

Interview with

AL MITCHELL
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at the Mitchell's Home
Midland, Texas
Sunday—September 7, 2008

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Al Mitchell, Ellen Mitchell, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



Introduction

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AL MITCHELL
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED

NANCY RAY: My name is Nancy Ray and I'm visiting with Al Mitchell today and we are at his home (Midland, Texas, Sunday, September 7th, 2008). Also present are his wife Ellen and Eddie Ray. The purpose of this interview is to discuss your career as a Ranger... and Ranger Mitchell, do I have your permission to record this interview?

AL MITCHELL: Of course.

NANCY RAY: And, Ranger Mitchell, do you understand that this videotape will belong to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas?

AL MITCHELL: I do.

NANCY RAY: And, Mr. Mitchell, 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 them on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum's website?

AL MITCHELL: Of course.

NANCY RAY: All right, let's begin by learning a little bit about you. What is your full name?

AL MITCHELL: My name is A. L. Mitchell.

NANCY RAY: OK, the, the A L, those are initials?

AL MITCHELL: Initials.

NANCY RAY: Do you have a full name or do you want to talk about it?

AL MITCHELL: I don't want to talk about it.

NANCY RAY: That works.

AL MITCHELL: Actually, my real name is Ashby, ASHBY, my middle name is Lige, but I've never went by that name.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell Lige?

AL MITCHELL: LIGE, that was my grandfather.

NANCY RAY: All right, well, that's an honor to have your grandfather's name. And you currently live here in Midland. Where were you born?

AL MITCHELL: I was born in Eddy County, New Mexico, on the Pecos River between Carlsbad and Artesia, near uh not far from the old town of Seven Rivers, just south of a little town, Lakewood, uh, I was born in 1935.

NANCY RAY: OK, did you go to school there? Did you grow up there?

AL MITCHELL: I went to school the first two years in Lakewood and then uh went, we moved into Carlsbad and I finished my high school, went through high school in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

NANCY RAY: Did you have any favorite subjects?

AL MITCHELL: (laughter) I just like to work.

NANCY RAY: You like to work. No, you didn't like any of the particular subjects in school?

AL MITCHELL: Oh, you mean subjects in school?

NANCY RAY: Right.

AL MITCHELL: I really liked history, yeah. I'm kind of a history buff.

NANCY RAY: That seems to be a trend with Rangers, it really does. What about sports or anything like that, were you active in that?

AL MITCHELL: Well, you know, in another life and in a younger day, I used to rope a lot of steers and did a lot of cowboying but that was, that was a long time ago.

NANCY RAY: Was that, did you do it like in a rodeo type setting?

AL MITCHELL: Well, you know, I was on a rodeo team in college and I roped a lot of steers. I'd worked for, I worked for the New Mexico Livestock Commission one time for a few years and I roped a lot of steers and, and that was, that was in another life, my first inclination was that I was going to be in the cow business. I never in my life thought I'd ever carry a gun or be a policeman. I never had, never had even thought about being a policeman.

NANCY RAY: My goodness. Well, before we get to your being a policeman, let's talk about what were your parents' names?

AL MITCHELL: My mother's name was Florence and my dad was named Buster, W. H. (Buster) Mitchell. Uh, they were, my dad was born and raised in Carlsbad uh, my mother was born south of Monahans on the Pecos River in 1908 in a tent. Uh, so I'm really a Llano Estacado product from across West Texas... and Southeastern New Mexico.

NANCY RAY: OK.

AL MITCHELL: My, my grandfather and his brothers and their sister and their dad came out of Comanche County, Texas, in 1902 and went to the Pecos River where they established a dredge business, or that was before there was any trucks, wagons and teams... they was in the dredge business, the hauling business... did a little bit of everything. Uh, actually, that business progressed into a trucking company and a house-moving company and in fact, my grandfather received the first SCC permit that was ever issued in the state of New Mexico and bought the first truck that was ever sold in New Mexico. Way back there. And so, that's where my family was kind of raised in, on, there in Eddy County.

NANCY RAY: Did you have brothers and sisters?

AL MITCHELL: I have one brother, his name is Bill.

NANCY RAY: Is he older or younger?

AL MITCHELL: He's six years older than I am. Uh, he currently lives in Kansas with his son and grandsons.

NANCY RAY: Well, very good. When you completed high school, what did you do then? Did you go to the military or...

AL MITCHELL: Well, I got out, I graduated from high school in 1953 in Carlsbad and I went to New Mexico State University for one year. And I came home and decided I wanted to make some money, I was about to starve to death. And uh, so uh I uh, I got a job, actually before I had left Carlsbad, for a very short time I worked for the Fire Department. I was a paid fireman, one of the first four in Carlsbad. But that didn't last long, about a year or nine months and uh I had always wanted to be in the cow business, that's what my real aim in life was and I intended to do that and after I, I went to school for a year at New Mexico State and come back home and uh, I got a job working in a potash mine as a welder and mechanic in the potash mine. And, and I had uh, I had a little piece of country leased out south of White City. I had about fifty head of yearlings out there, I was gonna get in the cow business. I was day working when I wasn't working somewhere else on those ranches out there in that part of the county. And of course it didn't rain for... that was during the time when it didn't rain for five years... price of cattle went pretty bad. Uh, I was about to get drafted and so I sold my little bunch of cattle and I got out of the cow business and when I paid all my bills, I had \$10 left. So I took my girlfriend to town and we had a steak supper and I went to the Army.

NANCY RAY: Oh my. Now what year was that when you went to the Army?

AL MITCHELL: Let's see, I went to the Army in 1956.

NANCY RAY: OK. And did you, what did you do?

AL MITCHELL: Well, it's kind of a strange deal. I, I enlisted through the New Mexico National Guard and went into the Army and stayed in the Army about 15 months before it was, it

was a limited enlistment type thing. I went, they sent me to school. I went to, I took my basic training in Camp Chaffee Arkansas and they sent me back to Fort Bliss Texas in, and for some unknown reason, I never knew why, when I got my orders out of basic training, they specified that they were gonna send me to Fort Bliss, Texas, to military intelligence school, S2, S3 school. I didn't even know what that meant. I... why in hell would you send a cowboy to military intelligence school? And so that's what I did and I stayed in school the rest of my enlistment period. And by the time I got out of school, I was so close to being out that I went ahead and, they went ahead and released me. I came back home and, I was trying to figure out how to get back in the cow business again and so ultimately I got a job as a deputy brand inspector, cattle inspector, for the state of New Mexico. And they sent me to Clovis to work in the stockyards and I stayed in Clovis eight months, inspecting cattle. At that time, there was four, four sale barns operating there. We were inspecting, about four days a week we were inspecting seven or eight thousand head of cattle a day.

NANCY RAY: Now what were you inspecting for?

AL MITCHELL: I was a brand inspector. Uh, the job of a brand inspector is to inspect cattle that is being transported and sold and determine that they are properly branded and they are the property of the people that's selling them or the people that's selling them have the proper documents to sell the cattle... the title to the cattle so to speak. And basically that's what the job was. It's a quasi.... And in New Mexico, it's a, it's a statutory job as opposed to Texas. Texas Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association in Texas is an association, they have a fine organization but they have no laws. In New Mexico, the brand laws are state laws and so, actually we were commissioned officers although I had little or no training as far as a police officer. I, the reason I wanted that job is because I thought I could, if I was a brand inspector I could get close to the cattle business and I'd know what was going on everywhere and I could get back in the cow business.

NANCY RAY: Well, let me ask you, before you get too far into your career, when did you marry?

AL MITCHELL: That come later on.

NANCY RAY: Ah, OK, well keep going.

AL MITCHELL: I'll get there. Uh, I stayed in Clovis eight months and they sent me, they came down there one day and they asked me if I wanted to be a district inspector. And they told me that they had an opening in Quemado, New Mexico. Now if you don't know where that's at, that's 108 miles west of Socorro over there on the Arizona line in a, in a big old Gila Wilderness, wide open country. Uh and so, they didn't know it... the reason they asked me to go because I was the only single guy they had and there was, nobody with a family would move out there. There was not much of a place for kids to go to school although there was a school. But anyway, what they didn't know is that I'd a went to hell to get out of Clovis. But, I accepted that job and they sent me to Quemado which is a little town of about 300 people, as I said, way out there in the Gila Wilderness, on Highway 60. My district was 150 miles long and a hundred miles wide and it had one paved road going across the middle of it... and no telephones and 1750 people in

the whole area. That's, the ranches out there, 70, 80, 90, 100 sections is a mediocre-size ranch in that country. Lots of big ranches, lots of good cowboy time. And so I stayed out there for about three and a half years... and all the time trying to figure out how to get back in the cow business. There was a time in the, in the cattle business when a poor boy could, could pick him up a cow or two here, get a few cows here, raise them, put them on some patch somewhere where first thing you know he's got six or eight you know... he can move them around, he can lease him a little corner somewhere and run a few cows in it. First thing you know you've got 15 or 20, 30, 40 head of cattle and then you kind of get started and get back in the cow business.

Unfortunately, it was at that time in the history of this country that the Internal Revenue Service fixed it where the people that had the money, had a lot of money, looking for places to write taxes off, they, the tax laws fixed it so those people with the money that needed a tax write off could buy a ranch and pay way more money than it was worth. In fact, they were not in the ranching business to make money they were in the ranching business to lose money. Well, that affected a poor boy like me trying to get in the business. Uh, and so, it became an impossibility to do it the way we used to do it. And so, during the period of time I was out there, I got involved in investigating some cattle theft cases, working some illegal transportation cases... I had zero training. The only thing I knew about how to do that was I just knew the difference between right and wrong. And that's all I really knew. And so I stayed out there about three and a half years and I, at that time I think I was making \$275 a month. And uh, I got acquainted with some State Police officers in New Mexico and they were making \$325 a month. And after it became clear to me that I was not ever gonna get back in the cow business that way, I thought well if I'm gonna work on this end of this deal, I just as well go where I can make some money and get some training. And so I applied and went to the State Police. And uh

NANCY RAY: Would that be the equivalent of the Texas Highway Patrol at that time?

AL MITCHELL: Well, the State Police is a uniformed State Police organization which performs all of the Highway Patrol functions, in addition the State Police organization enforces every criminal statute in the state also. So, it's a combination of... they work it all.

NANCY RAY: OK.

AL MITCHELL: State Policeman works everything from murder cases to dog bites at the state level. And so uh, I went in the State Police and

NANCY RAY: Now, what year was this?

AL MITCHELL: 1961. Yes, that's right, 1961. And uh, they sent me to Clovis on a temporary assignment. I'm still single, and so when I got out of school... there was 16 of us finished, there was 36 of us started that class and they had 16 jobs. And when we got through, there was 16 of us still there. And so I got a commission and they sent me to Clovis on a temporary duty assignment. I'm sorry, they sent me to Roswell, not Clovis, to Roswell on a temporary duty assignment. And I stayed in Roswell I guess about six months and uh uh subsequently, they transferred me to a little town up on old US 66 called Sanjon, New Mexico, SANJON, New Mexico. I didn't even know where it was. That was before they ever built the Interstate, on the old US Highway 66. I was the first State Police officer west of the Texas state line. And, I stayed

there about four and a half years and it was during that time, that I met a farm gal who lived in that town. She had been to college for a couple of years and come back home after she had got her degree from college and she was working as the secretary for the superintendent of schools in Tucumcari, New Mexico... which this was in Quay County. And so I met this young lady one day and you see her sitting here with me today. Subsequently, uh we got married in 1962.

NANCY RAY: And what is her name and would you spell it for us?

AL MITCHELL: Her name is Ellen Mitchell, ELLEN, Ellen Mitchell. And, we've been partners ever since.

NANCY RAY: That's great. What about children?

AL MITCHELL: Well, uh we got married in 1962 and a couple of years later our son came along.

NANCY RAY: And his name?

AL MITCHELL: His name is Steve, Steve Mitchell.

NANCY RAY: Is that Ste...

AL MITCHELL: STEVEN. Steven C. Mitchell. And we were stationed there in Sanjon. She had a big family, she was a member of a big farm family... big, big family in that part of the country up there. One morning I got a phone call about 8 o'clock from the chief in Santa Fe and he said, his name was K. K. Miller... uh you see some of these pictures, he's on some of these pictures here. And he said Al, uh I know you spent a lot of time out there in Catron County in the western part of the state as a brand inspector and uh, I've had a State Policeman out there that I had to fire. And he said them people out there are not very happy... said you know how to handle them people because I know you've been out there. Would you transfer to Glenwood, New Mexico? And I said well, you know I told you when I come to work, Chief, I'd go wherever you sent me. But I'd like to talk it over with my wife. He said, well, that'll be fine. I said, how long do I have? And he said about an hour. And so, we had about an hour's conversation and I called him back and I said Chief, what do you want me to do? We'll go. And so that's how, ultimately, I wound up being transferred back to Catron County which Quemado is in the north end of the county and Glenwood is in the south end of it. And uh so we moved to Glenwood and we lived there about two and a half years. Uh, it was during that time that uh... I was a uniformed State Police officer then. And I had applied to uh... they had formed a small unit in the State Police called the Special Investigation Intelligence Division. And I decided that that's the area that I wanted to work in, was the Investigation Division. And so I'd made an application and there was only about six or eight agents in the state. And so I wanted to do that and so there came a time when I had a chance to move back to Clovis, New Mexico, and I knew that I could probably uh better myself if I moved back to Clovis. And so uh we transferred back, we transferred to Clovis. Now you understand, all this time, I got roping horses and I got all these... it's like moving a circus you know to move, but I did. So, Ellen and my son and I moved to Clovis. And we stayed in Clovis for about uh, uh, how long did we stay there, Ellen?

ELLEN MITCHELL: Not long, about six months.

AL MITCHELL: Six or eight months, I guess. And uh there come a time when I went to Santa Fe to have a serious conversation with the Chief, and we had a different Chief then and I had a pretty serious conversation with him. And he said uh I'm gonna transfer you to the Special Investigation Intelligence Division and I'm gonna move you to Hobbs, New Mexico. Well,

ELLEN MITCHELL: Michelle was born two months after we moved to Clovis.

AL MITCHELL: That's right, during that six months time, we had our daughter, Michelle.

NANCY RAY: This was a busy time.

AL MITCHELL: Her name is Orpha, ORPHA, Michelle, and so then I had two kids and we moved to Clovis, excuse me, we moved to Hobbs.

NANCY RAY: And this would be what year?

AL MITCHELL: Uh, wait a minute now, let me think about this, we did that '66, '67 I guess is the year we moved. We only stayed in Clovis about six months, moved to Hobbs. And my job in that division and in that area, Hobbs is in the southeastern corner of New Mexico. There was a lot of people in that area of the state of New Mexico that needed some investigation done. Uh, you know I could go into that pretty detailed but probably not here.

NANCY RAY: Does that mean there were a lot of crimes that been committed that were not solved?

AL MITCHELL: There was, yes, and there was a lot of people in that area of the state... when, when I moved to Hobbs, I, I came down there the first time driving an old pickup with an old bale of hay in the back of it and stayed a little while before we got moved down there. But, there was, there was uh, there was a large group of people in that Hobbs area that was running all over the southern part of the United States committing major crimes and coming back to Hobbs and laying down.

NANCY RAY: Now, what kind of crimes are you talking about, just a wide variety or?

AL MITCHELL: A wide variety, major crimes. Bank robberies, burglaries, uh murder-for-hire cases,

NANCY RAY: Why were they coming back there?

AL MITCHELL: That's where they come from. That's a... I could go into that but I'd rather not go into that. They, they could come back there and they didn't have much fear about anybody messing with them very much. And that's pretty common knowledge among law enforcement... law enforcement looking at this will understand exactly what I'm saying. At any

rate, when I got organized in Hobbs and, uh, it was pretty well known that the Texas police officers could get very little help in that corner of the state on these certain people. And there was, actually there was five different groups of people running out of there. And I did a lot of things then that you know you... today you'd have to do a lot different... but I knew what the hell was going on. I made it my business to know through informants and information I developed in various sort of ways, I had a pretty good handle on what, on who they were and what they were doing and where they were going and... and so I became acquainted with a number of Texas Rangers who worked the New Mexico-Texas border all the way from, from Company C up in the north end all the way to El Paso. And uh, we got very well acquainted and we got a lot of work done. We did a lot of things together.

NANCY RAY: Can you think of anything that you did together that you can tell about on the video? Maybe something humorous or something that really stands out in your mind?

AL MITCHELL: Well,

NANCY RAY: Or some people that particularly stand out in your mind?

AL MITCHELL: We worked lots of cases. We had lots of action going on because there was lots of action happening then and there was a lot of people there that needed our attention, somewhere. And uh, I got well acquainted and well associated with all these Texas Rangers and we worked a lot of cases. In fact, during the period of about two years, we sent 61 of them to the penitentiary somewhere. And I didn't do it but I had a part in it and these Rangers had a part in it and we all had a part in it and we formed a common ground and we uh, uh... they didn't like me very well in Hobbs. Fact, they put a little money on me a time or two in Hobbs. They messed with Ellen a little bit on the telephone in Hobbs and all of those kind of things. But that's normal. When you start putting heat on crooks, they're gonna figure out some way to get even, or try to. And so, that's goes with the game.

NANCY RAY: Well, how long did you stay in Hobbs?

AL MITCHELL: I stayed in Hobbs uh about two and a half years. Uh, and there came a time... you talked about, you asked me about something that's funny... Captain Riddle was a Ranger Captain here in Midland, Company E, finest old captain that ever lived. That's him up there on that picture.

NANCY RAY: Oh, OK.

AL MITCHELL: He's my mentor. Uh, Sid Merchant was a Ranger in Abilene and Sid and I traveled together a lot. We, we got after a lot of crooks. We'd been gone about a week one time and come back through the Captain's office here in Midland and Captain Riddle looked up, shook his head, and he said, they don't either one of you son of bitches have any idea where the state line is, do you? (laughter) And then he grinned and laughed.

NANCY RAY: And you said...

AL MITCHELL: He said, just “do the needful,” boys. That’s the only orders he ever give us. At any rate, there come a time when I was over here at the Ranger office and Captain Riddle asked me if I’d ever considered applying for the Texas Rangers.

NANCY RAY: Now was that the Ranger office in Midland?

AL MITCHELL: The Company E Headquarters. In those days, the captains had a great deal of latitude in hiring their men, as opposed to how it is today. And I told Captain Riddle, I said no, Captain, I never even thought about it. I didn’t have any idea that I could ever be a Texas Ranger. Well, he said, you know, I’d like for you to apply. God, you could of hung a cowbell around my neck, I said where do I get the forms? And so, I made an application. And I don’t know, I don’t know how we, how deep you want to get into this, but it uh, they had never hired a man from another state. That hadn’t been done.

NANCY RAY: Um huh.

AL MITCHELL: And so, uh,

NANCY RAY: Meaning that, normally you have to spend time as a Highway Patrol officer for what, eight years... and you were not

AL MITCHELL: Well, in those days, that was not the rule. And that’s not law, that’s their rule now. In those days, the Ranger service hired lots of people that wasn’t, didn’t come from the DPS, they came from sheriffs or other agencies here in Texas. But they had not ever hired a man from another state, and another agency. And so, they, well to just to tell you like it is you know, they got to getting a little... when it became kind of knowledgeable that I had applied and they were considering hiring me, they kind of got, they got a little heat, they got a little flak. That didn’t bother Jim Riddle, didn’t bother Clint Peoples too damn much but, but anyway, the deal was...

NANCY RAY: Tell us for the purpose of this video, tell us who is Clint Peoples?

AL MITCHELL: Well, Clint Peoples at that time Senior Ranger Captain. He was in charge of the Ranger service in Texas. And uh, so there came a time when Captain Riddle came, called me and I went to see him. He said now, we’re getting a little flak, he said, I’ll tell you what we’re gonna do. He said, we’re gonna put you in the Ranger service. But he said, Elmer Terrell is the agent in charge of the DPS Narcotics service and he’s a friend of mine. And I’ve talked to him and we’re gonna put you in the Narcotics service because Elmer is trying to hire qualified people that have experience working criminal investigations. He said, Lord, you’ve got a world of that. And so we’re gonna put you in the Narcotics service for a little while. And then we’ll just move you over to the Ranger Service. And he said, Elmer’ll be out here next week, he’ll call you. And so in about a week, I came over here to Odessa and, I knew Elmer Terrell because when I was working in Hobbs in the State Police at that time, I had become acquainted with nearly every criminal law enforcement agency in the DPS that was working anywhere out here in this part of the world because it all filtered back into New Mexico. I met Elmer and we sat down and had lunch and he said, I’ll be glad to have you. But he said I’m trying to build my own organization

and he said, uh, I want you to work for me two years. If you still want to go to the Ranger service after two years, that'll be fine and I'll help you and I'll do everything I can. And I said, that's OK, I can do that, ain't no big deal. Subsequently, I wound up... Ellen and I and the two kids moving from Hobbs, New Mexico, to Lubbock, Texas.

NANCY RAY: And what year was that one?

AL MITCHELL: 1969, I think. '69 I believe. These dates are kind of... that's been a long time ago.

NANCY RAY: Did you have any special training when, once you came to work for uh, for Texas, in the Narcotics area?

AL MITCHELL: I had a lot of training from the State Police in New Mexico but I had never worked much in Narcotics. But I, I'd been to the old National Bureau of Narcotics training school and, and matter of fact, that was right in the beginning of the time when the uh Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers standards and education was, came into being. And in order for me to do this, I had to gather up... a part of what I did when I was applying, I had to gather up all of my training certificates for all the years that I worked in the, in the State Police and in the Livestock Board as a commissioned officer. And submit that. And I had, I don't remember how much, but I had several thousand hours of training. And I submitted all those documents to Texas and they approved it and issued me a certificate. So I was qualified under their rules. So Elmer sent me to Lubbock and I was in the Narcotics Division in Lubbock up there for about, about 18, close to 18 months I guess when an opening came up in the Ranger company here in Company E. The time that I was in the Narcotics Division in Lubbock, the Ranger captain in Lubbock and I were very good friends and all those Rangers and I up there were very good friends. And I dare say that I worked about as much with the Ranger service even while I was a Narcotics agent... I did Narcotics but I did what I needed to do.

NANCY RAY: Sure. Before you go into the Rangers much, what narcotics were the major ones at that time?

AL MITCHELL: Well, the thing was in its infancy then. You know, marijuana was the big deal... if... we had a lot of really young kids in the Narcotics service. They'd been, they had to be young to get into those clicks. If you bought a baggie of marijuana, you know an ounce, you'd have rung the bell, big buy. Today's world if you don't buy five tons, you can't even get it prosecuted. But in those days, it was way different. But 95% of the things we worked, that and pharmaceutical-type drugs, uppers and downers and that sort of thing... very little cocaine traffic and very little heroin traffic although there was some heroin in the deal but it was still, it was still a different world. Most all of it was narcotics (marijuana) and a little cocaine and that sort of stuff. But uh, I uh, as I was telling you, in about 18 months, this opening came up. There was a Ranger here named Bud Newberry who was a great friend of mine.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell his last name?

AL MITCHELL: Bud Newberry, NEWBERRY.

NANCY RAY: Thank you.

AL MITCHELL: Pete Rogers was the Ranger captain at that time in Lubbock. Selwyn Denson was the Ranger sergeant. All of those Rangers in Company C up there were friends of mine. Uh, as I told you, in... this opening came up. Bud Newberry was the Ranger stationed here and helped me *(short pause)*

NANCY RAY: We're back.

AL MITCHELL: OK, those, we were all very close friends. It was a real close-knit organization out here in West Texas because you know, it's a wide open country and pretty scarce. So, this opening came up. Bud Newberry got promoted to Ranger sergeant and they moved him to Waco and that left an opening here. And so Captain Riddle called me and told me that Bud was being promoted. And so I went to see Elmer Terrell and I said, Elmer I need to fudge on my two-year deal with you a little. And I told him and he said, hell, that's OK Al, said you've done us a great job. Said, you know, we had some very inexperienced kids up here in the Narcotics service. you, you've kind of helped us along, the whole bunch, and he said if you will stay with me a sergeant the first of the month. First of the year, I'll make you a captain. And I said Elmer, I can't do that because I've give my word to Jim Riddle. He said, I understand. And so Elmer wrote me a nice letter and I, I started vying for this job in Company E. Now, some things happened in that 18-months period, that changed the complexion a little.

NANCY RAY: Do you want to explain that?

AL MITCHELL: Yes, I will. There come a time during that period of time when Rangers had to take tests. Uh, competitive tests. People applying for the Ranger service, as I've told you earlier, prior to that time the captains had a great deal of latitude in who they hired and they still had a lot of latitude even then. But, but the DPS then decided that we needed to have these competitive tests for people. Which, suddenly I've got to take a test and compete with everybody that's been raised in Texas and applying for this Ranger job. And you know what? That's probably the best thing that ever happened to me. Because I did compete, I did study. Hell, I didn't know anything about Texas history and that was part of the test. We studied Texas history... I studied everything I could find about Texas law. And, I took the test and I went to the interview board just like everybody else did. And I came out number 1. And I got the job.

NANCY RAY: Tell us a little bit about the interview board. What was that like?

AL MITCHELL: Well, you know, uh, there was of course Captain Peoples was chairing the interview board. There was captains, lieutenants, command officers from DPS, other, other Rangers... a Ranger or two sitting on that board and they, they asked me lots of questions. And uh, uh, they... after all these years I can't remember. I just remember one question that they asked me.

NANCY RAY: What was that?

AL MITCHELL: And I don't know why I remember this question but Captain Peoples said Al, he said, Rangers don't have uniforms. And I said I know that, Captain. Said, uh, if you happened to be stationed in Dallas or Houston and you are working with the Houston Police Department or the Dallas Police Department or, he said, how do you think you should dress? And I said, I think I should dress in a coat and tie because that's the way those people are dressed. If I'm working on the border, I think I oughta wear a pair of Levis and a brush jacket. Now why I remember that question, I don't know but (laughter)... but of all the questions, that's the only one I remember. But anyway, I looked at him and I saw him shake his head and I knew I'd hit... I'd rung the bell on that question. But so, I passed the test

NANCY RAY: Number 1.

AL MITCHELL: and got the job. Now, there's one other little thing that happened, and I forgot about this. And I want to tell you this because it's really funny.

NANCY RAY: OK.

AL MITCHELL: When I was studying and getting ready and before this opening came up actually... when I first applied, uh, Jim Ray was the Chief of the Criminal Law Enforcement Division in Austin. And Captain Riddle told me one day, he said you know Jim Ray? I said yes, I've met him. And, of course we used to take a lot of evidence even when I was in New Mexico, we took a lot of evidence down to the lab in DPS because they had the best lab we could find. And, they'd run it for us, they'd help us a lot. And I knew Chief Ray. He said, I want you to go down there and talk to Chief Ray. Tell him that you are applying and so I did. I went down there and visited with them. I went in there and I told him, I said I'm applying for a job with the Texas Rangers, Chief, and I just want to let you know. I wanted you... And he looked at me and he said, Al, you got about as much chance of becoming a Texas Ranger as a snowball in hell. And I said, well, thank you Chief. And I went home. And I come by Midland and I told Captain Riddle what he said and he just grinned and he said, that's what I thought he'd say. Now, let's jump forward to the day that I got my commission. Whenever they were pinning that Ranger badge on my shirt, Colonel Speir was there, Chief Ray was there, everybody was there. And the Colonel pinned that badge on my shirt and we were kind of talking and visiting around and I eased over to Jim Ray... and I said, Chief I beat that damn snowball. He didn't like that very much. (laughter) Anyway...

NANCY RAY: Bud you had the badge. What, what are your thoughts about the badge and what do you think that people, such as Eddie or myself... what do we think when we see that badge, is it special... what makes it special? ... What does the badge mean to you first?

AL MITCHELL: (*emotional moment*) I'll tell you... there is *nothing* like it. There's nothing like the Ranger service. When I wore that badge and when I was a Texas Ranger, I would've arrested the damn governor if he'd a needed it. It didn't matter to me. When I came down here to this Ranger company and signed in when I got back from Austin, Captain Riddle called me in his office and he said, Al, I don't have a bunch of orders to give you. If I had to give you a bunch of orders, I wouldn't have hired you. But he said I got one rule and don't you forget it. And I said OK, Captain, what is it? He said, I don't want you working on a damn thing that ain't illegal.

Outside of that we don't owe nobody nothing. You just go "do the needful," that was his special phrase, you go "do the needful." And that's what we did. No, there is, there is no comparison anywhere in the world. Now, I have a lot of friends with Royal Canadian Mounted Police that I've made down through the years. And they're, that is a great organization. I never met one of those guys that I didn't like... and I mean it's really top shelf. But there is not another organization in the United States like the Texas Rangers. None. Uh, and that's not because of what I did or what my generation did, it's because of what a whole bunch of guys did long before I came along. They built the reputation. And so, our job was to maintain that reputation. And the new guys that are coming on, their job is to maintain and uphold that history. And, and uh you know, they, they're... well, you asked me what I thought about. There is, I would, you know, I wouldn't trade it for any badge in the world. I did leave the Ranger service.

NANCY RAY: Well, let's don't talk about that yet. That badge commands respect, wouldn't you say?

AL MITCHELL: Oh, absolutely. When, when... uh in my day, when a Ranger walked up on a scene, "John Law'd arrived." And he was damn sure in charge. And he'd better be able to handle it.

NANCY RAY: OK, you're a brand new Ranger. What year is this?

AL MITCHELL: 1961. No, I'm sorry, 1970.

NANCY RAY: OK, 1970. And you're first duty station was... here?

AL MITCHELL: The only one I ever had was here (Company E, Midland).

NANCY RAY: What was your first case, do you remember that?

AL MITCHELL: Yes, I do.

NANCY RAY: What is it?

AL MITCHELL: Strange that you'd ask me that. (*side conversation*) I don't remember exactly, but I remember what that first case was.

NANCY RAY: Well, tell me about it.

AL MITCHELL: Strange deal. I have to tell you this that throughout my whole career, I've been the luckiest guy in the world. You know, mostly, luck comes because you make it come but I've had things happen to me that never happened to nobody. Nobody ever done what I done. I just, I was just in the right place my whole life. I was in the right place at the right time, and I had Ellen supporting me and somebody had their hand on my shoulder. Anyway, the first case... Our old Ranger office was out here north of town then and I'd just got there two or three days and trying to feel my way around and... the Sheriff from Snyder called over here, and I knew him. I knew all these people in West Texas. And he said, we've had a burglary of a ranch out

here and we've had a whole bunch of ranches... of saddles and tack stolen out of a ranch or two over here. We don't have an idea where, where it went to. None, but he give me a description of what was gone. He said I wish you'd look around Midland-Odessa, Al, see if any of it shows up around there. And so, I wrote it all down, went in there and told the Captain, and he said well, just go "do the needful." So, I got in my car and I started out south of town on 349 and there was a place down here that had, where they rented horses... a kind of a stable thing. And I, I'm just driving around looking for something and I stopped and drove, went in there. And of course, you know, when a Ranger walks up on a scene, people go to listening. And I got that old man that run that thing around there and I asked him, I said anybody been coming by here wanting to sell you something here for the last two or three days... saddles or tack or something? And he said, yeah. I said did you buy any... yeah. Get it. He drug a saddle out there and said I bought this saddle from that guy. And I looked at the saddle and it was on my list. And I got started right there. He told me, he didn't really know who that guy was but he had give me a good description and we were able to... and from that I went around through... all through... all over Midland and Odessa and I gathered up 60 or 70% of the stuff that had been stolen from various places where this guy had sold it. That was the first case and of course we put him in jail forthwith, but...

NANCY RAY: So you were able to find him.

AL MITCHELL: Oh yeah.

NANCY RAY: And was he convicted and, what happened to him?

AL MITCHELL: I don't even remember. I've worked so many hundreds of cases I don't even remember what happened to the case. I know we put him in jail.

NANCY RAY: Where he belonged.

AL MITCHELL: And I don't remember for sure what happened after that but that was the first case I worked.

NANCY RAY: The very first. Well, you said uh, Rangers don't have a specific uniform but when you became a Ranger, what did the state provide you? Did they provide you with a car, with uh handcuffs, what kind of equipment? Do you know?

AL MITCHELL: Oh yeah. They issued me an automobile

NANCY RAY: What was it?

AL MITCHELL: (laughter) I think it was a Plymouth, I know it was a Plymouth of some kind. I've forgotten what model it was. And they issued me a .30 ought six Springfield rifle, uh, Remington Model 1100 automatic shotgun, a Model 19 .357 Smith & Wesson revolver, as far as firearms and equipment. And you know a number of things like a camera and all the things that you need to investigate things. As far as we had them in those days, if you look at what the Rangers are issued today and what we had to date, you know, today they got a trunk full of

equipment and we had three or four pieces but that was because that's the way it was. Uh, and you know you wore a coat and tie in the Ranger service, uh unless you were on the river on horseback or something. You wore what the needful was. If you were in Dallas working, you wore a suit and a coat and tie and if you were out here in West Texas we wore a coat and a tie. That was, that's what we did.

NANCY RAY: Well, back to some of your cases. OK, your first one was a burglary, uh I would imagine that some in this area would be related to cattle rustling...

AL MITCHELL: You know, after I came over here, I don't think I ever worked a cattle theft case. I might have but I don't think so. I uh worked lots of different kinds of cases when I was here but you know it evolved into a situation where I worked... the big majority of the cases I worked were oilfield related cases just because that's, that's what was happening.

NANCY RAY: Well, tell us a little bit about oilfield cases then. What would be... does a case stand out in your mind?

AL MITCHELL: Well, there's so many of them you know, I uh

NANCY RAY: Is it theft of something or what...

AL MITCHELL: Well, we worked theft of crude oil, theft of product. You know in those days crude oil was \$3 a barrel and it took \$750 to make a felony so we'd have to let them steal two truckloads in order to have enough to make a felony. (laughter) We'd be working on those things you know all kinds of equipment, tools and bits and pipe and all kinds of oilfield equipment was being stolen. And uh it never ceases because in the boom time the shortages creates a great big demand and, and the product is... you can't pick up a telephone in the boom and buy a piece of oilfield equipment. You can order it and get six months from now. Uh, in the in the, downtimes, in the crash times, and we've had a lot of those, you know this stuff is, oilfield equipment is waist deep everywhere and, and so they're still stealing it because they don't want to buy it, it's everywhere. It, it's, it really doesn't change much, it gets more heated up in the boom time but there's been a many a many cases uh... worked a lot of burglary cases a lot of theft cases, a few murder cases, bank robbery cases, uh... You talked about oilfield cases. I had a partner here named Charlie Hodges, someday you'll interview Charlie maybe. He lives down in East Texas, finest Ranger in the world. . We sat in the same office out here for a long time. And Charlie was working on a case over in Odessa... in those, what was happening is these oilfield thieves were stripping these pulling units in the field every night. And this equipment is very valuable. Uh, these pulling units are, are workover units that they erect over a well and they do remedial repair work on a well. And they don't work at night, they just work in the daytime, and the unit's sitting there at night by itself and the thieves go out there and spot it in the daytime and go out and strip all the tools off of it that night. And, so Charlie and I were working. We had, I don't know how many, we had pulling units stripped all over West, everywhere. All over West Texas and New Mexico, even Oklahoma, East Texas. And we uh, we got some information. There was a guy over in Odessa that had a casing company and he had uh a couple of old rag-tag pulling units that he was running. And he got a contract with Gulf Oil Company to do all the remedial repair work on 125 wells northwest of Odessa. That's a big contract. He took that

contract and went to the pulling unit company and they agreed to build him four pulling units, on credit. But his contribution to the deal was he had to supply the tools to go on the equipment. Well, he immediately put four, five or six people in the field and they started stealing tools and equipment. And they stole tools all over West Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, East Texas... everywhere... brought them back in here to Odessa. And took them into their shop out there, obliterated serial numbers, welded over serial numbers, painted all this stuff uh, they, every time they'd get a pulling unit built, you know they'd tool it with those stolen tools... put it in the field, put it to work. And subsequently what happened, Charlie and I went out in the field and we laid five pulling units down and we stripped every piece of equipment off of five pulling units. Uh, several million dollars worth... (*end of disc 1*)

NANCY RAY: OK, we're back and now we're ready to listen to the rest of the story about your case.

AL MITCHELL: Well, let's see, I think I told you that we laid down five pulling units and stripped all the tools off of them, everything... and subsequently started identifying stolen pieces of equipment that we had reports on, from all over the country. We run a search warrant on this warehouse where this guy owned this building where he run his business out of and we took, we took five or six truck loads of stolen..., semi-truck loads of stolen oilfield equipment away from that guy and identified about 95% of it uh by serial numbers. And it was a big chore, some of them had been welded over and some of them, some of them we couldn't identify but we got pretty close. But that case was, the dollar value of that thing was several million... I don't remember now what it was, several million dollars of recovered property. There was a set of tongs, casing tongs, that we recovered in that shop and I had a flyer on a set that had been stolen just like that out of Beaumont. And there was a \$20,000 reward offered for recovery of that set of tongs. They're worth about \$150,000. The serial number on the outside of that case was obliterated to the point where I couldn't restore it but I talked to the tong manufacturing company and they told me that they, if I'd get a tong mechanic to tear that thing down, there was a serial number stamped on the inside bottom of the case. And I called this guy in Beaumont who owned them and I told him I said it's gonna cost you about \$500 for us to do this and he said I'll send you \$500 by wire, do it. Turns out it was his tongs. We were able to identify... so you know the identification factor on that oilfield equipment is a big, big, big obstacle and you have to overcome that obstacle, there's lots of ways to do it. Anyway, that's just one thing in the oilfield. We worked, I worked lots of oilfield crimes, I filed the first, the first time the mail fraud statute, the Federal mail fraud statue was ever used in, to prosecute a crude oil theft case... we did it. I did it here in Andrews County. We filed it in Federal court here in Midland because we had a fellow that was stealing crude oil up there from Texaco whose father was very politically influential and we knew that uh we weren't going to get very far if we tried to prosecute him in state court up there so we filed this thing, after a lot of meditation and thinking about it, uh I uh I called the Chief Postal Inspector in Fort Worth and he sent me a postal inspector out here and we decided that every time that they stole a quantity of crude oil it caused a whole series of fraudulent documents to be passed in the U.S. Mail. Now we didn't indict him for stealing the crude oil, we indicted him for mail fraud. We indicted him for 98 counts and uh, in Federal court here, and he subsequently pled guilty and they put him in the Federal penitentiary and he made, they ordered him to make restitution to Texaco in the amount of \$198,000, I think that's right. So, we used all the avenues that we had to combat this thing but that was the first time that we'd

ever used the mail fraud statutes, to, in the theft of crude oil. So, you know, we spoke earlier before we started this interview about Glenn Elliott. Glenn and I worked a case one time where, together, he was in Longview and I was in Midland. And there was a guy down there that they knew was stealing lots of oilfield equipment and they put him in jail for some kind of a DWI or something and Glenn went down to the jail and looked in his property shuck and he found a, he found an invoice in there where he had, he had hired a trucking company to haul a piece of equipment, a commercial trucking company to haul a piece of equipment from Longview out here to Odessa. And it was a particular freight ticket... Glenn sent that to me and he said I don't know... said work on this, see what this is. This guy's stripped, well that deal ultimately wound up in me recovering, I don't know, 70 or 80 pieces of equipment that this guy had stolen, mostly in East Texas, and had shipped out here to West Texas by motor freight and sold it all over West Texas. So we went around out here in West Texas gathering up that stolen equipment and we ultimately put that guy in the penitentiary but Glenn broke the case with that freight ticket down there in Longview. And that's the beauty part of what Rangers can do because you, you range across wide areas and you work wide areas and you draw this knowledge of wide areas together... that's the beauty part about what the Ranger service can do.

NANCY RAY: Well, I was about to ask you about the camaraderie between Rangers and how you seem to help each other and also other law enforcement officers and I think you just gave an example of that.

AL MITCHELL: I did, you just... here's, here's an unwritten rule in the Ranger service. If another Ranger calls you from another area and asks you to work a lead or something for him, whatever you're doing you stop doing it and you go work that lead for him... and when you get that done, you go back with your own work. That's an unwritten rule in the Ranger service.

NANCY RAY: My goodness.

AL MITCHELL: That's the way it works. If a Ranger comes into Midland working on a case and gets with a Midland Ranger, whatever's going on here, that Ranger from another place... you get with him and you go do, help him do his business. That's the way it works.

NANCY RAY: You "do what's needful," right?

AL MITCHELL: Jim Riddle's favorite saying, "boys, just do the needful."

NANCY RAY: Well, think back to all of the different things you did. Is there something of which you are just really proud and you would like to, to share share?

AL MITCHELL: I can tell you what I most proud of.

NANCY RAY: What's that?

AL MITCHELL: Having been hired in the Ranger service. Something happened to me that had never happened to anybody before. They'd never done that before. That is the one thing that, you know, I told you that I was the luckiest guy in the world. I was at the right place at the right time,

many, many times. We've had lots of, we've had lots of successes and I don't mean to say we didn't have any failures, we always have some failures. You just don't, you just don't not have any failures in this business. I've got one outstanding murder case that I worked in Odessa that I've never cleared yet. Hardly a month goes by that I don't think about it. Someday we'll clear it, maybe.

NANCY RAY: So, on cases like that, are you still always on the lookout for something that might...

AL MITCHELL: Every day.

NANCY RAY: Every day. OK.

AL MITCHELL: And I'm, I'm you know I'm not... I don't, I do not have a commission, I don't have a Special Ranger commission, I did not take one. When I left the Ranger service and went into the private industry, uh because I'm having too much fun being a civilian. But never a day goes by that I don't, I don't think about it.

NANCY RAY: Let me ask you this... Before we leave the Rangers, um, being a Ranger is not a job that you just do 8 to 5 *(side conversation and pause)*

NANCY RAY: OK, we're back and I had a question. As a Ranger, this is not a job that you work 8 to 5, you don't leave it on the weekends, it's pretty much all the time. How did your family handle that and how did you separate your life as a Ranger from your personal life?

AL MITCHELL: *(laughter)* Well, to begin with, you don't. That's the standard, that's the overall answer. My uh... I have to give Ellen credit for raising these kids because I was gone. There's, in, in those days, uh as opposed to the way things are nowadays, we didn't have 40 hours a week to work, we didn't have any that kind of stuff. We worked when it was needed and then when we wasn't needed to work, why we *(another pause because of a fly annoying Ranger Mitchell)*

NANCY RAY: OK, we're back to talking about how your wife, her role in supporting your career.

AL MITCHELL: Well, I'm gonna tell you there's not a successful law enforcement agent that is successful in the world that doesn't have a successful wife with him. Because, in, you know, it's, it is a very, very tough deal on, on the family. And you have to work at it every day because uh in today's world you know, you... they tell you to work 40 hours. I remember when that rule come in and you can't crooks working 40 hours a week, you just can't make those suckers work 8 to 5, five days a week. They will not do that. And if you're gonna catch them, by God you got to go when they go. And so, it formulates a situation on the home life that's really tough. And you better be married to the right kind of the person. I was a State Police officer when Ellen and I married and we had a long talk about this before we married. And she knew that it, you know, she bought into my deal and she's been there for me every day ever since. And she raised the kids uh, I'd be gone sometime a week or two at a time. I went to Washington one time to the FBI

Academy and stayed four months. Never come home. She took care of things while I was gone. At any rate, the man who does not have the right, considering family will... wife and children, is not gonna be successful in this role.

NANCY RAY: Well, OK. That kind of leads into another question. If you were giving advice to a person who was applying to become a Ranger now, what advice would you give that person?

AL MITCHELL: Well, you better be dedicated. And, and you better, that new Ranger better understand that it's going to be a full-time uh profession, you don't have any side jobs, you don't have any extra jobs. If you're gonna be a successful Ranger, you work at it... I don't care if you...

NANCY RAY: OK, we were talking about a Ranger would need to be dedicated, that would be your advice...

AL MITCHELL: Of course, and his, you know his wife better be dedicated because if, if she's not a part of the team, he's not gonna be successful, it's just gonna be a problem from then on. It's very, very serious business and uh, the guys who are very successful are guys that have the right kind of family and the right kind of wife and that's what I would tell these young guys... you better get yourself rooted because just about the time you're gonna put your bib and tucker on and go somewhere with your wife and the phone rings... you know and the next time she sees you is six days later, that'll work for a while and then it'll get where it won't work if you don't, if you don't have the deal fixed.

NANCY RAY: Let's think about uh your career as a Ranger... and I know you retired some time ago... but before you left the Rangers, is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

AL MITCHELL: Well, you know, I suppose not. There's, it's been a, it's been the most fantastic career that a man could ever ask for and after I left the Ranger service is quite another story. Uh, and I've been as equally successful in that area and the reason I was successful after I left the Ranger service is because of the years I spent in the Ranger service. Uh, that, I credit that whole thing to those years because that's where I, I had the opportunity to do the things that led me into the positions that I've had since then and I've had some fabulous positions with some really good companies.

NANCY RAY: Well, let me ask, what year did you retire?

AL MITCHELL: '78, 1978

NANCY RAY: And what did you do after that?

AL MITCHELL: Let me make something clear...

NANCY RAY: OK.

AL MITCHELL: I did not retire... because I didn't have enough time to retire. And I'd like to explain that if I may.

NANCY RAY: OK.

AL MITCHELL: I had worked some cases for a company called Tom Brown, Incorporated, while I was a Ranger and we put some folks in jail for stealing some of their equipment and some of their stuff. So, uh I was a Ranger here, I did a lot of work with oil, the oil company corporate security divisions and got well acquainted with those people that run those security divisions and I was continuously getting offers from those companies to go to work, two or three a year. And I always kind of talked to them about it a little. And I had an offer from Shell Oil Company and I went and talked to them and, at that time, uh the Ranger salary, I was making \$13,500 a year as a Texas Ranger but I, we learned to live on it. I mean, we weren't destitute, we learned to get along, we did lots of things to get along. Family has to be a part of that and so Shell Oil Company subsequently offered me a job in Houston at \$26,000... \$27,000 a year and I'd, you know, I'd not ever had any idea about how a company was run or... I didn't know if it was a good offer or a bad offer. I didn't know anything about that. Well I knew Mr. Brown and Mr. Roper, the two subjects at Tom Brown, Incorporated, very well because I'd worked with them. And so I went to see them and I laid the letter on the desk from Shell and I said I'd like to... for you to help me evaluate this offer. And they looked at that thing, I never will forget it. Mr. Roper leaned back in his chair, he lit him a cigarette, and he said, well, for openers, they're just giving you half enough money. He said secondly, if you go to work for Shell you're gonna be a bubble on an organizational chart three foot long.

NANCY RAY: You're gonna be the what on...

AL MITCHELL: The bubble on the organizational chart three foot long and you're gonna be at the bottom and you're gonna have to live in Houston. The next thing he said was have you ever thought about going to work for us? And I said no sir, I didn't come down here to ask you for a job. No, the answer is no, you don't have a corporate security division. I just wanted you to help me evaluate this offer. And he said, well that's true. He said we're getting pretty big, the company's getting pretty big, and for several months we've been talking about creating a corporate security division... matter of fact, we had you in mind we just didn't have any idea we could hire you out of the Texas Rangers. And I said I don't know that you can. And that's how it started. And it took a little over a year for them to hire me because I did not want to do that. I'd meet with them, we'd go to drink coffee once or twice a week. I'd think up excuses not to do it, they just kept adding it on and piling it on. I remember very clearly the last deal they put on me. I went down there and told them, I said... I cannot go to work for you guys. Why? Because I don't have enough time to get a retirement. Mr. Brown said well Al, he said, let me ask you a question. He said if you stay with the Ranger service until you die, uh you stay with the Ranger service until you retire and you live a long life until you die and Ellen lives a long life and you and she get every dollar that you could ever get from the state of Texas, how many dollars would that be? And I said I don't have a clue. He said, well go find out. Well, I was in Austin some time later and I went back there to that actuarial section and they worked on that for about half a day and they give me a number... and it was a God awful big number. I thought well this will fix this deal. And so, I came back in about a week, they called me and I met with them. And they

said, did you get that number? And I said yeah, here it is. Mr. Brown said OK, He said, I'll tell you what, the day you come to work for me, we'll just give you that much stock in this company, now what the hell's your next problem? I said well, I'm not gonna leave, I'm not going to work for nobody because I'm not cutting my ties with the Rangers you know. I'm not gonna do that. And he said, I don't want you to do that, that's why I want to hire you. I want you to continue those ties. He said you continue doing whatever you're doing with the Ranger service, just work for me. And so there come a time when it just got to the point where I really didn't, I went in that Captain's office four times to lay that badge down before I finally did it. It was the toughest thing I ever did in my life. Well let me tell you, it turned out to be a fantastic deal because I've been able to maintain all of my ties with the Ranger service, I still go to their functions, you know I hosted a, I hosted a retired Rangers' deer hunt for 25 years and the company's paid the bill. Every time we had a Ranger meeting somewhere, I get to go. I work for an oil company. And so I worked for Tom Brown, Inc., and Timbersharp Drilling for 24 years and made a lot of cases and got to do a lot of administrative management duties. Uh, and in 1999, uh Don Evans, who was president of Tom Brown, Inc., at that time went to Washington with George W. Bush who was on our Board of Directors and uh they moved Tom Brown, Inc.,... we'd split the company then and created uh TMBR Drilling Company, we split the drilling division off from the production division in the crash... and created two freestanding companies. And Tom Brown, Inc., moved to Denver, that was the production company, and I didn't want to go to Denver so I retired. And when we had my retirement luncheon at the Petroleum Club, Mr. Brown got up there and said -- he was running Timbersharp Drilling at that time -- he said you ain't retired from me, just get out there and go on to work, send me a bill every month. And so I worked for Timbersharp Drilling on a contract basis for four years. And then Patterson, UTI Drilling Company, bought Timbersharp out. And they had no corporate security, period. UTI, Patterson UTI was the second largest drilling company in the world and they had 400 drilling rigs and 7,000 employees. And Glenn Patterson walked in my office the next day and he said, I've heard about you and I want to hire you. And so I went to work for Patterson and I worked for Patterson for uh about two and a half years. And Glenn retired uh, the other old timer that started Patterson retired, Cloice Talbot, and the company was changing focuses somewhat and I decided that I wanted to have a little more freedom so I was going to go back to contracting. I was gonna start my contract investigation because the four years that I worked for Timbersharp I did a lot of outside work too. I could do that being I was on a contract basis and it was very successful. And so I decided I wanted to do that and I got up one morning and I told Ellen, I said I'm gonna resign from Patterson Drilling Company the first of the month. Nobody knew that but she and I. OK, what are you gonna do? I said I'm going to contracting. And so, I was getting my stuff ready, nobody knew I was gonna do that. In about two weeks I get a phone call from a guy that I hadn't talked to in 15 years who used to work for Tom Brown, Inc., when I did. And he worked for David H. Arrington Oil and Gas. Right out of the blue, he said I'm a manager with Mr. Arrington's company and said we had a managers meeting and he asked me if we knew anybody in the corporate security business and I told him I knew you and he said, you call him and see if we can meet with him. He said, are you available? This ain't been two weeks since we made the decision that I was gonna do this. How come that happened? And so, ultimately I went and met with Mr. Arrington and spent about three or four weeks talking to him and I accepted a position with him as the... and the executive management staff, as the Manager of Investigations and Corporate Affairs. And what I do for him now is, in addition to running all the investigations, I manage all civil litigations. I have about eight people, manage all the risk

management, human resources, all the administrative functions in his company, and he pays me very well for doing it. And that's where I'm at today. I have a frequently asked question... and I have a standard answer. I'm 73 years old next week... and everybody asks me, when are you going to retire? And my standard is when it ain't fun anymore.

NANCY RAY: That's a good time.

AL MITCHELL: And I'll know when it ain't fun anymore. When it gets to where it isn't fun anymore, you know, I think we can make it. I think we'll be all right.

NANCY RAY: I'm sure you will.

AL MITCHELL: But it all goes back to the training and the camaraderie and, and the contacts that I made while I was a Texas Ranger. And I belong, I belong to the Ranger Foundation here and the Ranger Association, I belong to the Former Texas Ranger Association, I work in both of those organizations uh because those are the finest people in the world. And I, whatever success I have, I've had, I have, I have to state that it's because I, somebody give me a chance to become a Texas Ranger and I did. And that's directly responsible for my, my financial well being and my, my life today. It's been a, it's been a great ride. I wouldn't... oftentimes people, when we get to talking, they say well if you could go back and change... change, what would you change? I wouldn't change one thing. I've had the greatest career that any man could ever ask for.

NANCY RAY: Well, that's quite a tribute to pay, to pay to the Rangers and everything that's gone on in your life. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

AL MITCHELL: Gosh, I've run my head more to you than I have in the last 15 years to anybody.

NANCY RAY: Well, let me ask your wife, do you have anything you'd like to add?

ELLEN MITCHELL: No.

NANCY RAY: No? Eddie, do you have any questions? OK. Well, thank you very much for your time and well, I enjoyed getting to know you.

AL MITCHELL: Well, thank you, it's been a pleasure meeting with you people. I, I, uh you know when you... I didn't delve very far into cases because there's no end to that. I mean, there's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of cases. And some of them I've kind of forgotten and some of them stick out you know. There's a pair of boots sitting right over there in that floor... those were made for me by a convict in the penitentiary... uh he killed a bunch of people and I made a case on him before I ever come to Texas. Sid Merchant and I... he murdered a man in Hobbs, New Mexico, his name was Cecil Ray Rhinehart. He's dead, he can't sue me now.

NANCY RAY: That's good.

AL MITCHELL: And we went down and he was, he was a hardened criminal. And, he had been, they put him in the Texas penitentiary for pulling some armed robberies up in the Lubbock area. And I worked on that case for a year and a half, that murder case in Hobbs and I finally found me a snitch that told me who done it and how it happened. And Sid Merchant was in the Ranger service and he and I went to Huntsville and gathered Cecil Rhinehart up in the Ellis Unit and set him down and I expected that we would talk to him for two or three days and I sat down there and visited with him about 30 minutes and told him what I was doing... and told him I wanted to talk to him about killing old man Vener in Hobbs, New Mexico.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell that last name?

AL MITCHELL: VENER, Vener, VENER. He was an old Jewish clothing store operator. And here's this hardened criminal, been in the penitentiary all his life, in and out. And a tear come out of his eye and he said, you know, Mr. Mitchell, he said that old man bought me shoes when I didn't have any shoes when I was a kid running down the street in the wintertime in Hobbs without any shoes. And he put shoes on me and I killed him. Well, there I am, 30 minutes, it scared the hell out of me. I thought, this guy's gotta be lying. It's too easy. This don't happen. I'm sitting here with a lap full of 8 x 10 glossy photographs of the crime scene... And so Sid and I got him started talking about it and he kept telling me you know, he said that old man didn't have any money. We, that gal told us he had a lot of money up there in the house. We waited on him, he come in, we hit him over the head with a pistol... he wouldn't tell us nothing so we put him in the bathtub and scalded him to death trying to make him tell us... He said, hell, he didn't have any money... said we pulled them shoes off of him to burn his feet and said he had big old holes in his socks. And I'm sitting here looking at a crime scene photograph with a body laying on the floor with big holes in his socks. Nobody but the guy that killed him knew that. Subsequently, I took him back to New Mexico and he pled guilty and uh, he, we actually charged a couple other people in the crime uh, we, we weren't successful in getting all of them rounded up but we got him rounded up and... that, that started a kind of relationship between he and I. I brought him back to New Mexico and I cleaned up 85 major cases with him. Armed robberies, burglaries, just all over the country... I hauled him all over the country cleaning up cases that he had been involved in and involved a lot of other people. We, we arrested lots of different people, in both, both in Texas and New Mexico, Oklahoma. I took him back to the Ellis Unit where he had to continue serving the seven years that he was before he started serving the time in New Mexico. And in that time, he started making me boots. First pair of boots he made me was like a pair of rubber wader boots, you couldn't wear them. There's a pair of boots sitting over there in the floor, those alligator boots right there that he made me in the penitentiary, that uh I've had all these years. And at that time alligator leather was outlawed, they were protected species... except there was people smuggling alligator leather into the Texas state penitentiary and they were making boots and purses and stuff... those convicts were. And he made me a pair of boots... sent them to me. Made me several pair, as a matter of fact. I happen to have those sitting out here because I'm going to donate those to the Former Texas Ranger auction next week in Kerrville. I've wore them out, I've worn them long enough. But those are the kinds of things I could talk on and on and on about cases... those things, are just, there's no end to it. And I, I want to tell you this. I never worked a case in my life that I, by myself, solely responsible for breaking. I had a lot of good help from a lot of people. A lot of good officers... so it ain't all me, I, I. It takes a lot of help to break one of those old, old, big, long-standing cases... lots of people

working on things. But I didn't... lucky enough to be in a position where I had an opportunity to participate in those things for some 40 years.

NANCY RAY: Well, I would say that uh, from what I've heard today, you have lots of memories and have probably contributed to memories for other people and other Rangers. And I want to thank you for your time.

AL MITCHELL: Thank you. I, several people have asked me if I'm, why don't 'you write a book? And I kind of have a standard answer about that. It is, I ain't got time to write a book, I'm still living.

NANCY RAY: Well, when you retire again, maybe that will be what becomes needful.

AL MITCHELL: The only thing that I know, if I ever write one I know what the title's gonna be.

NANCY RAY: What's that?

AL MITCHELL: It's gonna be *Llano Estacado: Lawman*.

NANCY RAY: We'll look for it.

AL MITCHELL: Because I'm the only guy that ever put both states together. Crossed the Llano Estacado.

NANCY RAY: That's quite an, quite an accomplishment, isn't it? Thank you very much.

AL MITCHELL: I'm sorry to take so long.

NANCY RAY: Oh no, I'm glad. Thank you.