

Interview With

RONNIE McBRIDE
Texas Ranger, Retired

©2006, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame & Museum

Project:
Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted At The
Jasper County Sheriff's Office
Jasper, Texas
Monday—May23, 2005

Interviewed By:
Tony Hill
Nacogdoches, Texas

Present At Interview: Ronnie McBride and Tony Hill



Introduction

Welcome to the E-Book Project of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum (TRHFM). The TRHFM, located in Waco, Texas, is the State-designated Official Historical Center of the Texas Rangers. It is operated as a service of City of Waco by authorization of the Texas Department of Public Safety and the State of Texas.

The mission of this project is to provide easy access to books, oral histories dissertations, articles, and other literary works on Texas Ranger history.

Public Domain Works: Many of the works in this non-commercial library are in the public domain and may be freely enjoyed—please follow the conditions set forth below.

Copyrighted Works: Some works, which are clearly noted, *are under copyright*. They are in this library through the courtesy and permission of the copyright holders. Please read and enjoy them, but they may *not* be redistributed, copied or otherwise used without the written permission of the author or copyright holder.

Conditions & Statements

1. The Adobe Acrobat™ or other file format in which this work resides may not be redistributed *for profit*—including commercial redistribution, sales, rentals, or fees for handling, access, download etc. These works may not be modified, changed or sued in derivative works in any manner without the express permission of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum.
2. The TRHFM staff has exercised due diligence to determine that this material is in the public domain or to secure copyright permission. If you believe this work is under copyright, and you are the copyright holder, please contact us at **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame, PO Box 2570, Waco, TX 76702-2570** with proof of ownership.
3. You may link to the main page of the library, however, please do *not* "hot link" directly to the files or repost them.
4. If a work is redistributed for educational or nonprofit use, the following must remain intact: (1) The author/copyright holder credits (2) the registered name **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame E-Book™**, (3) the **logo** and name **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum™**.

Ronnie McBride
Retired Texas Ranger

TONY HILL: Today is May 23, 2005. My name is Tony Hill, I am visiting with the retired Ranger, Ronnie McBride, of Jasper, Texas. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger McBride's career as a Texas Ranger. Ranger McBride do I have your permission to record this interview?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: You understand that the video tape to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and museum in Waco, Texas.

RM I do.

TONY HILL: Do I have your permission to present copies of this tape, through the museum, to various historical organizations such as museums, libraries and schools.

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: To begin with if you could tell me your full name and where you currently live.

RONNIE McBRIDE: My full name is Ronald Roy McBride and I currently live in Jasper, Texas.

TONY HILL: What year were you born in and where?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I was born in 1946 in Kirbyville, Texas.

TONY HILL: And could you give me your parents name please.

RONNIE McBRIDE: My father's name was Arnold McBride, my mother Thelma Foxworth.

TONY HILL: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir I did.

TONY HILL: Could you tell me those in...my oldest to youngest.

RONNIE McBRIDE: I have an older brother Weldon McBride, then myself, then Armond McBride..ARMOND, Kent McBride, he's deceased, my sister Edith McBride, deceased, my sister Sylvia Buckner, a sister Melba Gordan.

TONY HILL: Did you go to Kirbyville High School?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir I did?

TONY HILL: What year did you graduate?

RONNIE McBRIDE: 1965.

TONY HILL: Did you go to any college?

RONNIE McBRIDE: No sir.

TONY HILL: When you were in high school did you have any special friends or teachers or anything like that, that had an affect on your life?

RONNIE McBRIDE: One in particular was Smokey Davis was the Superintendent there at Kirbyville, probably had a lot of impact on my life. I respected him very much.

TONY HILL: Is he still alive?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir he's currently resides in the Houston area, retired.

TONY HILL: What were your favorite subjects in school?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I don't think I had any favorites. If I had to pick one it would be typing.

TONY HILL: Were you involved in sports?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir I played football and ran track.

TONY HILL: It was almost a sin if you didn't play back in high school, in East Texas, wasn't it?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Exactly right. Had to play football.

TONY HILL: You're married aren't you?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: And what's your wife's name?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Her name is Nita....NITA.

TONY HILL: And what about children?

RONNIE McBRIDE: We have two children, oldest being Tracy....MATEICH....Mateich, she's 34 years old and resides in the city of Rowlett...ROWLETT. I have a son who's 27 years old, Jeffrey, he resides here in Jasper.

TONY HILL: And you were...you were in the service weren't you?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: When was that?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I was in the Marine Corp. from ...entered in 1965 and got out in 1967.

TONY HILL: Well being in, in that time you probably served in Viet Nam.

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir I did, the majority of that was in Viet Nam.

TONY HILL: Anything special about your military service that formed your life or anything like that?

RONNIE McBRIDE: No just... I always felt I went and served my country. After I got out it was over with, put behind me.

TONY HILL: When did you first want to be in law enforcement, do you have any idea?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Prior to getting out of the military I worked for a short time in the Evadale area, in the Temple Inland Eastex paper mill, and for some reason or another I decided to go work for the police department in Silsbee. At which time I did and stayed just for a short time, from there I went into the DPS.

TONY HILL: Was there anything in particular that made you want to leave Silsbee and go in the DPS, or benefits, or money or

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well a little bit of all of that. I had a Highway Patrol Sergeant there, L.C. White, later turned out to be a Texas Ranger, but he influenced me, he convinced me to do...go

do better things. And Iprior to that I had thought about the DPS and he kind of helped me make up my mind.

TONY HILL: When did you....when did you go into DPS?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I started July 30 or 31st of 1968.

TONY HILL: And do you remember how long the recruit school was back then?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I'm thinking it was about 18 weeks.

TONY HILL: About any of your monitors, do you remember who they were?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir, I remember all of them. There was Jerry Clemmons, later became a Ranger, Milton Raspberry, Billy Melton and Sergeant Hancock, I don't remember Sergeant Hancock's first name.

TONY HILL: What did you like best about school?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I can't think of anything that I just really liked.

TONY HILL: Morris said Friday's was the best thing about his youth.

RONNIE McBRIDE: Probably Friday's, no nothing just really jumps out at me that I liked.

TONY HILL: Do you remember any Rangers speaking to the...to your class?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir ah....Captain...Senior Captain Bill Wilson came and spoke to us, basically just on criminal law and a little history of the Ranger service.

TONY HILL: Any one besides you out of your graduating class become a Ranger that you can remember?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir ah...other than myself, Fred Cummings, Jimmy Mull, Thelbert Milsap.

TONY HILL: Out of your recruit class did any of the people that graduated with you move into the administration of the DPS?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Ah...probably more but ah....two or three that I remember was Fred Little, Bob Martin, and Jim Bob Porter. I say Jim Bob, I think it was Gary Porter, yes sir, Gary Porter.

TONY HILL: Did you come out of the Highway Patrol or did you come out of one of the other services when you finished your recruit school.

RONNIE McBRIDE: I went into thewent straight into the Highway Patrol.

TONY HILL: And what was your first duty station?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Jasper.

TONY HILL: Jasper, really. Did you have any other duty stations while you were in the Highway Patrol?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I.....a three year tour in the south end of Jasper County, in Buna. Our prior Sheriff here, Billy Rhodes and I opened that station up in Buna. I stayed there a short time, this short three years and then I moved back to Jasper.

TONY HILL: I see. Who was your training officer that you rode with when you first came over here?

RONNIE McBRIDE: It was G. L. Frame. G. L. passed away here about three months ago.

TONY HILL: Did he still live here in Jasper? What made you first decide to move over to the Rangers?

RONNIE McBRIDE: The resident Ranger here in Jasper County was Everett Smith and Everett pulled me off to the side one day and just talked to me and he told me he was getting ready to

retire and he thought it would be nice if I'd get out there and study and take his place here in Jasper. That probably inspired me more than anything. Although that didn't happen.

TONY HILL: It didn't happen?

RONNIE McBRIDE: That year Roscoe Davis made Ranger and was stationed here in Jasper and I didn't make it that year.

TONY HILL: I see. When did you become a Ranger?

RONNIE McBRIDE: October 1, 1982.

TONY HILL: Did you serve any place else besides Jasper?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Dallas, Dallas and Beaumont.

TONY HILL: And what years were you in Dallas?

RONNIE McBRIDE: From '82 to '88.

TONY HILL: And Beaumont?

RONNIE McBRIDE: '88 until '93 .

TONY HILL: And then you moved back up here....(inaudible)....

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: Who was your Captains up in Dallas?

RONNIE McBRIDE: First Captain was G.W. Burkes and let's see, after ...after G.W., James Wright, Bobby Prince, which that was back when I was backmoved back to Beaumont.

TONY HILL: Right.

RONNIE McBRIDE: And W.D. Vickers. And I believe I served under David Burns for a short period of time before I left Dallas.

TONY HILL: And then Earl after....

RONNIE McBRIDE: Earl, I forgot about Earl, yes sir.

TONY HILL: Did ah....did you retire before Cleat...

RONNIE McBRIDE: No sir, it was shortly after there. I guess I'd say I did serve under Cleat
...(inaudible)

TONY HILL: When you moved into the Rangers did you go todid they have a new Rangers
school or just particular classes that you took?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Just classes, they hadn't started the new Ranger school yet.

TONY HILL: Do you feel like there's a difference in the way people treated you as a Highway
Patrolman as far as a Ranger, the differences between the two, or that you could perceive or
ah....

RONNIE McBRIDE: Nearly....nearly as much as between daylight and dark.

TONY HILL: Really.

RONNIE McBRIDE: Big change.

TONY HILL: How so.

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well as a Highway Patrolman, here locally youit's not as bad as out
in the public, here's people that you go to Church with and eat with, you didn't see that much
difference. But once out in thein the general public it just seemed like, you know, you're a
Highway Patrolman was out there making a bad day for folks day to day issuing citations and so
forth. And I just think as a general rule they were looked down on as bad guys compared to the
Ranger who's supposed to have the white hat was the good guy. This was especially noticeable
in the large area, metropolitan areas, Dallas and Beaumont.

TONY HILL: Of the crimes that you worked while you were a Ranger is there any particular type that you enjoyed working more than others?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well the....probably like any Ranger we didn't like working on any of the bad stuff, but I enjoyed working your homicides and your...any major crime, bank robberies especially, which we did a lot of in the Dallas area.

TONY HILL: Do you remember what your first case was as a Ranger?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Probably....and I don't remember the victim's name, but I was asked by the Rowlett police department to assist in a homicide where a man located floating in Lake Ray Hubbard. It was a drug deal.

TONY HILL: Have any particular case that stands out as you felt best about, most satisfying that you were able to solve it?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Most of the ones that were ... that I got most satisfaction out of wasn't solved by me but just working jointly with other agencies and Rangers in the Dallas. We assisted with several large cases, two of them being bank robberies, that was cleared up while I was there that had been on going for over 10 – 12 years.

TONY HILL: What about a case that was real frustrating for you?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Probably the most ...one that comes to mind mostly is in the city of Farmers Branch. One of their officers was murdered in 1983 that is still unsolved and that one bothered me for years, and still does.

TONY HILL: Was it one of those situations that you kind of knew who did it and couldn't find enough evidence to make the case or was itor was it

RONNIE McBRIDE: I don't think we ever knew 100% who done it, it was a case of some illegal aliens from Cuba that was in the area and they all spread out across the United States. As they say now a days, a person of interest, was located in New York and then it just kind of fizzled out from there, it got lost in the shuffle and it never was confirmed even if he was the one who done it or not. It was real frustrating.

TONY HILL: What about your last case?

RONNIE McBRIDE: One of the last cases I worked on was up here out of Sabine County. A person was murdered, stuffed in the rear of his car, the car set on fire. Knew nearly beyond a reasonable doubt who done it, but so far the case has not been made against this individual.

TONY HILL: When you got to retirement you had 30.....

RONNIE McBRIDE: 34.

TONY HILL: 34?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: You were at 100% then?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes sir.

TONY HILL: Is that why you decided to retire or is there anything else?

RONNIE McBRIDE: That had a lot to do with it. But right about in that time my current Sheriff was making some little noise about not running again, so I kind ofthat helped me in away, cause I kind of took a leave of absence for nearly 2 years before the election took place. And in the back of my mind I was planning on running for Sheriff up here all along.

TONY HILL: What was your last day to work for the DPS?

RONNIE McBRIDE: It would have been August 31, 2002.

TONY HILL: And when you took the oath as Sheriff you had to give up your Special Ranger commission?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Yes.

TONY HILL: And ah....next question, what you've done since retiring.... you worked on being Sheriff since you retired.

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well that was it. I done a lot of little handy work around the house and helping my neighbors built fence and I took thethe outside maintenance job at the local DPS office here, which my wife and son still maintain that, keeping up the yard at the DPS office. And besides that I justjust kind of hung loose and helped my neighbors out and friends and did a lot of work around our Church. But I never did feel like I was really retired, I wasn't really ready to set down and roll over and play dead.

TONY HILL: Ah....humorous stories concerning Rangers or other law enforcement officers ah...do you have any stories that....humorous that you'd like to tell?

RONNIE McBRIDE: There's probably some of them out there, but nothing really comes to my mind. Had a lot of fun and had a good group of guys to work with. Like I say, I'm sure there was a lot of humor out there, but I don't have nothing stored up.

TONY HILL: Well it seems like the ah....the Rangers that I've known and the groups that I've known, that there's in some cases, more camaraderie between those guys than there is in other fields of law enforcement. Do you see that too?

RONNIE McBRIDE: I agree with that and I think the ...the biggest success to that is that, we're small and I could pick up the phone right now and call the Ranger in El Paso by his first

name, or anywhere in the state. And just say who you are and tell 'em what you want and you could consider it done.

TONY HILL: Exactly. About your kids, did you ah....your son, did you encourage him to follow law enforcement or leave....let him make those decisions or discourage him from it?

RONNIE McBRIDE: That's completely been his decision, it never was an issue, cause he never showed any interest in it and I respected that. This day and time that's fine with me.

TONY HILL: Yeah, yeah. Kind of like me, I left him alone about it, but I sure wanted him to go the other way.

RONNIE McBRIDE: That's right.

TONY HILL: What do you want people to remember Ronnie McBride for?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well, I would like them to always be able to say he was honest, fair, compassionate. Any officer that's retired and would want anything left I mean especially that, I think it would be something wrong especially, you know, compassionate for other people. I think that's a big part of our job that ah....and I think when you got policemen that are not compassionate they need to find them another field. I think that's very important and I like the old saying about a hand shake being your common bond, I'd like to be remember for that. It told you something, well you could write it down as being the truth.

TONY HILL: What about special Rangers that you worked with that made an influence on your career that you remember when you think about your time in the Rangers, anybody stands out?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well I had three that ah....just Captain Burkes and Glenn Elliott in Longview, they were my heroes, they still are, and Everett Smith who was the resident Ranger here, that I knew very personally. You know them guys are still my heroes and always will be.

TONY HILL: Thinking about what we talked about and ah....somebody looks at this DVD about, you know, 20 – 30- 100 years from now ah....what would you like to tell them about your time in the Rangers?

RONNIE McBRIDE: Well I'd like to say that it was 19 good years, wouldn't trade it for nothing. Don't have nothing just real outstanding to say other than what we said awhile ago about the closeness we had together as a small group. The guys that you didn't have to worry about, you called them up for help, you was going to get your help, you know it was going to be done right, didn't have to second guess it. One of the greatest organizations in the world and I'm just glad to have been part of it and remembered as being part of it.