicles and there was a... you had missile launcher that had three missiles on them. And basically it was a close support for infantry to shoot down airplanes that were attacking the infantry. And so it was pretty interesting. I was uh headquarters battalion commander when I got out. And uh I was in the active and ready reserve for several years too, after I got out of the military.

NANCY RAY: Did you ever go overseas?

RICHARD JOHNSON: No ma'am. There were about 79 of us when we showed up for our basic officers' course at Fort Bliss. And one year later out of the 79, I was the only one left there. Everybody else was gone. So I was just one of those... just one of those deals.

NANCY RAY: So you spent your what, two years there at Fort Bliss?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: Well my goodness. When you got through, when you were discharged, what did you do?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I had applied with DPS.

NANCY RAY: While you were in the Army?

RICHARD JOHNSON: When I was about to get out of the Army. And I hired on, I got out of the army in June and I went to work for DPS in October.

NANCY RAY: Well I was gonna ask... Normally I say well who influenced you to begin a law enforcement career but I kind of think I know the answer. That would be...

RICHARD JOHNSON: That would be my father who was with DPS for 40 years. He went to work in 1937. DPS was created in 1935 so he got in basically on the ground floor. Then he retired in 1977. He

was also you know in World War II and he was in the Army Reserves so I guess you know he was my role model.

NANCY RAY: Pretty good role model I would say. Well tell us about the school then, the, the DPS school. It was Highway Patrol, is that what you went into?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am. I went to work for DPS in 1971 and went to recruit school. And that was from the first week in October through the first week in February of 1972. And that's when I got out. And it was quite an experience.

NANCY RAY: Do you remember... who were your monitors?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh, Henry Hardin was one of them. And uh, can't remember this guy's first name, Sergeant Kissinger. And uh a Highway Patrol sergeant by the name of Rudd, RUDD, was our last of three monitors. We started with like 126 recruits and I think we finished with 86.

NANCY RAY: Some of them have lost more than that. What makes them leave?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Everything. I would say anything from they just got into something they didn't know they were getting into or they were homesick or whatever. I mean there are a lot of reasons they didn't, that they left. And some of the guys that left, you know, and I can't remember some of their names it's been so long. But they were fine guys. They were really good men, they just decided that wasn't for them.

NANCY RAY: Better to decide then.

RICHARD JOHNSON: So when I went down there, of course the bosses they kind of knew who I was but I didn't tell them. None of the guys I went to school with... we were almost out of school before any of them found out I had anything to do with DPS.

NANCY RAY: Well, tell us a little bit about the school. What was the hardest part?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I think the, of course I'd just got out of the Army. I was in pretty good shape. But one of the hardest things, the hardest parts is... I mean you're down there and it's kind of a regimented... its para-military environment. And the fact that you could leave at any time you wanted to when you're sort of being physically abused or mentally abused... You know they used to get us up

during the middle of the night and had to give a spelling test. And that, of course we would have the words given to us during the week or whatever. But if one person missed one, you know usually we all had to run. So it was just, the fact that you could leave if you wanted to you know, it was... it kind of made it difficult when you know well I can leave if I want to you know.

NANCY RAY: Well in your class, were any of the people in class with you, did they become Rangers later?

RICHARD JOHNSON: They did.

NANCY RAY: Can you remember any of those names?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Joe Haralson, uh let's see... Haralson, Cano, Jimmy Hailey, Ronnie Griffith,

NANCY RAY: Is Ronnie Griffith in East Texas?

RICHARD JOHNSON: He's in Texarkana. He's a good guy. Let's see, Hammack... that's Cano, Haralson, Hammack, Hailey, Griffith, Richard Benny...

NANCY RAY: That's pretty good to remember all those.

RICHARD JOHNSON: There's somebody else.

NANCY RAY: You'll probably think of it in a minute.

RICHARD JOHNSON: I will or tonight about 3 o'clock. That's when I do my best thinking, early in the morning.

NANCY RAY: Well when you were in recruit school, other than the physical training, what did you learn?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Of course we learned you know the tools of the trade. What you need to go out and do the job you know... the law and driving and firearms and self defense and things like that.

NANCY RAY: The self defense, was that boxing?

RICHARD JOHNSON: That's what it was back then. They do it a little different now. They have... I don't know what they're doing down there right now of course I'm kind of out of the loop. But they, for a period of time, they were doing a full body contact deal and they had all these pads and all this. But when I was down there, it was just these big old gloves and a mouthpiece and the "firstest with the mostest" is

what we used to say. You know you go in there and be the first with the most and you get to walk out maybe.

NANCY RAY: Well who was your instructor, PT instructor?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh, Jim Jordan and Jimmy Gilstrap.

NANCY RAY: All right, just wondered. Well what was the purpose of the spelling test during the night?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, when you... I think their through process on that was when you get out on the Highway Patrol and you go home at night, you're probably gonna get called out. So they just trying to condition you and see who's gonna be able to stand up and do what they had to.

NANCY RAY: And you did.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, I needed the job (laughter).

NANCY RAY: So you had some motivation there. Did you ever misspell a word?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, I don't remember. But I know if we misspelled a word, well everybody paid. It was sort of peer pressure you know.

NANCY RAY: Well back to the tools of the trade. Out of all the things you learned in recruit school, what do you think helped you the most in your career?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know that's really hard to say because they teach you... when I went to school down there they taught you uh not only the tools of the trade but they taught you how to uh control your emotions you know to an extent, and control your temper if you have one, and to evaluate things and so you know it would be hard to just isolate one thing to say you know this is the thing that helped me the most. But uh you know it all, it's kind of like everything... the way the Department's organized you know, everything kind of fits into place and it all fits together and its hard to just pick just one thing really.

NANCY RAY: All right. Well when you were doing uh pursuit, did you do pursuit driving in your recruit school?

RICHARD JOHNSON: We did some high speed driving. But they didn't have the training like they do now. I mean we would go out and drive and we would, they would find a place for us to drive the high

speed and they'd evaluate us. And they'd have city driving you know and rural driving. And things like that. I think now maybe they take them to a track or something. I know there's a track in the planning but I'm not too sure how they do it now. So...

NANCY RAY: All right. What about your weaponry? Did you have marksmanship training or something/

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: How did you do with that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, we started off with these .22 revolvers and I wish I had one of them right now. They were really good guns. And then we moved up, and you know, when we first started... of course I had been in the Army and uh so I was familiar with weapons a little bit. But uh you, I wasn't that good at like 50 yards. Well you know I kind of got beyond my deal but you know later, I shot on a pistol team for Region 5 for years. But uh it was... it was a unique experience. We had some firearms instructors down there would, shoot, pretty much intimidate so you didn't want to mess up you know. And probably, Ranger Gerth, you might ask him about that. He might have some stories about that. He was uh... you know there was nothing eventful about our firearms training. We did rifle and shotgun and pistol and... They had a nice range down there in Austin which they don't even use anymore.

NANCY RAY: Before we move off of the school. Is there anything about the training that you went through, any experiences or anything that stand out in your mind that you'd like to talk about?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know back in the old days, if somebody was messing up or whatever they might just come to class and they would call your name and that would be the last you'd see of them. And so one day, this was way... the school had been going on you know for a while. They came in and they called my name you know and... which kind of... you know that kind of startled me. And they said that they needed to see me out in the hall. And so I went out there and uh of course you know, I... anytime that ever happened, everybody was kind of drawed up so to speak. So I went out there and they... I didn't know what to expect. And they said uh, well we noticed on your record that you had military. And I go, yes sir. And there's several... and there's people there like from the chief's office.

And I went out in the hall, I thought boy I'm in trouble here. And they said here's what we want to do. We want you to be responsible for teaching this class all military marching and facing movements and saluting and all this so we can get prepared for graduation. Can you do that? And so you know that always kind of stuck out. And so I said yes, I can do that. And so they gave me that assignment and then they got to calling me sergeant, which I wasn't a sergeant.

NANCY RAY: You acted like it.

RICHARD JOHNSON: So I thought, how am I gonna do this. I got these you know 90 guys almost so I just found out who else had been in the military. And there was probably seven or eight people who had been in the military. And so I recruited them and then we divided everybody up and we spent weeks, I mean the guys... I mean they looked good. And then they had this place they were gonna do this graduation. And the day we were all prepared and I, we had marched in there and I'd give commands on all the turning and all this. And everybody was doing great and then it came the biggest storm you ever saw the day of graduation. So we didn't even use any of it.

NANCY RAY: You didn't get to show off, did you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: But I thought I was fired there (laughter).

NANCY RAY: So you went from a sinking feeling to feeling good then.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes.

NANCY RAY: All right. Well when you graduated from recruit school, where was your first duty station?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Mineral Wells which is in Region 5.

NANCY RAY: Tell us about Mineral Wells. What happened at... Region 5... at Mineral Wells?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, uh I went down there and of course met the sergeant and everything. I was gonna get my assignment and uh he put me with one of the troopers to break me in. And of course things were a little bit different back then. You know they have field training officers now and they have this program they go through. Anyway, they put me with a fellow. Well the first day I worked, my partner was off. So I worked with another fellow.

NANCY RAY: Who was your partner?

RICHARD JOHNSON: A guy by the name of Marshall Brown. You might have him on your list.

NANCY RAY: I might, I'll look.

RICHARD JOHNSON: And so he was off and they put me with uh Jack Hunter. And so I worked with him the first day of my career. We go down interstate and then we get this drunk and he resists and all this you know and it was kind of exciting for me being right of school you know. And then the next day was when I got with my partner which was Marshall Brown. And of course they have, like I said while ago, they have field training programs now and they have a field training officer goes through all this stuff. When I got in the car with Marshall and we were introduced and everything, then we left the office, got in the car and left the office. And when out to work and so he says I want you to understand this. I go yes sir, he goes I want you to keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut. You got it? I go, I believe I got that. I can do that (laughter). But we worked together for a long time and then he made Ranger. And he was a Ranger in Plainview for a while and he was a Ranger in Haskell for a long time. And he was a good break-in partner.

NANCY RAY: I bet he was. So of all the things he taught you, the first day that you rode with him, is that what stands out?

RICHARD JOHNSON: That stands out pretty good. No, he taught me how to be a Highway Patrolman. He taught me what I needed to know and he was the kind of fellow that you know, he wasn't the kind of guy that goes OK, forget everything you learned in school, I'm gonna show you how to do it. No, he was a guy that you know, we're gonna show you how to apply what you learned, and teach you some more stuff. And you know a fellow is really fortunate when he gets a break-in partner that's good. And I had a good one.

NANCY RAY: Good. So tell us what stands out in your mind that he taught you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Marshall Brown could do it all on the Highway Patrol but one of the things he was really outstanding at, is finding and arresting drunk drivers. And when I got out of school and of course I'd been in the Army and everything. And I got out of school but you know I'd never been a police

officer. And he taught me how to do that. And I don't want to pat myself on the back but that's one thing I can do.

NANCY RAY: Well how... are you talking about how you determine or decide who to stop?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well first it's attitude. And I did this for years because Marshall Brown taught me this. When we went to work, it didn't matter if it was 8 o'clock on Sunday morning or 5 o'clock Friday night. Our attitude was OK, we're going to work. There's a drunk driver somewhere in this county and we're gonna find him. So that's where it all starts and then you know you just go out and enforce the law and look for the bad drivers.

NANCY RAY: So were ya'll working interstate mainly or...

RICHARD JOHNSON: We worked some interstate but we worked all over Palo Pinto County. We used to really like to go to Possum Kingdom Lake and work. But Fort Wolters was a military installation there and that was the primary helicopter training base for the United States Army. And so Vietnam had been going on and it was still going on. And so that was a busy place, real busy.

NANCY RAY: So you had a lot of military people that you stopped?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, they were part of our deal but you know it was a lot of things that's related to the military. I wouldn't say it was just the military I mean it was just a busy place.

NANCY RAY: So how did you feel about stopping cars, that's a dangerous job.

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I've been around law enforcement my whole life. And I just, I don't guess I really thought about it. My job was to stop cars and take enforcement action. And I just...

NANCY RAY: Were you ever concerned for your life?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well there were times that you stopped something that you might not... a car that you felt like maybe something wasn't quite right or something.

NANCY RAY: Can you tell us about one?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I'm a big believer that you revert to your training, in stressful situations especially. So you know you just do what you were hired to do.

NANCY RAY: Can you pinpoint a time when something like that happened that you had somebody stopped and you just weren't feeling good about it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, you know if I could search my memory. I got in a chase with a car one time in the evening and he turned his lights out. And I chased him all over the place. And finally, there were two people in the car and finally they pulled over and stopped. And they wouldn't get out of the car. I was yelling at them to get out of the car and they wouldn't. And so I didn't feel right about the situation so I didn't approach them. And of course I had already called in that there had been a pursuit and that I needed some backup. You can never be too proud to call for backup. And so finally, when... it didn't take too long when somebody got there and I don't remember who it was now. And they backed me up. And when I had reinforcements there, we got these people out and one of them, the driver, was a male and he had a female with him. And he was a parole violator. And when we got them out and we got everything under control, I walked up there and there was a pistol laying in the floorboard on the driver's side. So I think maybe he had an idea that maybe he was gonna do something but I didn't walk up there.

NANCY RAY: That was smart.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Mainly because of the way Marshall Brown trained me.

NANCY RAY: Did you ever tell him that.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, I don't know.

NANCY RAY: Well how long were you there at this first duty station?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, about five years I guess.

NANCY RAY: What happened after that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, I moved off to Midland for a couple of years and was on the Highway Patrol out there. And uh was in MVI for about, for a little while and then I decided I wanted to go back to Highway Patrol. And I was stationed in Childress for about seven years which... Childress is kind of in the middle of nowhere but I really liked it there. There was a lot of good people there.

NANCY RAY: Well how was Childress different from Mineral Wells?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, just... in what respect? Traffic or like...

NANCY RAY: You said you liked it there a lot.

RICHARD JOHNSON: I did. It was you know it was just a lot of good people there. And I had a really good supervisor and there was a lot of work to do.

NANCY RAY: Well was the traffic... were the problems different from Mineral Wells being away from the base?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh yeah, the working conditions were a lot different. Of course you know you get snow and ice, mainly ice. You know usually Wellington would get the snow and we'd get the ice and so you know I worked 23 wrecks in one day. And it was... and mostly, you know, we worked 287 a lot and 83 and sometimes I'd go up to the state line and have a driver's license check with the Oklahoma Highway Patrol guys. And they'd be right on their side and I'd be on my side and...

NANCY RAY: Well I've heard other patrolman, other people would say when they were patrolman, that they had such a good time and sometimes they made their own fun. Do you agree with that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I would agree with that. But I don't want to get into any of the stories. You know it was just a good time it was... you know we had fun but we did the work. And we would go out, I mean a lot of these guys, we were kind of weekend warriors. I mean we would go out there and the guys that broke me in and were troopers when I first started, they, they would take care of business and they would have fun doing it. And they, you know, they wouldn't abuse or mistreat anybody or anything like that but it was just like man, let's go out and have fun you know. And I don't know that it's really... you know we're so big now. I say we, I'm out. But the Department is so big now and times are so much different now than they were then that uh a lot of the fun's gone.

NANCY RAY: That's too bad isn't it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: So... anyway.

NANCY RAY: Well did you ever train a rookie?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I worked with rookies but they put me with rookies you know off and on and stuff but you know just as far as like getting my own rookie and this is... you're gonna break

him in and all that, I really never did. You know I'd work with the rookies when their partners were off or something like that.

NANCY RAY: Well at Childress were you a one-man station?

RICHARD JOHNSON: When I first went there, I was a two-man and then my partner left and I was one man up there for quite a while. So I was busy.

NANCY RAY: You worked pretty much around the clock.

RICHARD JOHNSON: I was on call all the time. It was like a substation you know and uh so I would work mainly weekends, Friday, Saturday and Sunday night and then days during the week. And I would be on call seven days a week just like I had with this job. So you know if there was a bad cloud that needed be checked, the Weather Service would call and say we need this... well I would be the one you know. And if there was a wreck, I would be the one. So it was... it was busy.

NANCY RAY: What do you mean a cloud?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well like you know a storm cloud would come up and they would say, the Weather Service would call and say hey, we've got rotation in this cloud, we've got hail in this cloud. Can ya'll send somebody to go check it and see what's going on? And of course it was just another thing the Highway Patrol would does that people don't think about.

NANCY RAY: I've never heard that. Yeah, tell us about it.

RICHARD JOHNSON: So they would call, well... if it started hailing I would run for cover (laughter). Try to find a place to put my car because they don't fix them too good when they get hailed on. But uh the Department doesn't let you. Just little things like that you know. If there was livestock on the highway, you know, who'd they call? They called the Highway Patrol that's on call. And if you're the only one there, you're the one that goes. And so it's busy you know. And if there's a wreck, you know they called me one night and said hey, we've got this major accident up north of Childress about five miles and we don't know what the status is can you go check on it? So of course, you know, I go up there and its five fatalities, it's just terrible. But you just go and if there's nobody else to go, you go. I had a really good supervisor and he made Ranger.

NANCY RAY: What was his name?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Ted Poling... and he helped me a lot. He was... I worked for Ted for seven years and uh he was uh.... He was a pretty good influence on me. I had a lot of respect...

NANCY RAY: How did you influence you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well you know, just, he just was the kind of guy... he has fun and he does the work too. And he let you know what he expects of you and you go out and you do that. He was just a good supervisor.

NANCY RAY: Well this wreck that you mentioned, what caused that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: It was drunk driving.

NANCY RAY: Is that the major cause of wrecks?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh that's one of the major causes I would say. Of course I've been out of traffic now for you know, almost fifteen years, but yes, that's one of the major causes.

NANCY RAY: Well did you ever have trouble with narcotics in your area?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, you know, I stopped a lot of cars and got some narcotics but I never got anything really big. Probably five or ten pounds was the biggest thing of marijuana I ever got. And you know you pick up all this other stuff, this usable quantities and stuff but I don't know that I was a... you know I worked, they call it drug interdiction now where you go and you try to detect people hauling drugs and stuff. I just, I could find a drunk driver but I was not very adept at doing that. I would get usable quantities and things like that.

NANCY RAY: Well what did you do... how did you determine who to stop?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you do that in conjunction with a traffic violation. And then you know you'll be curious and you make your own luck. If you're curious enough you have good luck and if you're not very curious, you have bad luck.

NANCY RAY: I'd probably have good luck then. Well what... what raises your suspicions? If you had a car stopped, what would be something that would raise your suspicion?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, nervousness. Sometimes the way they're driving in the first place. Uh you have several people in there and their stories don't match. Things like that. Where're you going? And if person tells you one thing and one person tells you another and... Or the driver changes his story. Just little things like that. But I never was that great at it.

NANCY RAY: But you were good at finding drunk drivers. Did you ever have any who were violent?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh yes, but they're...

NANCY RAY: How did you deal with it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well usually you try to talk your way out of it. It's easier to talk your way out than to fight your way out. But I've had a few scuffles but I tried to talk my way out of most tight spots.

NANCY RAY: OK. So the scuffles that's... in the training you're doing the PT, is that what you're training for? To handle the scuffles?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: Were you ever afraid?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh, in a scuffle?

NANCY RAY: Any time?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know... yeah, I've gotten a little bit concerned. I don't know... I guess you could call it... fear is a good thing sometimes, you know. You know fight or flight or whatever they say but you know, a little bit of fear can keep you alive. So you know when you get, when you get concerned about something, I've been concerned about who was gonna come out on top before.

NANCY RAY: Tell us about it...

RICHARD JOHNSON: But you know there's a deal, when you think something's not right, you need to call for backup and tell somebody where you are.

NANCY RAY: Can you tell us about an instance that happened?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, I don't know. There's been you know... I was on the Highway Patrol for 22 years counting my sergeant time. So there would be so many instances that... I mean I've had a partner and myself fight six guys at one time before and you know... we weren't going too good.

NANCY RAY: Tell us about that.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well I had to fire a shot off in the air and I don't think you're supposed to do that anymore. But it does... you get a little bit of respect immediately when you do that. But you know, there'd be... like I said, I was on the Highway Patrol for 22 years.

NANCY RAY: Let's talk about that fight where you and your partner had six people? Where was that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: This was in Mingus, Texas, in Palo Pinto County. This was years ago.

NANCY RAY: Is that near Mineral Wells?

RICHARD JOHNSON: That was near Mineral Wells, yes. So you know, but it was just one of those deals where you try to arrest somebody and then the struggle starts and then before you know it, everybody that's in the car you've stopped comes and starts fighting you. So but we made it.

NANCY RAY: Well how long were you at Childress?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Seven years.

NANCY RAY: And what did you do after that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I uh made Highway Patrol sergeant and uh I went to Bowie, Texas.

NANCY RAY: Well to become a sergeant, what do you have to do?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well you take a written promotional examination. And then they take a certain percentage, the top percentage on the written test, and then you go for an interview in Austin. And then they combine your scores and they have a way they figure all this and then if you make the list and if there are enough vacancies, then you get promoted.

NANCY RAY: Do you remember the interview board, anything that was asked?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh gosh. That's going back a ways. Not really. I mean if you had of mentioned this to me before I might have... at three o'clock in the morning I might remember something and get them written down.

NANCY RAY: Don't call me in the morning (laughter). Well in any of your working with the Highway Patrol, did you ever do any criminal investigations or help with any even though that's not part of it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know we would do, in a sense a hit-and-run investigation is like a criminal investigation.

NANCY RAY: How's that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Because you know... a hit-and-run is like you have an intent... because you leave... and you intended to leave after you had this accident or whatever so that would kinda be classified as a criminal investigation. But we would arrest parole violators and fugitives and things like that and we would go to jail breaks to help and but as far as like from start to finish, I would say no. Not while I was on Highway Patrol. I mean usually if we got a stolen car, if the vehicle identification number was altered or something, we would do our part and then we would like seize the vehicle and we would call the Motor Vehicle Theft people and they would come. Or if you were at a crime scene and my job as a patrolman would be to limit access to the scene and protect the scene and get a hold of the Ranger or the deputies or whoever. So from start to finish, I would say no.

NANCY RAY: Well did you ever have a hit-and-run that you had to work?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yeah, there were several of them. Yeah, there were several but I don't know if I can go in any details on any of them.

NANCY RAY: Well can you tell us... say one happened. How did you go about investigating it and finding the person who did it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, sometimes you can't find the person. But uh you know you work it, you do it like any other investigation. You protect the scene and you look for evidence and you interview people and uh and where the person had been or where they were going and any evidence at the scene. And you look for paint samples and things like that.

NANCY RAY: What other evidence would you look for?

RICHARD JOHNSON: At a crime scene? Oh you might look for.... You might look for tire impressions you know and things like that.

NANCY RAY: All right. OK, so you went to Bowie...

RICHARD JOHNSON: Or you know pieces of the car that fell off (laughter). Stuff like that.

NANCY RAY: All right. Well when you went to Bowie, now you are a sergeant. How is that different from being...

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know instead of out there doing the work, you're responsible for seeing that other people do the work.

NANCY RAY: Is that harder?

RICHARD JOHNSON: It wasn't easy. Because you're not dealing... and I would go out and work sometimes even when I was a sergeant. I would get a black and white car and go out and then of course I rode with the guys. But you know, you're not normally out there working traffic you know and issuing tickets or arresting drunks or fugitives or whatever but you have ten or eleven guys working for you that are supposed to be doing that. So you gotta retool yourself. You know you gotta be geared to do this instead of this and so it was different. And I did it for six years and uh had a really good sergeant area. They pretty much took care of me.

NANCY RAY: That helps, doesn't it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: They were a good bunch of guys. I had Clay County which is over here out of Henrietta and Montague County. And I had ten guys working for me and toward the end of my tenure there with, as a sergeant. I had a dog working for me because the Department went into this drug dog deal you know. And so one of my troopers applied for that and so for a while there we had a drug dog in our area. So I had ten guys and a dog (laughter).

NANCY RAY: I bet the dog was the easiest one to manage.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Pretty much.

NANCY RAY: OK. Did you ever have any crashes, any accidents when you were a patrolman?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I... a couple.

NANCY RAY: Chasing someone?

RICHARD JOHNSON: One of them was in a chase and uh actually, I was riding, I wasn't even driving. But we got rammed by a guy that we was trying to chase and wrecked both of us out. And then I

was riding, referred, which is you know I'm the passenger in the patrol car. So then we ended up, I ended up in a foot pursuit and nobody knew where I was.

NANCY RAY: Well tell us about that.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well it's no big deal really. We just had a chase, a drunk, and my partner was driving and we were trying to get him stopped before he got town and he took exception to that and he ran into us and then he fled on foot and I was the passenger and I got out. It was on my side and we had a little lengthy foot pursuit and...

NANCY RAY: You ran faster?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I used to be able to run, can't do that anymore (laughter). So we got him.

NANCY RAY: I'm sure you did.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Anyway, it was... the Highway Patrol's fun.

NANCY RAY: That's what I've heard. I don't think anybody...

RICHARD JOHNSON: Everybody probably says that.

NANCY RAY: They do. That's a standard. That's why I keep saying well what made it fun?

RICHARD JOHNSON: It just, just the whole thing was fun. You know, just... and I don't know what everybody else told you but of course... one of my proudest days in my careers... one of them was putting that second lieutenant's uniform on when I got my commission. But when you put that uniform on and you walk out of that academy... so in most, I think, I don't know what everybody else has told you but I think most guys, you know, when they got on the Highway Patrol and they went to their duty stations, every evening or every morning when they got up and they put their uniform on, they were proud and it was gonna be fun. And that was every day. Of course you know as your career goes, well and you get older you know, but things change some but from putting your uniform on to going out there and until you got home at night it was mostly fun.

NANCY RAY: Mostly fun... When you got out of school, recruit school, do you remember what they issued you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You mean as far as...

NANCY RAY: Did they issue you a weapon, or a car, or what all did they issue?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, no, you got your uniform and your weapon and your handcuffs.

NANCY RAY: One set of handcuffs, I've heard that.

RICHARD JOHNSON: One set of handcuffs. Now you see these guys and they've got two sets on their belts and they've got three or four sets in their car you know and boy I would have loved to have that. Of course we didn't have anything when I went to work. We had these Remington typewriters that were of course not electric even. I mean and so you had to do reports and you had to do four copies. And so you would arrest somebody, a drunk driver or something, and you would... the next day you would write your report. And so you know it's hard to get a typewriter to go through... and you put your carbon paper in there you know and you put it in there and you pound those keys you know. And of course if you make a mistake, usually we'd just X it out or if you didn't want to start over. But you know then, what was really sad was after you got a nice report done and you took it out and you had one piece of carbon in backwards. And then you had to do the whole thing over. But times have changed. No, they gave me a pistol and my uniform and...

NANCY RAY: Pat on the back?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Go find your partner and learn how to be a Highway Patrolman.

NANCY RAY: Well did you have radar?

RICHARD JOHNSON: We did have radar. We had stationary radar. And some of the guys, some of the guys you talk to, they had the old kind but when I went to work, we had the newer radar. It had the digital readouts but it was a stationary radar. You had to be stopped for it to work properly. So a lot of times you know we worked stationary radar, or if we were working a moving patrol that night or something you know and we met a car we thought was speeding, well we would like probably, we'd be going pretty slow. We'd pull off and stop and get them on radar.

NANCY RAY: What about when you stopped... I'm sorry...

RICHARD JOHNSON: And while we're on that, this is kind of an amusing story. But when we had these radars and then we got these moving radars. And you could, you know you could clock somebody

speeding while you were riding down the road. So the first day I got mine, I got mine and it was on Sunday. You know got in the car and everything and I got it all lined up. And so Sunday morning and I went to work. And about 9:30, I get this car and he's speeding but he's not really speeding that much. But he's within the violation where you might want to stop and talk to him and give him a warning or whatever. And so I thought, I get him speeding and I go oh man, I'm gonna stop this guy and he won't believe that I got him on radar because I wasn't even stopped or anything. I was going about 40 miles an hour myself. Well, I stopped him and it was a DWI, Sunday morning. Very first car I stopped with moving radar was DWI. So I knew there was a drunk driver out there somewhere that day.

NANCY RAY: That was your one for the day. Well that brings up a question. How did you test for... when you stopped a driver, did you have breathalyzer? Did you have anything you could do there or did you have to take them in or what?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know they have field sobriety test and all this and even these portable breath testers and stuff they used but we didn't have any of that. So we would uh, you know you would... the very first thing I would consider is I'm stopping somebody on one violation. It could have been speeding. It could have been failure to drive in a single lane, or something like that. Failed to signal a turn, failed to dim headlights... that was always a good one. But then you would evaluate their driving and stop them and then you would evaluate the driver. Of course now they've got techniques like horizontal gaze in the stigmus which is a deal when your eyes are offset you know and it's an involuntary twitching of the eye. And they've got all these techniques and these field sobriety tests they give to determine if somebody's intoxicated. But you know we just, when I was working, we would look at their eyes and their balance and their speech and then we'd make an evaluation and if we thought they were intoxicated, we would ask them... of course we would arrest them and then ask them if they would consent to a breath test. We'd have to take them back to town. And of course the instrument was a lot different than it is now.

NANCY RAY: OK. Did your car have a screen between the front and back seat?

RICHARD JOHNSON: No ma'am. As far as I know, none of the cars had them back then.

NANCY RAY: Did you ever have any incidents where you had to take someone in and you didn't want to put them in the back seat?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I always put them in the front seat. Things were different back then.

NANCY RAY: What's the biggest difference then compared to when you...

RICHARD JOHNSON: Of course now the guys don't, I don't think they have any screens now. It's not like the city or the county. We may have some, I don't know but... No, if you were working with a partner, he got in the back seat with whoever you arrested. You handcuffed them and put the seatbelt on and put them in the front seat. So if there were more than that and I was by myself, I'd call for somebody.

NANCY RAY: So you used backup when you needed to?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, no point in being foolish.

NANCY RAY: That's true. Well did you ever work with any Rangers when you were still with the Highway Patrol?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, when I went to Mineral Wells a guy by the name of Billy Peterson was the Ranger there. And uh Billy lives down at Cleburne now I think. But he was a good guy. I spent a little time with him and of course I had known Rangers most of my life.

NANCY RAY: Well how long did you stay at Bowie?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Uh, six years, just shy of six years. And Bill Gerth was the Ranger here and Phil Ryan, I don't know if you've heard of him.

NANCY RAY: I have.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Phil Ryan was the Ranger down in Decatur. And then Marshall was at Haskell and so uh Johnny Waldrip was over in Sherman. So uh I knew all those guys. And Leo Hickman... And of course Leo... we'd drink coffee with Leo every day. That was entertaining in itself.

NANCY RAY: I'm anxious to meet Leo. So when you left Bowie, is that when you went into the Rangers?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am.

NANCY RAY: OK. Let's talk about... Anything stand out in your mind...

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, I tested for Rangers several times and uh I didn't make it. And went to a couple of interview boards and still didn't make it. And then uh later on I tested for Highway Patrol sergeant and made it. And then I... they asked me when I made Highway Patrol sergeant you know if I would go there and stay. And I said you somewhere and I'll stay and I'll be there for a while. And they sent me to Bowie and I stayed there. And I didn't test again for a while. And they asked me that one time on a Ranger interview board. They go how come you haven't tested in a long time? You tested before and you haven't... Because I told them when they sent me to Bowie, I'd stay there for a while. And I said I did.

NANCY RAY: OK. At Bowie, does anything stand out in your mind that happened? Any incidences or thoughts you want to share?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I was just supervising ten guys and they called me... on one thing after another... and I tried to make all the fatality accidents. Unless I was out of town, I went to every fatality accident. I tried to do whatever the patrolman, the trooper was that was doing the investigation, well I would go down there and say what do you want me to do to help you.

NANCY RAY: And what would they say?

RICHARD JOHNSON: And I did everything from directing traffic to interviewing witnesses to holding one end of the measuring tape to whatever they wanted me to do you know. And so I tried to be there, I tried to be available when my men needed me. So when they called, I went. So I mean you can figure how many fatal accidents in six years, ten guys investigated, so... And I couldn't even remember.

NANCY RAY: Must be a very high number.

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I can remember back over my career fatalities. Like I worked fatalities... two fatalities that had twins, twin babies. One set of twins was two years old that I worked. One lived and one died. And the five-fatality accident I was telling you about earlier, there was twins in there, six months old and one lived and one died. So I can remember... But you know if you want to go gosh...

NANCY RAY: Seatbelts weren't used then, right?

RICHARD JOHNSON: A long time ago they weren't used like they are now. And they will save your life. I have cut seatbelts off of people that were killed in wrecks but like one or two and that's all. The rest of time somebody has them on, they survived.

NANCY RAY: Um mmm. Well let's talk about the, about become a Ranger then. The... you took the test more than once. Did you do OK on the written part?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I did.

NANCY RAY: How did you prepare for it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, I had all kinds of study material. And I would study for hours. And, you know I would set myself goals when I was trying to promote. And I did this in the Highway Patrol too when I made sergeant. I would set myself a goal... and I didn't think of this myself, somebody else smarter than me... but he said, somebody told me you need to set yourself a goal. Set yourself up so many hours you're gonna study a week. And you say OK, I'm gonna study eight hours this week, I'm gonna study six hours this week. Then you're responsible for studying six hours. So if you go, if something happens and you go half the week and you didn't study any, then you've still gotta make up the six hours. So I kind of had me a goal set and I would try to study a little bit along. And I would try to meet my goal. And uh, I had all this study material and everybody... everybody would have this you know. And I would try to never study something I'd already learned. If I knew it, I would just skip to something else. But I studied a lot. I really, I tried to make Ranger several times and I studied a lot. And then later on, actually when I made Ranger, we went and we had the Ranger test, the written test. And there was a bunch of younger guys than me because you know I didn't make Ranger until I was like almost 48. And then somebody'd ask a question about something and a guy would say let me check this in my computer or I've got these cards on it... and I go I think I wrote that on the back of a matchbook cover (laughter). Let me see if I have that... because they were way ahead of me on this studying and stuff.

NANCY RAY: Things did change.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Things did change.

NANCY RAY: Well what kind of questions were on the test, the written part? Was that history?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh my gosh, there was... I don't remember if there was any history. We took history, we had Texas history in... I don't even know if they do that anymore in recruit school. But you know the test would have just everything on there. From the penal code, a little bit of traffic even, uh code of criminal procedure, investigative techniques, a lot of DPS policies and things that come in this big book that they call the general manual. Did anybody mention that before?

NANCY RAY: Uh uh.

RICHARD JOHNSON: When I went to work, they had, the Department operated on operations memorandums. And there would be... and there would be directives you know, maybe there'd be little memos they'd send out, this is the way you do this and this is the way you do that. Well the Department, the Highway Patrol was still operating off of Operations Memorandum 11-60. That means it came out in November of 1960. It was pretty much everything you needed to know about being on the Highway Patrol but it was in this little bitty memo. Of course now, when I retired, we had the general manuals and they're about... I had two binders about that thick of policies and stuff. It was just mind boggling. When I was a sergeant, I used to study all that stuff and when I got to be a Ranger, I was too busy to look at that.
(short pause to change discs)

NANCY RAY: The question I want to ask you now is to become a Ranger, did someone influence you or is there someone who made you think this is what I want to do?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I was raised up in DPS so I've known Texas Rangers all my life. When we lived in Amarillo when I was a kid you know, there was Rangers there that I knew.

NANCY RAY: Can you remember the names?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, Frank Probst was one of them and I think J. P. Lynch was there and uh oh I can't remember now. Then I was in Lubbock and Pete Rogers was there, Captain Rogers. And he was... he was really a nice fellow. Bill Wilson was there. Of course I was going to high school and college and I would go out to the office with my dad a lot. And you know these guys... they would treat me like I was really somebody you know. And I was always really impressed with the guys. Of course

when I went to work for the DPS you know, there was Billy Peterson and uh the guys that I'd met you know. I mean I can go... you know Bud Newberry was the sergeant. Selwyn Denson was a sergeant in Lubbock. And uh during my Highway Patrol career you know you've got Bill Gerth and you've got Leo Hickman. You've got Marshall Brown who broke me in... and uh Warren Yeager. And when I was on the Highway Patrol in Childress, Larry Gilbreath made Ranger. And so when Larry, he is really a good guy... and just you know it's just uh... you get so impressed with these guys... they're like bigger than life really. You know sometimes... and so uh I was interested in getting in the criminal law enforcement work and those guys meant a lot to me. And I wanted to be part of the organization. And I was lucky enough... I probably wouldn't have hired myself but I was lucky enough that I got on. And you know it's been a real honor to serve with guys like Bill Gerth and Leo Hickman. And I'll name those two but all the rest of them... Carl Weathers, I could just go on and on but I won't.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well when you did go before the interview board, do you remember who was on the board at the time you made it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh my goodness... now see, you should asked me that question... I've probably got that written down somewhere.

NANCY RAY: If you can't, that's fine. Does anything stand out in your mind?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Let me tell you, Cano was on there and I went to school with him, I remember that. And uh Maurice Cook was on there. And I think Captain Powell was on there I believe. But you know I had studied and studied and studied to make Ranger. And then the last time, when I made Ranger, when I was just beginning to study... I got all my stuff out and I told Connie... and I sat down and a couple of nights I studied and I said you know, I don't know if I can do this again. And so I really studied hard but not like I had before. And I really didn't think I was gonna make it.

NANCY RAY: So what year was it that you made it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: '94. Because I went to Bowie in '88 as Highway Patrol sergeant. And I went down there and I just kind of told them what I believed in.

NANCY RAY: Did they ask you anything that you remember?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, the... I could probably think of some stuff but I remember the closing deal they asked me if I had anything to say. And I remember I told them you know that I wasn't a Ranger and I hadn't done that many criminal investigations but I considered myself a hard worker. And that I could learn anything they wanted me to learn and I could do the job and I'd do whatever they'd ask. And if you want somebody that will get down in the mud and the dirt and roll up their sleeves and go to work, then I'm your guy. And if you don't want that, then you don't want me. And then everybody kind of had a funny look on their face and I go man, I said the wrong thing. And so I left... and they said OK, thank you. And I left. You know you get that sinking feeling but I thought well, the worst thing that can happen to me is I'll go back to Bowie.

NANCY RAY: But they called you.

RICHARD JOHNSON: They did.

NANCY RAY: Who else made it with you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know uh... Tony Leal, he's a captain in Houston now. Uh Dino Henderson, he's a captain. Uh, Israel Pacheco... there's several that made it when I made. So, Pacheco, Oscar Rivera, Otto Hanak, Jeff Cook, Jess Malone, Christine Nix, Sal Abreo...

NANCY RAY: Quite a few.

RICHARD JOHNSON: You're taxing my memory now. If I had a list I could go through there and probably pick everybody out.

NANCY RAY: Well where was your first duty station?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Plainview.

NANCY RAY: And your captain?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Carl Weathers. And my lieutenant was Barry Caver. And I don't... Barry retired... he was the captain in Midland. And he was instrumental in the Republic of Texas deal out in Fort Davis. But Carl and then Barry made captain and my lieutenant, new lieutenant, was Jimmy Hailey. And he's retired.

NANCY RAY: Well can you remember... you put that badge on. Can you remember the feelings? Can you put into words the feelings you had?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, I don't know if you can put that into words or not, really. Uh it's just you know... you have this feeling that... it's like an honor. You have this feeling of pride and then you get this feeling that you don't want to let everybody down when you put that badge on. So you know, I hope I can do what I'm supposed to... to uphold the traditions and the heritage of the Rangers and not do something to tarnish the badge you know. But it, it's... it's really a feeling that's indescribable really. Because it's like, you know... you're becoming part of something that's pretty unique in law enforcement. So I, I don't think I could describe it.

NANCY RAY: OK. You're in Lubbock. Is that where you were actually living... in Lubbock?

RICHARD JOHNSON: When I made Ranger, I went to Plainview.

NANCY RAY: Plainview, OK. Do you remember your first case?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh gosh... you know... no. There was several cases there that I helped on you know. I helped the county and the city on a couple of murders. And we worked a lot of burglaries. We had worked some aggravated robberies and things but there's nothing that really stands out in my mind. Uh there was a murder case where a lady was driving down the street when she hears this explosion. And this fire... and this guy comes running out of the house. And he's on fire. Anyway, so she puts him out and she's a nurse. And she says is there anybody else in the house and he goes yeah, but I killed her last night. So the Fire Department gets there and puts the fire out and we all get there and I go and help the city work this crime scene. But he killed this lady with a hammer. And you could actually... it was in a bedroom. You could see I mean that it was a bad scene. After he did it, he said he told some of the guys this later, it wasn't me. But that he decided after he did this that he had to get rid of the evidence. And this was after... he was like on drugs. Anyway, so he goes and sleeps on the couch and wakes up the next morning. And goes I've gotta do something about this and decides to burn the house down. So they had this big wall heater, a gas heater. So he goes and he turns the gas on and he goes, oh, I don't have any

matches. And then he goes in the kitchen and messes around and he finally found some matches. I don't know how long later... and then of course when he strikes that match, *whoosh*.

NANCY RAY: Gas has been going on...

RICHARD JOHNSON: It has been going for a while. And then of course the nurse drives by and sees him run out of the house on fire. So, but... you know, I spent a couple of years there and I worked on a couple of murders and a lot of other stuff. The guys were really good there. Jim Mull, his brother, was the captain with the uh Criminal Investigation Division of Plainview and I had a really good working relationship with him. And I did a lot of stuff with them off and on and with the county too. And uh I worked Floydada and Plainview and Tulia and Quitaque, and Silverton... that area over there. And then, of course, I was raised up in Lubbock in the dust. And so I really didn't want to stay in the dust.

NANCY RAY: So?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Of course Bill Gerth had retired and then the fellow, Butch Durochez replaced him... when he transferred back to... he was from Houston. When he transferred to Conroe, well I put in a transfer for here.

NANCY RAY: So you came here in what year?

RICHARD JOHNSON: '96.

NANCY RAY: And you spent until...

RICHARD JOHNSON: June of '96. And I left in August of 2008.

NANCY RAY: So you're a new retiree. You had twelve years, is that what you said?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Fourteen years, a little over fourteen years in the Rangers. Thirty-six years and eleven months overall.

NANCY RAY: That's a long time.

RICHARD JOHNSON: That's a long time with one outfit.

NANCY RAY: Well when you came to Wichita Falls, how was that different from Plainview?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, just a sheer... you know the population... just the sheer volume of work because I worked, I've been working Jack, Clay, Wichita, Archer and Wilbarger Counties. And then I did

a lot of stuff in Montague County and you know different places filling in for guys when they were gone and stuff. But of course you're in a bigger town here and so it's just... you know I don't know that it's any different, it's just... every Ranger is busy. You're not gonna find one that's not busy, it's a busy job.

NANCY RAY: That's what I've heard. So what do you work on, how do you get involved in cases?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, most of the time other agencies call, say can you help us do stuff? Every once in a while you get something through here that you've gotta take and do yourself. Or the bosses assign you to do something. Or Austin gives you an investigation to do. You know or something like that. But most of the time, over 90 percent of the time, you go out and you build relationships with the people who work in these other law enforcement agencies – Wichita Falls PD, Wichita County Sheriff's Office, Burkburnett, Iowa Park, Jack County Sheriff's Office, Vernon, Wilbarger County... You go and you build a relationship with these people and they're really the ones in the trenches. Let me tell you. Because I'm usually... they go oh we've had this bad deal, can you come? And, but they're the ones there but they call you to help. And so you get involved in it. Sometimes they call you over there and say can you do this? And you go yes because you never say no. And all the rest of the guys will tell you that when you say no, it's bad. So you don't say no.

NANCY RAY: That's a consistent story. It really is. Well can you tell us about a case that really stands out in your mind from Wichita Falls maybe?

RICHARD JOHNSON: From this area or from...

NANCY RAY: Wherever.

RICHARD JOHNSON: One that stands out, there are several cases but one that stands out in my mind was in Montague County which was not really my area. But the Ranger... and this was in 2001. The Ranger which would be a good guy for ya'll to talk to is Lane Akin. I don't know if you've heard his name before.

NANCY RAY: I have.

RICHARD JOHNSON: He was a Ranger in Decatur. And I owe him a lot too because he taught me a lot when I came here. But uh he was gone and so the... and working in Montague County, the Chief of

Police knew I was covering Montague County. And the Chief of Police in Nocona calls me up one day and says hey, I've got this deal I need to talk to you about. It's a deal going on and I might need some help on it. And I go OK, I said I'm going to Decatur tomorrow because I was covering for Lane Akin on something, I forget what it was. I had several bad deals down there while he was gone. Uh one was like a two-year old baby got beat to death and then another one was two guys got murdered and dumped in the river. But anyway, that's another story. I said I'm going to Decatur tomorrow and I can't come because I'm gonna be tied up. How about day after tomorrow? He goes OK, that'll be fine. So then I go to Decatur and whatever I had to do, I got through early. So about three o'clock I'm coming back to Wichita so I called up the Chief and I said hey, I got through early in Decatur. Would you like for me to come visit with you? And he said yeah, if you've got time, I need to talk to you. So I go to Nocona. And I get over there and you know I've been doing this a while so I thought he's got some little deal he needs me to do this or do that. Or check on something in Wichita. So I go... he says hey, I've got this deal and I go OK, what is it, Chief? He goes, well we've got some kind of problem at the hospital and I go OK. And he goes... and I go what is it? I thought he was gonna say... well, you know somebody's broke in and stole some drugs or something. I said what is it? He said well their death rate had gone up in the last few months. And this was like in February. I said what do you mean? He said well since October, its like tripled or doubled. And he says there's a problem and I go, well what is it? He said well, we think they're being poisoned and all these people are deceased that wasn't supposed to be. And I go Chief I think we've got a problem here. And so, he said well I've got these people... he said when you told me you was coming, I called them... with the hospital, and we're gonna do an interview with them. Can you help me? And I go yes. So, we interviewed the administrator and some other people with the hospital. And we determined that somebody was killing patients. And so this started a six-month long investigation. And I set up some surveillance... what we believe was that somebody was stealing a drug... that if you give it to people and you don't put them on a breathing apparatus or you don't do the breathing manually for them with something, then it paralyzes their respiratory system. And they don't survive but just a minute

or two. And they said, this was another thing, the Chief said there's this medication that's missing. And I go OK, what is it? And he goes it was mivacurium chloride.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, my gosh (laughter). This whole thing... we would interview these doctors and we'd be doing this interview and me taking notes and they would use some big word and I would still be trying to spell it and he was three paragraphs ahead of me (laughter). Doc, we need to go back, I'm still trying to spell this word. But I said how... he said there's a bunch of this stuff missing. So anyway, we set up surveillance and we did all this and this big... I called our lab and I said hey, we've got this stuff missing and these people... there's a bunch of people dead here. I said can we test for this? And they go no, let me do some checking. And they called me back and they said there's only a couple of private labs can do this in the world. So I had called the FBI about some surveillance stuff and I had a real good working relationship with them here in Wichita Falls. And so I'd told them kinda of what was going on. And then I got them to come, I got one of the agents here. And so actually, myself and the Chief and one investigator with the FBI... one special agent from here, we conducted a lengthy investigation on unexplained deaths at the Nocona hospital. And before this was over, we had interviewed dozens and dozens of people including physicians and nurses and everybody. And these deaths, they were, all but one of them had occurred like on a night shift. So we did a bunch of research and isolated who was working and all this sort of thing. And we got some doctors of our own. One of the doctors we got was Michael Baden, he's always on TV.

NANCY RAY: What's the last name?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Baden. He's from New York. We had some FBI connections. We need some help on this so the agent that was working on this said well let me call Washington and see if they have anybody that's got experience in things like this. And there was a special agent in Connecticut and he was, had a doctorate degree in pharmacology and I don't know what all. He was really cerebral (laughter). I mean he was way above my head. And so he came down and so we told him what we had and he helped us a lot. But uh Michael Baden was like a medical examiner in New York City.

NANCY RAY: Do you know how to spell that last name?

RICHARD JOHNSON: BADEN is I think how you spell it. But anyway, so we did this big investigation. And we evaluated all these patients who had died and who had it. What they were doing, they were going into what they called a code at the hospital where they would be on some kind of monitor or whatever or they would go into respiratory arrest and then they would go and try to uh resuscitate these people and just save their lives or whatever. And so we had a whole bunch of those that they actually did save their lives. And there was several people that I personally believe were poisoned that were, well we know some of them because we went to the hospital and they still had blood from these people and we got it. And all this concluded... the FBI actually bought equipment and trained people to test for this drug. So I knew that some of these people that actually lived had been poisoned but they were revived. And once it was all said and done, we evaluated all these patients and we exhumed ten people which was just more than you could imagine. And of course we had to meet with families and uh get court orders and all the logistics that go with exhuming ten people and taking them to Dallas to the medical examiner and having autopsies. It was really... it was something. And the news media was running everywhere. And we uh did arrest somebody and they're in the penitentiary for life, a nurse. And she was... she was a pretty evil person I think. But that was her motive when I say that. I don't think that she had some kind of angel you know... say put people out of their misery or anything. I think she was just mean. But we, I personally believe that 23 people were murdered in that hospital. We proved up ten plus some that we didn't use in the trial that we know were poisoned. And uh it was just... the logistics of it and everything you had to do dealing with families, it was something. It was a heck of a deal.

NANCY RAY: How did you narrow it to that one person?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, when we first... we determined when all the deaths were happening. And who was working what shifts. And uh we uh sort of narrowed it down like that. Because when you've got all that happening on one shift where certain people work, and...

NANCY RAY: Just a mean person.

RICHARD JOHNSON: And so our surveillance never did pan out. You know we never did catch anybody breaking into the uh crash carts to get drugs off of it but uh, we uh exhumed all these bodies from the cemeteries. Some of them in Oklahoma... uh two in Oklahoma, one in the Panhandle, one in Fort Worth, one in Dallas, and most of the rest of them around Nocona area. And the FBI, you know we had the evidence recovery team and we had an airplane. We actually exhumed this fellow up in the Panhandle and we had an airplane up there that the federal government provided and flew him to Dallas for an autopsy. And then flew him back and then fixed everything back just like it was. But it, it was uh a pretty unusual... Because we had... and this is gruesome and I won't tell you about it if don't want me to.

NANCY RAY: Yeah.

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know caskets are supposed to be like guaranteed not to leak you know... not to get water in them and stuff like that. And of course they do. So we were paying for everything that we tore up. And some of the, one of the caskets had water in it and the... we had the funeral home representative there when we did all this and they called the casket company up and said hey, you know, you've got a twenty-year guarantee on this and these people had only been buried six months. So they would make good on their guarantee. But it was just... we exhumed ten bodies in five days. And had autopsies done, which was a logistical nightmare in itself going to Dallas. And then put everything back just like it was the same day.

NANCY RAY: OK. Now after someone has been embalmed... and then you can still do an autopsy and get results?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes ma'am. But I'm not an expert in that so...

NANCY RAY: How did the families react to all this?

RICHARD JOHNSON: It was pretty varied. You know when this started leaking out, some of the families would come and you go... we want to know what's going on here. And of course I couldn't, we couldn't reveal a lot of stuff. But some families you know, they demanded answers immediately and some families go, you're not gonna do this... you're not gonna exhume my mother, my grandfather...

whatever. And then it was... I had to get some court orders and stuff, some search warrants, and got some consents.

NANCY RAY: Well how did the nurse pick who to give the drug to?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, I don't know, only she knows that. Only she knows.

NANCY RAY: And how long did you work on this case?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know we started, we started in February and we started exhumations, I think it was in June. And then we had to preserve evidence that was seized at autopsies to ship to Washington. And then they had to develop their techniques that they were gonna use scientifically to analyze all this stuff. And then it was another year before we got her arrested.

NANCY RAY: Goodness. And was she still working at the hospital?

RICHARD JOHNSON: We used surveillance and she was working at a delicatessen at a grocery store.

NANCY RAY: Uhhh (laughter). That doesn't give me a good feeling.

RICHARD JOHNSON: I talked ten hours with that woman and she just... But it was you know... it was a unique investigation. It was something... it was different.

NANCY RAY: That's the most unusual...

RICHARD JOHNSON: And it was a very lengthy report. And I spent... Last year I spent six and a half hours at a deposition with all these attorneys on this case and a court reporter and a video guy for civil stuff.

NANCY RAY: Not for the case itself?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Not for the case itself?

NANCY RAY: Now what civil stuff would this be?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, where people were... the victims' families were suing the hospital, the doctors and...

NANCY RAY: Did you go to court?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know we had uh.... They had change of venue first thing. And then they, that didn't work out. And then they changed... that was one year. And they go OK, this is not gonna

work, we can't get enough jurors here or whatever. So then they changed it again and it went to San Angelo. And then of course the first year we spent all this time studying and getting our evidence all lined up and making sure everything was right and of course court... getting ready for court, that's a whole another chapter. But anyway... on any case. But then that fell through that year and then they changed the venue and they went to San Angelo. Then the next year we did all this again. Served all these subpoenas, dozens and dozens of them plus getting all this stuff ready. Reviewing reports... and then they had a mistrial. And then saw another year and then we did all this again. Serve all these subpoenas again and all this stuff, get everything ready. And this woman, this really surprised me too because I really think she liked the attention. But right before the trial, she just said I don't want to put my kids through this. I plead guilty.

NANCY RAY: She could have done that before, huh?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I wish she had of. It would have saved me about three years getting ready for court (laughter).

NANCY RAY: Oh goodness. Well you mentioned a minute ago uh about a baby that was murdered, or a two-year old that was murdered. How did you deal with cases like that from a mental standpoint?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, that's really difficult. Of course you go and you do what you have to do because who's gonna do it? I mean the guy, the investigator is there. And like I said, these officers, these detectives and these deputies, they're really in the trenches. But you go with them and you do what you have to do. And you just try to, you focus on that. And you don't focus on you know this poor little baby girl or whatever. And you know you think about that stuff but you can't let that get in the way of your... it's just like when you go to a fatality accident when you're a Highway Patrolman. There is Christmas presents scattered all over the road and you have got your job to do. And that's what you get hired to do so you do it. But you just deal with that stuff. But I'll never forget that little girl.

NANCY RAY: What happened there? Why was she killed?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, I don't know really why. But she was, there was marks on her that came from a wooden paddle that I found. And uh they matched the marks. The paddle matched the marks on the baby. It was... it was sad.

NANCY RAY: Was someone convicted?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes. The mother.

NANCY RAY: That's just unimaginable.

RICHARD JOHNSON: A sad deal.

NANCY RAY: Well how do you go home at night and turn things like that off?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know sometimes you don't. You wake up at three o'clock in the morning... when I do my best thinking. But sometimes you don't. And a lot of times if you have a really bad deal, you know like on the Nocona deal... between interviews I would have... and that's probably I've got misspelled words in there and my commas not in the right spot... but you between interviews on that Nocona deal, I'd get my laptop out which is a far cry from the Remington with four carbons. But I would type as fast as I could to get down what this doctor said you know before the next interview started. And then I would have my notes and then a lot of times I would go home. And you know, you can't get a lot of typing done here (at the office) because the phone's ringing and people are coming in your office. Which I loved it but a lot of times I'd take my laptop home and I would work at home, do stuff. So sometimes you can't put it away. But other times you, you just... it's time to be a family man. You put that stuff in the back of your mind and then you get it out the next morning.

NANCY RAY: OK. Is there a case that sticks out in your mind that maybe you weren't able to solve or... just really frustrates you?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know, all... I guess I'm fortunate but the murders that I worked over the years... was quite a few of them. But of course you know what they say. The murder victim usually knows the perpetrator. So basically all my murders... there are a couple of warrants out on people that, they are in Mexico. But all my murder cases have been resolved. And so you know there was a missing person... there was a kid from here, a missing person in 1997 and he just vanished. And I spent a lot of

time working on that. And I think I have a person of interest that... but, and I have visited with him before. But I have never been able to prove up anything but I do not believe that boy just left. So you know, in that regard... but I've interviewed everybody, I've done everything... I don't know what else I can do. So that frustrates me a little bit especially since I know somebody I think knows something.

NANCY RAY: They just haven't messed up yet, have they?

RICHARD JOHNSON: So that would be... but all my murder cases you know, basically have... they're solved.

NANCY RAY: What other kind of crimes... you mentioned murders and missing person... did you ever have any kidnappings you had to...

RICHARD JOHNSON: There were a couple of kidnappings but really, nothing really that would really stand out in my mind. I had... There was a fellow that kidnapped his second cousin one time. She was like fifteen and it was a sad deal. And he hid her. He took her somewhere and it was in Nocona where he let her out. I mean he took her to another person's house and said she was not free to leave. And then he went with another woman. Anyway, we tried to track him down. This went on all night through the tornadoes and thunderstorms and everything else. And we finally, I found him in Lewisville. And I was in Bowie when we found his car there, Lewisville PD did. And I said I'll be there in 90 minutes. And so, he never would tell me where she was at but the girl he was with did. And so we, through the storms and tornadoes that night, we went all the way to Nocona and we found her. And it was kind of said because she had been assaulted. But you know other than that... like any major kidnapping deals, I haven't been on any of them.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well I understand that if a Ranger called another Ranger and said I need help, then you would drop what you were doing and help that person. Is that right?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I would. And that's kind of an unwritten policy in the Rangers you know. And we would, if another Ranger came to my area, he would call me. And if he didn't need any help, he would say hey, I need to come up here and do a deal and... you know it was an unwritten policy, I would say I will be there. What do you need me to do? Well I don't need anything. I just wanted to let you know. I'd

say OK, you come up here and make yourself at home. But yeah, if another Ranger called me and said hey, I've got this murder down here and we need to check for some cars at a house in Wichita Falls, if I wasn't working... if you weren't on a crime scene doing something that you had to do right then or in an interview... pretty much drop everything and go.

NANCY RAY: Did you ever get called for something like that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh sure. Rangers called me all the time on different stuff. And I'd call them. You know, that's one thing that the Rangers really benefit other agencies. Because let's say they have a murder in Wichita Falls for example. And then something leads to San Antonio and they don't know anybody in San Antonio maybe. And they call me and say hey, we got this deal down in... from here we're working this deal and we need to do something in San Antonio. Do you know anybody there? I go you bet. I know every Ranger there. And they know people that they work with. I say what do ya'll need and we'll see if we can't get it done? So that's one advantage that these other agencies have utilized a lot with the Rangers. Because a lot of times, the crimes aren't just right here, they go somewhere else and they need to know somebody to help them. And that's what we're here for and that's what we do.

NANCY RAY: Well you also mentioned working with the FBI. Was that... did that go well or did you ever have any other experiences?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I had... we... I had a really good... there've been several agents here in Wichita Falls and I had a really good working relationship with them. And uh those guys, I mean they've moved on. The guy that helped in Nocona which I spent a lot of time with him... And he even, I mean the special agent in charge of the Dallas area, he came and he was you know... we briefed him up and they let us know that we're not in charge of this, ya'll are. And they just, they were just really helpful. There was four murder suspects that got out of, broke jail in Montague County. And uh this was a bad deal... all these people in jail for murder. And so we went and we started, they called me late at night and said we got a jailbreak. And so we go down there, myself and another Ranger from Decatur, and I go this is a bad deal and I think we need to call the FBI. And they go, I don't know if I want to do that. And I say yeah, I work with these guys all the time. And before it was over with, they had a command post set up

there at the volunteer fire department in Montague. They had an FBI SWAT team. They had guys that came in there with computers and they said we're here to help you, ya'll tell us what to do. Ya'll are in charge. And you know I've heard stories from other places that wasn't too good but these guys... my experience up here has been pretty good with them. So this guy robbed a couple of banks, well actually I think he robbed four, Sacramento, Reno, and Las Vegas one time. And he had an ex-wife in Bowie and so we had a pretty good working relationship with the FBI and they were kind of in on this deal. We did a bunch of surveillance down there and stuff. And sure enough, he showed up in Bowie. And the guy, I tell you he was an idiot. He was armed with a knife when they... when we jumped him he ran in this backyard. But the FBI was there and they had you know their SWAT team was on the way because this guy robbed a lot... You know, he robbed this bank and he was running away from one of them, like the fourth one he robbed, and he dropped his wallet (laughter)... had his driver's license and everything in there. But anyway, it was all the way back to Montague County you know but I had a lot of fun working with those guys. And I was like a hostage negotiator on this guy. Of course we didn't have a hostage but we were negotiating with him and the FBI shows up. And they had their hostage negotiator there too and they didn't take over, and this was a bank robbery. They said hey, do you mind if we work... Yeah, the more the merrier, come on in. So I've been really fortunate to be able to work with everybody practically. You know these other agencies and that's what it takes to get the job done.

NANCY RAY: People skills?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Yes, all the agencies gotta work together.

NANCY RAY: OK. You mentioned a jailbreak. Did you catch them?

RICHARD JOHNSON: We got them in Ardmore, Oklahoma.

NANCY RAY: How did you find them there?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know the FBI... they had a bunch of phones tapped and one thing after another. But this thing went on for uh ten days. I worked 165 hours in ten days. And I was on horseback some you know. And when we had these little clues that came up, leads where they thought they might be and one thing after another. And finally, we, after all this time, learned that they had made

their way from Texas to Oklahoma across the river and then all the way to Ardmore. And we went up there. I went up there with a prison dog. We got permission, because they were in a state park up there, and of course I worked with the Texas Department of Corrections out here and I had my own horse and everything out there that they provided for me. And if we went up there... and the Park Service up there... they didn't want us to turn the dogs loose up there. They said do these dogs bite? And I go yeah. He said well I got people in there. I said we need to get them out, these are four murder suspects. He said I don't know whether I can do that. So I was a little unhappy with that. But it's pretty impressive when the special agent in charge of the FBI, Oklahoma City Division, comes... gets there. Of course we had been working with the FBI and the special agent in charge from Dallas had been to Montague. And he goes are you the Ranger? I go yes sir. He said tell us what you want us to do. You know... that's where pinning that badge on... when you feel that pride again. I go really I'm in Oklahoma. I don't have any authority over here. I tell you what, it just seems like it always went back to Montague County you know. It just... We solved a murder case that was ten years old where this lady was stabbed to death on a highway outside of Jacksboro. And it was her husband that did it. And it happened in December of '95 and we had to try him at the prison in 2005. That was kind of interesting.

NANCY RAY: How was that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you know he had told all these stories and lies back when Lane Akin and other Rangers who had initially conducted investigations. Of course they, they were all gone. And I kind of picked up on it when a girl he was going with, he beat her up. And so the chief of police in Nocona, the same guy I worked with said hey, I got this information. You know this lady's been beat up and she's been dating this guy. I go hey, that might be some information. So it went from there but you know we finally got enough to get him indicted but we needed a little more information. So I monitored all his jail conversations.

NANCY RAY: How did you do that?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, you can do that now. And they tell you when you go to jail that these conversations can be monitored.

NANCY RAY: Like on the phone or just in the cell?

RICHARD JOHNSON: On the phone. And so uh then this murder, there was like a two-year old boy in the car seat, their son. And they find this woman stabbed to death on the side of the road and the baby's still in the car seat, just sitting there. Somebody driving by goes what's the deal there so he stops and there's this bad old deal. So uh we did this big, lengthy investigation. I'll bet you counting the people that's got scattered over the years' interviews, I'll bet there's sixteen Rangers that did something on this. But anyway, had the suspect, the husband, in jail and I listened to every conversation he made on the telephone. It took hours. But during the course of the deal, I wasn't getting a lot of information. But uh he wouldn't talk about the murder. And he was calling the same girl he beat up. He later married her by proxy. One of those deals (laughter). But anyway, I went and found her and said... told her that I was a hypnotist and I was needed to know who had custody of this little boy because he was like eight or ten now. I said you know we can hypnotize him and he's gonna tell me who did this murder. You can't do that, it wouldn't work. But she told him and so they had some lengthy conversations. And of course he was denying it all the time but one time he got a little excited and he said well, he was in the car seat and turned around looking. And he made some other statements during the course of the deal that kind of iced the cake with the jury and he was convicted on circumstantial evidence alone. He was sentenced to life and he's lost his appeals. So that was a pretty satisfying case. Lane Akin started the deal like I said. There were Rangers in Lubbock, Plainview... Danny Young down at... I don't know where Danny's stationed now. I had guys... guys in Houston did some stuff for me. There was people scattered everywhere that was interviewed. It was pretty interesting.

NANCY RAY: Sounds pretty interesting. Well, I can ask you about awards and accomplishments and things like that, but what... whether it's an award or whether anybody knew it or not, what is the thing to you, through your career, that you've done that gives you the biggest sense of accomplishment. Makes you feel good. I can hear it when you're talking about these cases. But what to you... maybe nobody else even knows about it.

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know I've had a couple of deals... this kidnapping is one of them. Where you go and meet the family and they're like frantic. Please do something, please do something. And then you actually go and do something and you find somebody safe. And then when these people, when they grip your hand, let me tell you... When you've got somebody that's traumatized because their loved ones are victims or you want to find who murdered them. Or their daughter's missing on this kidnapping and they look to you. Let me tell you, you can see the fear and what would be a good word? The hope in their eyes that you're gonna do something because you're a Ranger, let me tell you what. That will build a fire under you that you won't believe. And then when you actually do something for these people, and they come to you, and thank you, it's just like this fellow who killed his wife. He had about... he had abused women a lot. He had several wives and one of them, he'd mistreated her terrible. She was deathly afraid of him. And she told me stuff. She confided in me and I told her you're gonna have to testify that you told me. She had my cell phone number and all these women did. There was about ten of them. And I go you get afraid, you call me and I'll come. But when they send you a card in the mail or they call you or you see them in person and they grip your hand and they say thank you for what... thank you so much for what you did. You know, that's... I'm not big on awards and citations. I mean you know now they have... you get a director's citation you did this, you did that. You know that's what I got hired to do. I don't care too much about that. But when these people tell you that, that's where it's at.

NANCY RAY: That's genuine, isn't it?

RICHARD JOHNSON: I guarantee. And Bill Gerth and some of these other guys, they'll tell you the same thing.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well I think I would want you on my side.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well thank you for saying that.

NANCY RAY: Well tell me about these manhunts. You talked about riding on a horse. I mean that's... you'd think a Ranger does but most of them don't ride horses.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, all of them used to (laughter). You know I, I've been... I was on horses as a kid but I kind of quit that over the years. And really didn't have a whole lot of use for horses but I

got... Out here they built this big prison out here and it had just been completed not too long after I got here. And I got in with... you know I'd go out there and do interviews and I got in with the wardens and stuff out there. And uh of course you know I would go... even when I was on Highway Patrol. When I was Highway Patrol sergeant, we had manhunts all the time. When I was patrolman, you know I'd be involved in road blocks and one thing after another. And then when I was a sergeant, I'd be directing people. And of course I'd go man I'm directing people out here and I don't even know what's going on myself. But you know then I got with these guys and I started riding again. We'd go... we'd go on these practice runs you know. And they would have volunteers, actually volunteers that would go out and lay a track and dogs you know, three or four hours later dogs would get on the track. And you know run them down and stuff. And I'd go on those and then actually, I've probably been on... I don't know. Over the years, over the twelve years, twelve and a half years I was here, I've probably been on two dozen probably.

NANCY RAY: Really? Who were you tracking?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well, jailbreaks and people that you know the Highway Patrol would try to stop and they were trying to arrest for drug violations and they'd run off.

NANCY RAY: Can you tell us about one?

RICHARD JOHNSON: Oh, they had uh this murder suspect broke out of jail in Weatherford one time and they called and they wanted the dogs. So we go, we get down there in the afternoon and they've... you know they always called and said we've got a manhunt going on and I'd say OK, get a perimeter set up, do this, do that... All the Rangers do and the Highway Patrol sergeants do, some of the agencies would not... you get caught up in the excitement of it they wouldn't get organized the way it's supposed to. So I would try to get everything geared up. And I would call out to the prison and say we've got this... it's a felony suspect and they you call in for the dogs and all that. And so I would go with them. And they, I had several different horses that I rode out there. But uh I would go with them and so we'd go down there and we'd get briefed up by who was in charge. And they'd say this was the last time we saw them and we... you know. So we would get the dogs and they'd run a pack of ten. And they would work on

human scents. So that's why you would need a perimeter with nobody in there except the suspect because they do have some scent-specific dogs out there where they're lease dogs. And you can maybe get a ballcap or something of the suspect. But most of the time, and we've done that too, but most of the time we would use the pack dogs. And we would try to get on track. And if, depending on how old it was you know. And I'm not an expert. The dog sergeant out there, Steve Croley out there, he and Ronnie.... My gosh, I've been on two dozen manhunts with him, I'll think of it in a minute. They, I mean these guys... they know, they would do these practice runs and they would know how much, what the humidity was and one thing after another... which way the wind was blowing, and they'd write all that down. They'd know how their dogs do you know. We'd go on these runs and the dogs would be sniffing around and they'd get out of sight and we'd hear one of them. And I'd go there's one, is he on track? And they'd go oh yeah, that's old Lulu, I recognize her voice (laughter). And so these guys were really experts. Then we'd get the dogs and they'd get on track you know and we'd get... the horses even knew this. When a certain... those dogs start you know, when they start to howling, the horses knew when they were serious. And those old ears would perk up on those horses. And you know of course the guys I was riding with, they could ride. And I'd go uh oh, time to hang on because we're fixing to go. But we had this manhunt down there and we couldn't pick up this track. And the dogs had got confused because I think too many people went in there and they... some went in there and they said they didn't and whatever. But the sun goes down and we were still working. And we get on this, we're on this railroad track because they thought they had seen somebody going down the railroad track and we'd... you know catch a train or whatever. So I go, OK, we need to call... have the Sheriff's Office call the railroad and tell them we're gonna be on the tracks you know and see if there's any traffic. So anyway, they called back and said no, its all clear. So we, this is at pitch black. We've got ten dogs. We took the chains off of them. They usually chain them up to each other, two of them, you know for control. So then they take the chains off and the dogs are sniffing around. There are three of us on horseback, two guys from the prison and me. And uh so we're... the dogs are sniffing around. And this is a bad old deal. It's a murderer guy you know. A helicopter from Fort Worth PD had been over there and they were still over there. And it was Fort

Worth Air 1 or something like that. So I had a radio and I heard Fort Worth Air 1 to anyone at the command post. And nobody answered. And he was calling for anyone in the command post. Finally, the Highway Patrol sergeant down there he answered them and told them to go ahead. And he said you have an inbound train running about 60 miles an hour and he's about two minutes out. Well I heard that so I started to panic you know because we're way up on this railroad track and there's slope up and down and there's fences on both sides. And so we start trying to get the dogs back. And so you know they're hollering for them. You know they've got like a bullwhip they can crack, these guys do, and then the dogs will come back and they yelped for them to come back. So we started getting all the dogs and we've just about got them all chained up and we could... I could hear the train. And he's coming you know. I'm going man, we're gonna get run over. So we get them and we get off our horses and they're trying to hold their horses and I'm trying to hold mine and we're trying to hand onto dogs. And the train... at the command post up was up there at this intersection where the train goes through. They put out emergency flares for the train to stop. When the engineer went through there, he shut that train in an emergency stop because we were down on the track. And of course it just came... you know you don't stop a train in (laughter)... it takes a mile or two. That thing skidded past us, pitch-black dark, and sparks and flames coming off that thing. And those animals went crazy. I did, I thought we was gonna get run over. But we survived that and then we... that was kind of the end of our manhunt there until the next day. And I said you know, if ya'll see him, ya'll call us and we'll come back. And this, we got... I got home about four I guess. Got up, cleaned up, and went back to work at eight. And uh, that's just the way you do it and everybody else will tell you that too. And they called here. I'm in the communications and they say hey, we've had a sighting of this guy. We need the dogs. So we go down there and they have had a good sighting and they got their perimeter set up. And the guy that had a short foot pursuit, he knew just where he ran to and he said this is where I stopped. And so we had a pretty good track. And we turned those dogs loose and we ran pretty hot, that's where they're running pretty good you know. And there's a big, deep creek. It's like a gully. This creek's got walls as high as this room here. And so all of a sudden, the dogs start jumping in the water. And you know of course it's hot. We go well they need... you know but

they were acting strange. And there was a bridge up there on the highway on this Farm-to-Market road where we had troopers stationed. So I called the Ranger down there and said have you seen anything because we're down in this creek bottom. And he goes no. I got guys on the bridge. They haven't seen a thing. I said well these dogs just aren't acting right. So I got off my horse and I got down in that creek bottom and I was trying to hold onto a tree and look to see what I could see. I could see some of the dogs you know. They were looking at me and swimming around there you know. And I go you know... there's something here. But I couldn't get down in the water. So I went back and I called the Ranger and I go hey, ya'll get a boat and ya'll put in at that bridge. And ya'll work this way and I'm gonna take these dogs back up about half a mile and we're gonna come back this way. And I think this guy's in here. And sure enough, he had... this guy was from Louisiana and he knew a little bit about dogs because I interviewed him after this deal. But he had, he had dug a little cave back in that bank, in that mud. And he'd packed mud all over his face and he'd put it on his eyelids. And he was kind of buried back up in there. But we had this little old dog named Allred. And this... when I interviewed him later, he said you know this little dog? And I go yeah, that black and tan one? I asked the Sheriff after we captured him. I said can I go talk to this guy? And he goes no, he won't talk to you, he's a jerk. So, well, I said let me try. So I went and talked to him. He said I'm not talking to you. I said I just want to tell you what a good job you did getting away from those dogs. Well, that just opened up a can of worms there (laughter). He said that little black and tan one would bite me. My foot would float up in the creek and every time that toe would come up out of that water, he would bite me (laughter). But anyway, we captured him. The sheriff was happy and everybody was happy and everybody at the command post, they gave the dogs a big hand when we got back. But I could go on... I went on about two dozen of those things.

NANCY RAY: Well, if somebody looks at this video say the next generation or whatever, what do you want them to remember about you as a Texas Ranger?

RICHARD JOHNSON: You know... I want them to just remember it's an organization, it's not just me. It's the whole organization from 1823 to now. It is just guys... you know the guys back in the 1800s you know that were in the Frontier Battalion before, you know they were storekeepers and farmers and

ranchers and they went and did their deal. And they faded into history forever. You know never to be heard of again and that's what I'm gonna do. I'm just gonna fade away like the Frontier Battalion guys did. But it's not me, it's not about me. It's about the organization and what the organization represents. And what we try to do for society that works for the benefits of society as a whole and being the law enforcement agency that... not I made but the guys before me made.

NANCY RAY: Well we want to thank you for your time today for this interview and thank you for your service to the state of Texas.

RICHARD JOHNSON: Well thank you. What you're doing, the information you're collecting for the Rangers. I appreciate it.

NANCY RAY: You're welcome.