

Interview with

**JOE SANDERS**  
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

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

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray  
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Joe Sanders, Lyssa Sanders, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray

**JOE SANDERS**  
**TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED**

**NANCY RAY:** My name is Nancy Ray and I'm visiting with Joe Sanders in his home (Midland, Texas) and the purpose of this interview is to discuss uh Mr. Sanders, Lieutenant Sanders' career as a Texas Ranger. Uh today is Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup> (2008) and also present are Lyssa Sanders and Eddie Ray. Uh, Lieutenant Sanders, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** Lieutenant Sanders, do you understand that this video will become the property of the Texas Ranger Hall of Museum... Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas?

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes I do.

**NANCY RAY:** And, Lieutenant Sanders, 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?

**JOE SANDERS:** If they want it.

**NANCY RAY:** I take that as a yes. OK, what is your full name?

**JOE SANDERS:** Joseph Thomas Sanders.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, and you do currently live in Midland and you've lived here how long?

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, moved here, got stationed here on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1987.

**NANCY RAY:** Just passed your anniversary date, haven't you? When and where were you born?

**JOE SANDERS:** Born August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1946, in Sayre, Beckham County, Oklahoma.

**NANCY RAY:** Sarah?

**JOE SANDERS:** Sayre, Beckham County, Oklahoma.

**NANCY RAY:** All right, I've got you now. All right, and uh did you grow up there and go to school there?

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, lived there in various locations in Beckham County for the first seven years of my life and uh November of 1953, we moved to Dumas, Texas, where my father went to work for a company called Shamrock-McGee Oil and Gas. And that's where, and I moved there... I guess it was the mid-term of my second grade. And that's where my school years was, was in Dumas, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** And you graduated from high school in Dumas?

**JOE SANDERS:** Graduated 1964, Dumas High School.

**NANCY RAY:** And did you have any favorite subjects?

**JOE SANDERS:** I guess if I had a favorite subject it would have to have been history. Uh, but baseball was probably my most favorite subject.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, so you played that through high school?

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes, I did.

**NANCY RAY:** All right, were you good?

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, not as good as my boys were.

**NANCY RAY:** Really?

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, I felt like I was good enough to play there.

**NANCY RAY:** Uh huh. What position?

**JOE SANDERS:** I was catcher.

**NANCY RAY:** Catcher. OK. So, did ya'll win any... district or...

**JOE SANDERS:** My Junior year in high school we took Third Place State in Class 3A.

**NANCY RAY:** You must have been pretty good to do that.

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, we had a good team.

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

**JOE SANDERS:** I have one older brother, uh, he's seven years older than I am. He was an attorney here in Midland. Uh, got an older sister that is four years older than I am. And then my baby sister uh was seven years younger than I am and she's now deceased.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, OK, and when you were in high school and you graduated, what happened then? Did you have any military service or college or what?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, (laughter) no, I had no military service but there's gonna be a lot of people that'll wonder about this one. When I was 16 years old I thought I'd been called to become a minister... and so I went to Howard Payne College after graduation in Brownwood, Texas, but I only lasted one semester. Uh, moved back home to Dumas, Texas, uh, worked at various jobs and uh I guess I met my wife when she was a senior in high school which was... actually met her in September of 1966... first time I met her we were on a double date. She was in the back seat with another guy and I was in the front seat with another girl.

**NANCY RAY:** And, how did things get straightened out?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, we were just sitting around what we called the Demon Mart or Dairy Mart back then, just a little... kind of like a Sonic Drive-In is today with the pull-in booths and everything and... I saw her sitting over there and I motioned for her to come over and she came over and asked her out and here we are today... 40 something years later.

**NANCY RAY:** So, when did you marry?

**JOE SANDERS:** We got married on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1967.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, all right, and so you were in Dumas High School also, Lyssa?

**LYSSA SANDERS:** Right.

**JOE SANDERS:** She didn't, she moved to Dumas when she was a Sophomore and I was Senior at the time but I didn't actually meet her until she was a Senior and I'd already been out a couple of years.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Well, since the *call* to become a minister didn't last very long, what did you do after that?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, let's see... worked uh, I don't think we're gonna mention all of them.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, just mention what you want.

**JOE SANDERS:** I've done just about everything that you can think of. Uh, I worked at a grocery store as a sacker/checker. Uh the one I wasn't gonna mention, I was a milkman, I delivered milk. Uh, then I went to work for a company called Potash Company of America. Started out as a yard man... worked, drove front-end loaders loading boxcars with uh potassium sulfate. Uh, that wasn't what we wanted to do so uh in the early part of 1969, my wife, Lyssa, came to Odessa and went to work for a law firm and shortly thereafter I came back, or came down here... I had to wait, oh two or three weeks to a month before I came down, and uh tried selling insurance and found out I couldn't sell a thirsty man a drink of water... (laughter) even if he was a millionaire. Uh, so that didn't work out and I worked for a company called R&R Electronics in Odessa, Texas, and at the apartment complex that we lived in... well, can I back up a minute? When I was growing up in Dumas, Texas, there was a Highway Patrolman up there by the name of Wesley Crites.

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

**JOE SANDERS:** CRITES. And he and I became good friends although I was a hot-rodding teenager and he was a hot-rodding Highway Patrolman.

**NANCY RAY:** So, were you stopped by your friend?

**JOE SANDERS:** Very many times. Uh, my wife's had one ticket in her whole life and it was by him. And uh, but anyhow, he was... you know I watched him as I was growing up and I thought that would be a very interesting job because you could drive fast and uh stop people and things like that and it looked like a good job. And uh of course I always like to drive fast cars. But my wife, when we talked about it, she thought that uh that would be too dangerous of a job. So she really didn't like the idea of me pursuing a career in the Highway Patrol. Now I go back to the time we were in Odessa because in the apartment complex that we lived in in Odessa, there was a... we lived on the bottom floor and the ceiling and floor of the upper room was kind of paper thin and it felt like every time they took a step up there you could feel their, see their feet coming through the, the ceiling. But anyway, we got to know this couple and he was a rookie Highway Patrolman over there. And we became good friends with that couple and through the course of our friendship with them, I snuck over to Midland and got an application to go to work for the Highway Patrol. And I'd fill it out in the car when I was supposed to be out selling insurance.

**NANCY RAY:** Uh huh. That's why you didn't sell much insurance.

**JOE SANDERS:** That's when I was filling out that big thick application. But anyhow, one day my wife, Lyssa and I were talking and she said you ought to make application to the Highway Patrol. Maybe after she met, that couple's name was Pat and John O'Brien, and she had visited with John and found out that it wasn't a running gun battle all the time. And so I said I've already filled it out and I came over here and turned it in and two weeks later I was in the DPS Academy.

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

**JOE SANDERS:** That was 1969.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. That was fast.

**JOE SANDERS:** Oh yeah, that was when they had a big hiring program on. I got in fast enough that within two weeks after me turning my application in, I was reporting to Austin and that was on May the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1969. Went through that torture...

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us a little bit about the school itself.

**JOE SANDERS:** Ooh... hardest thing I've ever done in my life. Uh wouldn't want to go through it again... I would to have the career I had, you know, I've been very fortunate in the career I've had. Uh, it was hard on me. I never liked physical abuse you might say. I didn't like to run, uh my legs... I'd hurt both of my knees playing football and baseball and in, and it hurt... my little short legs, I couldn't run as fast as everybody else. I hated it. I hated exercises, uh that was the hardest part of it for me. The classwork was tough too. Uh the mental part of it of being away from my bride of two years uh was probably the most difficult time because I left her in Odessa... she was in Odessa, didn't know a soul except the people she worked with and the couple that lived above us. She uh stayed there I guess from May... and July 4<sup>th</sup> of that same year, two of my classmates, actually three of my classmates came back to Odessa and we loaded up what little bit belonged to us in a, what 8 by 10 UHaul trailer, and I moved her back to Dumas uh, I guess I could quit rocking so that film wouldn't be sitting there bouncing. (laughter) Uh, moved her back to Dumas and she stayed with her parents until I graduated on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1969. And for a month, I guess... graduated August 29<sup>th</sup> and we didn't get commissioned straight out of school because there was uh, they had to go into a special session of the legislature that year in order to create positions for some of us that didn't get commissioned. So for one month and two days, I guess whatever you'd say, I was a non-commissioned graduate of DPS Academy and we worked, I worked in the DPS office in Amarillo for that 30 days... worked in all aspects... worked with uh, except I didn't ride with the Highway Patrol. I worked in the Driver's License part, worked with the MVI troopers, worked with L&W troopers, I don't recall ever riding with the Highway Patrol but then I got my commission on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1969, and we got to stay, got stationed in Amarillo. I was driving, that month I was driving back and forth from Dumas every day uh in my personal car, at my own personal expense, just to have a job. And I think when I was going to school we were making \$500 a month uh, the month that I was out, before getting commissioned I think I got raised to \$535 or something like that. And then when I got commissioned, they'd given everybody a raise and I think it went to like \$635. I can't remember for sure. So we uh were stationed in Amarillo in Highway Patrol. Uh my first captain in the Highway Patrol was J. W. Blackwell. My first Highway Patrol sergeant was uh Jack Crownover.

**NANCY RAY:** How do you spell that name?

**JOE SANDERS:** Crownover? CROWNOVER. Uh, and I think he retired as a lieutenant in the Highway Patrol in Abilene. Uh, I think that's when he made... he made lieutenant I think sometime about 1972 and uh... got a new sergeant that came in to Amarillo, his name was C. B. Culp and then in 1974, I let a Highway Patrol sergeant out of Borger named Charlie Henderson talk me into going to Spearman and opening up a Highway Patrol station.

**NANCY RAY:** What do you mean a Highway Patrol station?

**JOE SANDERS:** No one had ever been stationed there before.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh, I see. OK.

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, in Hansford County... and that was probably the biggest mistake I ever made in my career.

**NANCY RAY:** And why is that?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, circumstances that I'm not gonna talk about uh happened there uh and so I contacted J. W. Blackwell who was my captain... after we'd... I think about a year and a half was how long I stayed there. Uh, there were some issues with the sheriff up there and the law enforcement up there that didn't want Highway Patrol and all that but... go on and some other things happened that, like I said, won't talk about. I called my Captain down there and asked him if there was anyway I could come back to Amarillo. He told me, Joe, he said I don't have an opening in Amarillo he said but I have one in Vega and one in Canyon. I said I'll take Canyon. So, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976... now I'd moved to Spearman September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1974, and March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976, uh we transferred to Canyon. Bought our second home, I guess the second house we'd ever bought, uh, my wife, Lyssa, went to work for West Texas State University. I had two little boys... Let's go back. I forgot the birth of my children.

**NANCY RAY:** I was gonna ask.

**JOE SANDERS:** Probably two of the most important events of my life. Uh, we were stationed in the Highway Patrol in Amarillo and we lived in the first house we lived in on Parker Street and our oldest son uh... well our first child was stillborn and he was born March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1970. Uh in Dumas and uh everybody from the Highway Patrol that knew me from the short period of time that I'd been there was there. Uh, Lyssa was not able, she was in the hospital, she was not able to attend it. Uh, so the doctor... she finally started going to a gynecologist and he had kind of advised that we not be real quick. But anyhow, uh, December the... November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1971, our oldest son, Brent Wade, was uh born. And December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1972, Bradley Wayne was born.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh my, don't be too fast.

**JOE SANDERS:** Thirteen months and two days. And uh, we have two fantastic young men as sons. Brent Wade, our oldest son, is a master sergeant in the United States Air Force. At this time, he's stationed in Minot, North Dakota, but come January the sometime, 2, 3, or 4, somewhere around in there of next year, he and his wife, Kim, and three of our grandchildren are going to Okinawa, Japan, for five years. Which is gonna be tough. I guess I'll have to save my nickels and dimes and we'll go to Japan. Bradley Wayne Sanders, uh our second son, is a sergeant in the Motor Vehicle Theft service with the Texas Department of Public Safety stationed in San Antonio, Texas. He's got three sons, uh so we have a total of six grandchildren. Uh, Jordan Scott Sanders is 12, is that right? Uh, Paige Elizabeth is 10, and Emily Kathryn... how old is Emily, four? Four. Those are three that are by my, our oldest son, Brent. And Brad has three boys, Brendon Jacob is 6 or 7...

**LYSSA SANDERS:** He'll be 7.

**JOE SANDERS:** He'll be 7 in November. Uh Ezekiel Thomas

**NANCY RAY:** After you?

**JOE SANDERS:** The Thomas is and the Ezekiel part we kind of wondered where he came by it. But come to find out, I have ancestors way back that the first name was Ezekiel. In fact, the first one that came over the water was named Ezekiel. And then one of them was named Ezekiel Andrews Jackson Sanders. Now we weren't raised in the South or anything. Uh, but uh Ezekiel, or actually we call him Zeke. He is, he'll be 6 in April, this coming April? Is that right?

**LYSSA SANDERS:** *(side conversation)* No, it is 6.

**JOE SANDERS:** Six. And then uh, the special one... they're all special but our baby, his name is Isaiah (laughter)... I lost it. Isaiah Christian and he's a... he's a Downs baby and I tell you what, one of the most precious kids you'll ever run across. And I think he'll be 3 in October.

**NANCY RAY:** He has your heart.

**JOE SANDERS:** Oh, I mean to tell you.

**LYSSA SANDERS:** He's a blessing.

**JOE SANDERS:** He's a blessing in disguise. Uh, Brad's wife, Jessica, is a nursing practitioner and Brent's wife, Kim, has a day care center on base. They are all doing real well, we're proud of all of them. Everybody's healthy.

**NANCY RAY:** You sound, you sound very proud.

**JOE SANDERS:** Very, very proud. We're very proud of, of our family. Uh, our sons, we're very proud of what they've accomplished in their lives. Uh, no problems, except problems as teenagers... now, now... we had a time or two we had to uh worry about them.

**NANCY RAY:** You had a few issues?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well (laughter)... that's true. Uh

**NANCY RAY:** I want to ask you a question. You were talking about the time at the uh, when your first child was stillborn and about the camaraderie of the patrolman...

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes.

**NANCY RAY:** ...who came. Because that seems to be a theme that I hear over and over as we interview.

**JOE SANDERS:** Tremendous camaraderie. I'll go back to an instance when I was a rookie Highway Patrolman, I mean brand spanking new. Uh, my first partner was Bill Wade Olsen, uh we were working one night and he got a telephone call and uh this guy had asked him if he would work for him the next two or three days. And of course being a rookie and not really knowing everything that's going on, he said that he couldn't work, he had something else and asked me if I wanted to work... I could make \$3 an hour. And I said, boy I could sure use that \$3 an hour. And really back then, you couldn't work off duty, I mean you couldn't even get permission to work off duty. So uh, anyhow I went ahead and did it because we needed the money. And I was working for a plumber named Pancho Lacey, Lacey's Plumbing. And on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1969, now remember I'd only been commissioned a month and four days. We were putting in a uh new heating system at this two-story house and we were having to put a vent pipe on top... well stupid me, I got up there with my leather boots on, leather-soled boots on... knew better because I'd shingled houses before... and I fell off... two stories onto a concrete driveway. Uh broke my left wrist in two places and cracked the lowest three vertebrae in my back. I called Jack Crownover who was my sergeant and I told him that I was in the hospital and he came up there. I could have lied to him and told him I fell off my own house but I didn't, I told him the truth. He told me that uh... I'll try to quit rocking, I'm sorry. Uh, that he didn't know whether I'd have a job when I got out of the hospital or not because I had violated DPS policy. And so I had made... I guess in the month that I had worked there that I made a strong impression on the guys that I worked around. And you talked about camaraderie, they all went to bat for me and one of them in particular named Bob Maxwell uh stood up for me and uh I wound up getting three days off without pay. Uh which was \$48, that was three days pay, \$48. And got to keep my job and uh 34 years later I retired. But uh, that's the camaraderie and when we our child was stillborn, everybody in that sergeant area and the surrounding sergeant areas came to the funeral. And you know I'd only been working a month. A lot of them didn't know me that well. Uh, I got to know them all in later years. Uh, but there is a camaraderie amongst uh... or there was back then. And there still is today in some aspects of the Department. Uh and I

know, not being in the Highway Patrol or the uniformed services, I'm sure there still is today. But uh, it was a special... it meant a lot to me you know for those guys to come uh to, to there. Uh, there's a part of my life that I did not discuss earlier, or did not mention earlier because I guess we were going through my growing up years where I moved from Texas, Dumas, uh Oklahoma to Texas and I'd like to go back and touch on that one little thing. Uh, like I said, we moved from Oklahoma to uh Texas in November of 1963, I was seven years, uh '53, I said '63... '53. I was seven years old and on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1956, my father got killed. Uh, he was forty years old, my mother was 38 years old with three, with four children. And so basically, I grew up without a father. Uh, my mother did a wonderful job. I've got an older brother, like I say. We all, I guess you can say we turned out OK. Uh, my little sister passed away in 2001 with MS but now that I've gone back and touched on that part of my family... uh, probably one of the major influences as far as the male species is concerned was my father-in-law you know. My mother-in-law, I love mother-in-law and father-in-law to death and they probably thought more of me than they did my wife, you know (laughter). Which is, and she... she'll agree with. Uh, they were great people and they were a tremendous influence on my life. Uh,

**NANCY RAY:** Well, tell me, at your first duty station, after you've been commissioned, you've been non-commissioned for a month now you are. What was your first... did you have cases in the DPS or the Highway Patrol or what did you do?

**JOE SANDERS:** You just worked traffic.

**NANCY RAY:** Worked traffic. What kind of traffic problems were there, speeders...

**JOE SANDERS:** Of course back then, uh, radar was not that prevalent. We had one radar unit. Uh there were six Highway Patrol units stationed in Amarillo, three day cars and three night cars. Uh, there was one, one radar so one car during the day and one car during the night got to work the radar. And if you worked a two-man car, you didn't drive, which we called him the lead, every day so you might not get that radar... out of a five-day or seven-day workweek, you might not get to use that radar but three days or two days, whatever the case may be. And so you didn't write that many radar speeding tickets, you did a lot of pursuit driving, which uh you'd see somebody that was going too fast we, you would just get in behind them and trail them and see and get up to a certain speed and... if they were pulling away from you, you knew they were going that speed. Uh, there were some units that had what's called vascar unit which was I guess an electronic stopwatch I guess.

**NANCY RAY:** Is that like VASCAR, vascar?

**JOE SANDERS:** Vascar, it was just, I never was certified on it, you had to be certified on that, so I never ran one of those, I don't know that much about one of them. I just know it's time and distance is what it is. Uh, we did a lot of uh MVI stickers, we did a lot of equipment violations, we did a lot of just watching to see... drunk drivers. More so than just working speed... it wasn't just speed, we patrolled the back roads, the major highways, anywhere we wanted to go. We just

patrolled around all over. We didn't sit in one spot and work traffic in that one spot, you know, or work speed in that one spot.

**NANCY RAY:** How long does it take, when, when you first start working with a partner you're not the lead, is that right?

**JOE SANDERS:** No, he's breaking you in, he's the senior man, he's breaking you into the dos and don'ts and of the sergeant area, the policies and procedures of the Department, uh how to work traffic, how to handle a traffic stop, uh, the safety precautions that, that you take uh going up to a car, uh... he was your backup and you were his backup. Uh, you became very close, you became very good friends, with some of them. One of them we'll never talk about, my wife said cut that one off. (laughter)

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

**JOE SANDERS:** And some people just have personality conflicts that they just don't get along.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, let's say one that you did get along with well, what, what can you tell us about... what did you learn from that person?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, I learned how to play golf, and Stanley would come to the house and ask if Joe could come out and play. No, that's very important. Stan Gouge was probably one of my most favorite partners. .

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

**JOE SANDERS:** GOUGE. Uh, I could probably name every partner I had, uh Bill Olsen was probably the most, he was my first partner, uh he was probably the one that had the most influence over how I worked and handled myself. Uh, of course there was an incident there where something happened, I wound up within less than a year uh being on the road being by myself out there in the car, because I didn't have a partner, he was gone. Uh, I loved the Highway Patrol, uh had a lot of fun working Highway Patrol. At night, uh if I was working days, I'd have some of the guys that were working nights come by and pick me up and I'd go ride with them. Uh, my wife became friends with their wives... back then a lot of us had no children or they were real young or... what?

**LYSSA SANDERS:** They were going to save the world.

**JOE SANDERS:** We were gonna save the world out there one speeder at a time. Uh, but you just go out there and you'd ride with them... you wouldn't be in uniform but you'd be in the back seat having fun with everybody. I mean it was a ball, we had a great time. We, we played and we worked and uh it wasn't, it was not drudgery. I loved going to work everyday, it was... like my wife said, like Lyssa said, we were going out there to save the world. But we were going

out there to have fun, we were having a good time. Uh, we weren't dangerous or anything like that, we were doing our job. It was just so exciting.

**NANCY RAY:** Did your... you mentioned earlier uh your wife was concerned about the danger of being in the Department. How did that work, did she get OK with that?

**JOE SANDERS:** Oh yeah, I'm sure she worried. Uh, she never said so, she never tried to talk me into quitting. Uh, she never tried to, she knew that I loved it, uh she was OK with it... I'm sure she breathed a sigh of relief every night when I came home or every day when I came home. Uh, but there's just, you know there wasn't... sometimes you get things built up in your mind like there's a running gun battle... you see these things on television you know, and you think that that's real life, that's not the way it really is. Uh, and she got, I'm sure she'd have to be the one to explain that to you but I'm sure she worried. I don't see how she could keep from it. I know she does now even... because she's got a son that's out there doing it. Uh, he worked on the Highway Patrol for six or seven years, uh, and we both worried about him. Uh, so I had a son that I was worrying about doing the same thing so I can imagine what she went through. Uh, but she never once complained about it, she never once told me that she was worried about it, she was very supportive of everything I've ever done. I couldn't have made it... where I made it through the day without her. I guarantee you. The love and the support that she's given me through my career and anywhere I wanted to go and anything I wanted to do, hey, that's fine with her, let's go do it. Uh, if I wanted to move to, well I can't use that term, but if I wanted to, if I wanted to move to uh Egypt, she'd go with me, uh and never say... In fact, she'd be packed before I got home. She loved to move.

**NANCY RAY:** Uh, that's great. Well, speaking of moving, did you have more than one duty station with the Highway Patrol? Where did you go next?

**JOE SANDERS:** OK, like I said, I went from uh Amarillo to Spearman, from Spearman to Canyon. I had three Highway Patrol stations, those were the three that I had.

**NANCY RAY:** So you were in Canyon when you applied for the Rangers?

**JOE SANDERS:** No, no I wanted the... In the early '70s, they started the, the Motor Vehicle Theft service. I really wanted to be in that because it dealt with cars, I loved cars. It was kind of a specialized service so I studied and studied and studied... of course back then there was only like eight or ten of them through the whole state. I don't remember just how many there were. Uh, in fact, I think they took people from different services and put them into the Motor Vehicle Theft service to start with, which uh... and I wanted to get in on the ground floor. Well, I studied and studied for that and when we were in Canyon, uh, you could go take, if you met the qualifications, you could go take other tests and practice. So I told my wife, I told Lyssa, I said I'm gonna go take the Narcotics exam and I'm just gonna do it for practice. OK, she believed that, and I did too. So I went and took it because I was wanting to do this in preparation for the next test because a lot of the same questions are on different tests. And so I made the interview

board. And she said, OK, you took the test and it's for practice, now what'cha gonna do? Well, I'm gonna go to the interview board for practice. So I went to the interview board for practice, well I wound up getting promoted into the Narcotics service. So we were in Canyon one year to the day, uh March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976, we moved to Canyon. March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1977, I promoted into the Narcotics service and went to Dallas. Uh, my wife and two boys stayed in Canyon uh for what, a couple of months maybe... uh until we could get our house sold... uh and find a house in Garland. Actually, the office was in Garland, not Dallas. And we moved to our home in Garland. I think we moved in on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1977. Well, we were gonna stay in that house for a year because it was a little more than what we could afford. Ten and a half years later, we moved out of that house and moved into this one. We stayed in the Narcotics, of course we were gonna go to Dallas, that area, and we were gonna stay there one year and then we were going back to the Panhandle because the big city was not where we needed to be. Well, we stayed in, stayed in Garland for ten and a half years in the Narcotics Division. Uh and one day, one of the guys was taking the Ranger test... and I never really thought that uh, that I could get into the Rangers because it was such an elite organization and uh, I didn't know anybody that well... and when I moved to Garland, let me back up to when I moved to Garland. You remember the man, the Highway Patrolman that was in Dumas that was an influence on my life, Wesley Crites, he wound up being my Captain in Narcotics for ten and a half years.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh my.

**JOE SANDERS:** And I think he wound up retiring as the Commander of the Narcotics Division. Uh, and, you know which that meant a lot to me. Uh, one of my partners on the Highway Patrol in Canyon, we both made Narcotics at the same time and went to Dallas, or to Garland, Dallas. Uh, and his name was Jimmy Humphries, and he was more like a son or a baby, a little brother. He was single and we kind of adopted him. And ladies man.. ooh! (laughter) He was a ladies man. Anyhow, Jimmy died when he was 29 years old, he had cancer. But anyhow, to go on, and uh never thought that I could uh get into the Rangers but one of the guys that I was working with said he was gonna take the Ranger test. I thought, well I'll just take the Ranger test. So I went and took it, well I didn't do too good, never studied for it. I just thought I'd just go see what it was about.

**NANCY RAY:** What is it about? What kind of questions are on it?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, there's law questions, there's policy and procedure questions, there's history questions, there's Texas, most of its Texas history questions, uh... gosh it's been so long since I studied for one of them I can't remember... but most of it has to do with uh DPS policy and procedure, uh law, uh Texas history, uh, any number of subjects... current events, uh, it's just a menagerie of everything that you could think of, I guess. But...

**NANCY RAY:** You didn't do real well?

**JOE SANDERS:** No, I didn't do too good. I don't even know how I did, really, I know I didn't make the interview board. Well, the next one was coming up, well, I started studying. Well, the next test I made the interview board. And uh, at the end of the interview board, they ask you if you have any questions or anything you'd like to say. Well being kind of dumb, I guess, I asked a question of Captain Bob Mitchell... I shouldn't of asked that question. (laughter)

**NANCY RAY:** Can you say what the question was?

**JOE SANDERS:** I can't even remember what it was but he had asked me a question and I didn't know the answer to it or how to answer it... I wanted to know how he would have answered it. And his remarks to, I believe it was Lefty Block was the chair of the interview board... he looked at Lefty Block and said uh, I believe he's the one on interview here, not me. So needless to say, I didn't fare too well that time. Then the next time I took the test, I had learned my lesson and I made the, was able to promote. I think they promoted four of us at that time, Tommy Ratliff, Clete Buckaloo, myself and Johnny Allen.

**NANCY RAY:** And when you said promoted, promoted into the Rangers?

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes, promoted into the Rangers, or appointed into the Rangers, however you want to put it. Uh, it was not a promotion so to speak... it was but I had always been told that if you were promoted, you ought to get a pay raise...

**NANCY RAY:** And you didn't.

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, no, I made the same money coming into the Rangers as I was as a Narcotics agent. So, there was no pay raise but it was a tremendous promotion to me.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh yeah.

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, I didn't want my sons having to try to explain to all their friends what I did for a living as a Narcotics agent. Of course, I wanted to be part of this organization, more than anything, and I can remember telling my wife... and she reminds me of it at times, that

**LYSSA SANDERS:** In Dumas

**JOE SANDERS:** In Dumas, when we lived in Dumas, before we ever got into the Highway Patrol, that I wanted to be a Texas Ranger someday. And uh, never really thought I would ever accomplish it, uh, but I did. And... September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1987, uh the four of us, like I said, Tommy Ratliff, Clete Buckaloo, myself and Johnny Allen, were all promoted, appointed into the Ranger service. Uh, , it was a service then because we were still part of the Criminal Law Enforcement section. And uh Tommy Ratliff went to Pampa, which was my wife's hometown. We'd thought about liking to go there but Tommy, that's where he went. And Johnny Allen went to Del Rio because that's where he was born, raised, lived, the Highway Patrol and Texas Rangers... never,

never left the city limits of Del Rio, Texas. And the only other two openings was in Midland, Texas, and Clete Buckaloo and myself both got stationed here. And in Midland, Gene Powell was my Captain, Bob Favor was my, he was called a sergeant at that time, and we Rangers were called privates. And, during that time, I think Bob retired in 1993, I believe, Bob Favor. Well between '87 and '93, and I can't remember what year it was, they moved the sergeants up to the rank of lieutenant and moved the privates up to the rank of sergeant. So that's when the lieutenant came into being... because it used to just be captain, sergeant, private. Well, of course you had your senior Ranger captain and assistant senior Ranger captain, and we were under the umbrella of, the major umbrella of the Department of Public Safety and then the next was the Criminal Law Enforcement section. Sometime during that time, they made uh the Rangers a division of their own. That was after Lefty Block retired, I believe, because uh... what's his name, the Senior Ranger Captain... boy I've gone blank. Uh, I can

**NANCY RAY:** I probably have a list. What year was it? Company E?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, he was not out here, he was the Senior Ranger Captain. I know it.

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

**JOE SANDERS:** Yeah, I'm ashamed of myself.

**NANCY RAY:** We'll come back to it.

**JOE SANDERS:** He was the Assistant Senior Ranger Captain under Lefty Block... almost said it. But anyhow, he uh was able to, whoever did it, got us to become a division or our own. Uh,

**NANCY RAY:** So you spent your entire Ranger career here in Midland?

**JOE SANDERS:** In Midland, in Midland, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, when you came here, what was your first case, do you remember?

**JOE SANDERS:** No.

**LYSSA SANDERS:** Maurice Cook.

**JOE SANDERS:** Maurice Cook. That's who it was, the Senior Ranger Captain at that time. Thank you.

**LYSSA SANDERS:** You're welcome.

**JOE SANDERS:** I just drew a blank. Uh, you know, I really... there's some of them, I tried not to live my cases... I tried to leave them at work, I tried not to bring them home. Uh, it was a job,

uh, I'm sure if I really sat and thought about some of them I could remember them. My first one... I couldn't tell you.

**LYSSA SANDERS:** Fort Davis is probably...

**JOE SANDERS:** Yeah, that's probably the one that sticks out more than anything.

**NANCY RAY:** Tell us about that one.

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, I will when I get to it. Uh, in 19... I believe 1993, Bob Favor retired and Kirby Dendy came to Midland as our lieutenant. And then November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995, I believe Kirby Dendy made Captain, went to Waco, I made lieutenant, got to stay right here. I say "got to," sometimes that might have been a curse, might not have... because I always wanted to be a captain... wanted to be a Ranger captain. Uh, just never could get there. And so from 19... November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995, until uh August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003, I was the lieutenant of Company E. And I retired effective August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003. Uh, actually left the job sometime in July and then went in the hospital on August 14<sup>th</sup> and had both of my knees replaced because looked like I just got off of a horse... my knees were very, very bad. And we stayed retired for four years, uh, then another retired Ranger... that's another one you don't have on your list is in Synder, Texas.

**NANCY RAY:** I do.

**JOE SANDERS:** Oh do you. John Billings uh worked for, he retired the end of March, went to work for Patterson Drilling on the uh, the next day I believe, and then in August he called me and asked me if I would like to go back to work. I said I'll try it for a while so we've been there, what, a little over a year now, right? As security and investigations for Patterson Drilling Company.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, it seems that quite a few Rangers go into security after, after retirement.

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh huh.

**NANCY RAY:** So, the things you learned or your experiences as a Ranger, what are some of those that you're using now?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, any kind of investigative work, I mean, because they have, most of this is internal... uh dealing with roughnecks, you know, drillers, tool pushers, anybody that works on a drilling rig. And Patterson's probably the largest land-based drilling company in the United States. Uh, we cover, we've got drilling rigs in Canada, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Utah, Pennsylvania, and there's just two of us.

**NANCY RAY:** Just two.

**JOE SANDERS:** Most of it's right here in the Permian Basin though, 90% of it.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, being in the Midland area, of course cattle... would cattle theft be one that you dealt with as a Ranger? Oilfield thefts... what kind of cases did you deal with mainly?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, there was oilfield theft but you have to stop and remember that the boom was going on in the oilfield in the '70s and in the early '80s, the crash came in. Oilfield equipment, you couldn't give it away. So you know, when I first came out here, anything that was, had to do with oilfield, the production, and in the oil and gas industry was a second-degree felony if it was a theft... it didn't make any difference how much it cost, or how much the value of it, it was a second-degree felony. So we worked a lot of that. UH I never did work all that much of it because the time I got here, the bust was going on and it, the laws got changed to where it went on the value of the equipment instead of just because it was oil and gas. And so people didn't, you couldn't give it away let alone... why would you steal it, you couldn't sell it to anybody. So that really stopped for several years. I mean there was still some of the drilling going on and it was still valuable to the people that owned it but there was so much of it just laying around that nobody took the time to steal it anymore. Uh, I don't remember what year it was, Ector County... during that first oil boom I believe, Odessa was considered the murder capital of the world... uh because they had more murders per capita back during that time than any place in the world.

**NANCY RAY:** Why was that?

**JOE SANDERS:** Because of the oilfields, of the boom going on. If, we didn't live here at this time but my brother did and he's told me about people living in tents in bar ditches, people renting out their garages to people... because there was no place for them to live and we had such an influx of... or they had such an influx of people coming from the North that were out jobs down here to go to work in the oilfields and there was no place for them to live. So and then, Odessa... it's not that way today but Odessa was considered the blue collar city and Midland was considered the white collar city... of the oil industry. And so all of your workers lived in Odessa and of course there's lots of bars and beer joints and I'm sure back then roughnecks and everybody else liked to drink beer and, and uh get rowdy and uh, there was just uh, from what I understand, I didn't live here during that time, but there was lots of murders. But then before I made lieutenant, there was the uh Ector County District Attorney, uh John Smith, formed... he got with my Captain, Gene Powell, and he got with the Police Chief in Odessa and he got with the county Sheriff and the Medical Examiner's office and we formed what was called the Metro Homicide Task Force. Well, for four or five years, three or four years, whatever it was, that's basically all I did was work murders. Uh, I still had other counties of responsibility but I didn't uh work that much. I worked more in Odessa than I did anywhere in that time. Uh,

**NANCY RAY:** When you had to work so many murders, how did you not bring it home?

**JOE SANDERS:** Left it at the office, it didn't belong at home.

**NANCY RAY:** You were just able to walk out and leave it?

**JOE SANDERS:** Oh, you know, it bothered you, but uh... and there's some of them... I mean... I just don't dwell on them. Uh, it was unfortunate that it happened. I guess the worst murder-suicide, the worst one that I ever worked was a family of five where this guy killed everybody in his whole family and then killed himself. And I still remember to this day that little baby crawling up on the sofa... just barely hanging onto the edge of the sofa, still laying there, dead. He had shot them, every one of them. That one probably, that family was, their last name was Law, LAW, uh and uh, it was kind of ironic their name was Law, you know. Uh then there was another one that we worked where the, a man and woman, an elderly Hispanic couple named the Aguirrez, their next door neighbor named uh Michael Gonzales, I probably shouldn't be mentioning names, uh, killed both of them. He was just like, I don't remember, he wasn't but like 18 or 19 years old. Uh I guess he's still on death row. Uh...

**NANCY RAY:** Well, that should be public record.

**JOE SANDERS:** Oh it is public record. Uh, I'm sure it is. I'm almost positive he got the death penalty. I just try not to relive it or carry it home. I've got other things of interest that we do and uh my family is more important to me than anything. And uh, well in fact, they're the most important thing to me. Uh, my job was just a means of supporting my family.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, let me ask you this. Uh, I hear you say your job was just a means of supporting your family, but I haven't seen a Ranger yet that that's really all there was to it. What did the badge... was it a really special feeling to you or...

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, sure it was. But, the badge don't make the man.

**NANCY RAY:** True. What makes the man, what makes a Ranger? What are the characteristics to you of a good Ranger?

**JOE SANDERS:** Integrity, loyalty, honesty, perseverance,

**LYSSA SANDERS:** Tenacity.

**JOE SANDERS:** Tenacity.

**LYSSA SANDERS:** Getting the job done.

**JOE SANDERS:** Getting the job done. Uh, I don't know whether I said loyalty or not.

**NANCY RAY:** You did, yeah. I see that, that's a very strong... it's for everyone. Very strong, yeah. Well, you said you were a lieutenant, what year did you make lieutenant?

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995.

**NANCY RAY:** What's... did you enjoy being a lieutenant compared to...

**JOE SANDERS:** No.

**NANCY RAY:** No. That's more of the supervision type?

**JOE SANDERS:** You were the middle man. I enjoyed the camaraderie I had with the guys under me and that was probably my downfall because I enjoyed being around them more than I did the other lieutenants or the captains. In fact, I even got told that one time that I needed to become... and I never can remember the word that was used but it was meant being more sociable with my, I guess you call peers, uh the lieutenants and captains. I felt more comfortable with the working class, if you want to put it that way. The working class. My friends, my good friends were the Rangers. That was the hardest thing... was being a Ranger in Company E and then turning around and becoming the lieutenant of Company E. You were not supposed to be... they didn't need any supervision. You were supposed to be their supervisor. If they did something wrong, you were supposed to get on... I couldn't get onto those guys, they knew more than I did. You know, they were all fantastic men. In my opinion, Company E is the best company in the Ranger Division. Everybody feels that way about their own company but the whole Ranger Division is a group of fantastic individuals. Uh, they're great men... I've known some great men and met some great men. I've met some that, I probably shouldn't say this but I'm going to, that... (laughter) No, I probably won't... There's some of them that uh... Well, let's put it this way. I'm not one to go write a book about what I did. UHh, I'm not one to pat myself on the back about what I did. I just got the head shake so I'll stop there.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, well, let me ask you this then...

**JOE SANDERS:** It was a job, like I said, it was a means of supporting my family. Uh, they're all great guys.

**NANCY RAY:** (*side conversation*) OK, what is the thing that you are most proud... think back over your career, something that you did or something that you achieved, uh some commendation, what is something of which you're the most proud related to your career?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, as far as my career, I'm most proud of becoming a Texas Ranger. That's the thing that I'm most proud because (*emotional moment*)... excuse me...

**NANCY RAY:** It's OK, it's a big honor.

**JOE SANDERS:** .... I accomplished... (*emotional moment*)

**LYSSA SANDERS:** What you set out to.

**NANCY RAY:** You accomplished your...

**JOE SANDERS:** You shouldn't of asked me that question.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, why don't we pause right here.

**NANCY RAY:** OK, we're back. And you were telling us uh why it was so important for you to make Ranger... that was the most, the thing that you were most proud of.

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, you're talking about as far as career wise.

**NANCY RAY:** Career wise.

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes, making Ranger was the most, the..., that's what I was more proud of than anything in the world because it is an extremely important job. Uh you have, the Rangers have the respect of people worldwide, *worldwide*, I'm not just saying in Texas. It's worldwide. You have people in Germany that collect Texas Ranger memorabilia, not the baseball team but the law enforcement side. You know, going back to the baseball side of it, when I first made Texas Ranger in 19... what 1987, my sister's oldest son... what is Robert, a couple years older than Brent? And Brent's our oldest and he was 15, so that would have made Robert 16 or 17. And my sister told Robert, said your Uncle Joe made Ranger and he said well isn't he a little bit old to be playing baseball? (laughter) Of course, you know, in Texas you got the Ranger baseball team. Uh, but, yes, making Texas Ranger was the highlight of my career. Uh, I couldn't have been more proud of myself and I know that my wife was extremely proud, and my boys were too. Uh, it meant a tremendous amount to me. I couldn't wait to pin that cut-out silver star badge on my chest... and walk around and let everybody see... hey, look at me, look what I've done, you know. But I'm still I'm not a flaunter, uh, I don't try to impress with... I wore double holsters every once in a while, single holsters uh, that was part of it. That was part of being a Ranger. You got to wear a double gunbelt. Uh, you got to wear that cinco peso badge, uh, the mystique of the Rangers. You were above the Federal Bureau of Investigation, you were above the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, you were above Interpol, you were part of the oldest law enforcement agency in the United States, you know, that dates back to the 1800s. Uh, that's nothing to be taken lightly.

**NANCY RAY:** That's right. Well, being a Ranger isn't something you take lightly and it is not an 8 to 5 job, it is pretty much 24/7... so how did that impact your family? I know you said your wife supported you, but it still had to be uh a big thing for your family too.

**JOE SANDERS:** Sure it was. Uh, you know, teenage boys growing up, uh they had basically grown up with me being a Narcotics agent and you know that was pretty dangerous. Uh, being a police officer of any kind is dangerous. The most dangerous, in my opinion, the most dangerous

job in law enforcement today is a Highway Patrolman. You don't have any idea who you're stopping out there. I knew what I was dealing with. You know, you were dealing with murderers and robbers and thieves and dope dealers and everything else. But a Highway Patrolman stopping somebody out there on the side of the road has no earthly idea who that person was. He didn't know if he was gonna walk up there and get his head blowed off. But, it was a dangerous job. I know it impacted my family, uh my wife... she never really broke down or told me how she worried but she never, I never left this house that we didn't kiss and she didn't tell me to be careful (*emotional moment*).

**NANCY RAY:** And you paid attention. That's good.

**JOE SANDERS:** And the minute I walked in the door (*emotional moment*)

**NANCY RAY:** Kissed and said hello.

**JOE SANDERS:** Big hug.

**NANCY RAY:** Big hug!

**JOE SANDERS:** We are a hugging family.

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

**JOE SANDERS:** My youngest son, our youngest son, well both our boys, Bradley is 6'2" and weighs about 260 and... he likes to break you in half when he hugs you. And Brent is about my size, uh but a lot stronger. Uh we're just a hugging family, we're a very affectionate family, uh and it means something to us when you walk in and out of the door. If you're leaving, you know, you don't want to leave on a bad note... (*emotional moment*) and you're always glad to see them when they walk through the door. And as far as a supportive wife, I probably had the most supportive wife that any person could ever ask for. And to put up with what she had to put up with.... you know, any woman in law enforcement that stays with their spouse is a very special person. I could not make it today or could have not made it back then had it not been for her.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, let's say, say someone talked to you uh about becoming a Ranger, uh today, 2008. What advice would you give that person from what you've learned through your experiences?

**JOE SANDERS:** Work hard and never give up.

**NANCY RAY:** OK. Well, let's don't give up on cases. I think you were gonna tell us about something at Fort Davis?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, we were remodeling this house and we were in our... we had already the kitchen out there added on and we were redoing our bedroom which at that time had a, we were taking out a walk-in closet and a small bathroom and shower. My very, very good friend who stayed here with us and built this place, we had just ripped all that out and had half of the ceiling back there gone... all you had were rafters, insulation hanging down, and I got a call April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997, that there was hostages taken in Fort Davis, Texas. And I had to leave. I grabbed up...

**LYSSA SANDERS:** One set of clothes.

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, what I had on. I still have that shirt today. I wouldn't get rid of that shirt. I left here thinking I'll be back tonight and here my wife was with my best friend and the roof... the ceiling is out of the bedroom, our bedroom, and they hang up a sheet of plastic over that so the insulation don't fall out or the wind blows and crackles that... so she has to move to another bedroom. We're gone eleven days. Not knowing who you were dealing with, you had no earthly idea what was down in those Davis Mountains, uh what kind of army they may have had, you know. Come to find out it wasn't as big an army as it was... but you had law enforcement agencies from everywhere. Everybody wanted to become, to come in and be part of the standoff. We first got there, we were staying at a ranch house or actually we weren't staying at the ranch house, this couple uh named Johnnie and Rusty Walker let us kind of take over their home and their uh property. And they were just inside the entrance to the Davis Mountain Resort. And uh a couple had been taken hostage, Joe and I can't remember her name, Joe Rowe and his wife. I can't recall her name. But I've talked to Joe since then so that's why I can remember his name. But anyhow, they were taken hostage and they were just inside the gate to Fort, uh Davis Mountain Resort. But I mean we had law enforcement people from everywhere and finally, uh, of course, you know this was shortly... what within four years of the Branch Davidian... Janet Reno didn't want anybody with the Federal government in there you know, so they didn't want another one of their turn of events. So it was pretty well put up to that. And Barry Caver, at that time, was my captain. Gene Powell, uh he was my first captain when I made lieutenant and uh I made lieutenant like I said in '95, I'd been lieutenant for about a year and a half at that time. Uh, Barry Caver... Gene Powell had gone to Austin as Assistant Ranger Captain uh sometime in August of '96 and Barry came as captain... I believe it was November 1<sup>st</sup> of '96... we're talking he'd been a captain for six months when this took place. And he had a tremendous load on his shoulders and I was always used to letting the captain do everything, I mean it's his company, you do it. If you want me to do something, you tell me to do something. And Barry was negotiating back and forth with the uh bad guys, uh Richard McClaran, uh and anyhow, we just kind of had a few words there and he put me in charge of delegating things for people to do while he handled uh the negotiations. And things progressed and we moved on into the fire station down inside the camp and we spread out all in the mountains and I don't know that I did anything extraordinary but uh after it was all settled and, we got uh the people arrested in uh... one of them was killed I believe, I know he was. One of the people was and he was... uh but not by the Rangers. The Rangers were not... anyhow. Uh,

**NANCY RAY:** When this case started, why did they take the people hostage, do you know?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, that bunch was part of what was called the Republic of Texas. Uh, they didn't believe that Texas was annexed properly so therefore was not a part of the United States of America, that it was still a Republic of its own and therefore it was a nation of its own and Richard McClaran was the ambassador of the Republic of Texas and he was going to take Texas back and make it a Republic of its own. So we didn't know if they had an army of 5,000 down there or if they had an army of 5. And, you know, but anyhow... like I say, it's been over ten years ago... it's hard to remember just everything that took place. But after it was all said and done, we got them, they surrendered, we got them arrested, uh they came and surrendered to where I was at, where we were at, and I put them with the Rangers that, that uh hauled them out of there and took them to jail. And then of course, uh, I'm probably the only Ranger in history, I don't know this for a fact, that signed for an M-80 tank retriever.

**NANCY RAY:** They didn't bill you for it, did they? (laughter)

**JOE SANDERS:** No, I said... but anyhow, I mean that was one big piece of machinery.

**NANCY RAY:** I'll bet.

**JOE SANDERS:** But we came home, everybody was safe, everybody... nobody was injured, uh, except for the bad guys. And uh, at that time, our youngest son, Brad, was a Highway Patrol trooper and he was living in Odessa and I believe it was on a, I don't remember what day of the week it was but we were building a patio cover at his house. And Barry Caver called me and said uh, asked me what I was doing and I told him what I was doing. And he said, uh, you need to be in Fort Worth, Texas, the next day, wasn't it? Uh and you need to bring Lyssa with you. I said OK, what for? He just said you need to be here. So when I got there... well he went ahead and told me what it was. I had been nominated for and received through the Sheriff's Association of Texas the Lawman of the Year Award for

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

**JOE SANDERS:** 1997.

**NANCY RAY:** Quite an honor.

**JOE SANDERS:** Yes it was but... I don't think I'm the one that deserved that award. The *guys all deserved* that award. It was not just me, it was everybody out there. I just happened to be the one that was pointing fingers and directing traffic. And staying up at all hours of the night making sure they weren't doing things that they weren't supposed to be doing but doing what they were supposed to be doing (laughter). Uh, and it was a tremendous honor and I was nominated by Barry Caver and I believe Bruce Casteel signed off on it. Bruce Casteel was the Senior Ranger Captain at that time. And it was a tremendous honor. I'm very, very proud of, of

the honor that they bestowed upon me, uh, through the Sheriff's Association of Texas. Uh, but I still feel like... yet I got the honor... that everybody out there was as responsible for it as I was. It was a team effort if you want to call it a team. Uh, I got, you know somebody says something and it sticks with you the rest of your life. Uh, we had a group of guys that were, that I had assigned up on top of this mountain or hill or whatever you want to call it... it was a mountain to us out here in the flat land... where they could look down on to the deal. And I didn't want them staying up there all the time because it was hard to get them food and water. So, I sent a group up there to relieve them so they could come down and get something to eat and water. Well, they didn't like that idea. They didn't want to be relieved, some of them didn't. Some of them wanted to come down uh but some of them were stubborn, they wanted to stay. And so the group that I'd sent up there to relieve them come back down. And uh boy I got on the radio... the best I'm recalling and I may not be recalling this entirely correct. But I sent that group back up there and when I got them down there, I gathered them all together and said when you're relieved, *you're relieved*. And uh

**NANCY RAY:** In about that tone of voice?

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, no... a little more stern than that.

**NANCY RAY:** OK.

**JOE SANDERS:** Uh, anyhow, that phrase has stuck with me, "when you're relieved, you're relieved." And uh which is really humorous uh and a lot of guys they laugh about it because we were just... 90% of us that were there were just Company E Rangers. We had other Rangers come in from other companies to help us, uh, and I, we appreciated their help. Uh, there was a lot of people from the other organizations, other services within the Department, that were there and we appreciated everything they did to help. But it was a Ranger operation. And I made them aware of that when it came time to... hauling the prisoners out that it was gonna be Rangers that took everybody out of there. But anyhow, I got nominated for that... and I won it... and it was a tremendous honor, and uh something that I will remember for the rest of my life. Uh, I got a nice plaque. They give me a uh, a nice pistol in a display case. Uh, those things they could have kept, I mean they're nice to have but it was just the fact that they did it and bestowed it upon me that was uh the best part of it.

**NANCY RAY:** If there was one thing you could go back and do differently, what would that be... not necessarily in this case but just anything related to your career. Can you think of anything? ... I know that kind of puts you on the spot.

**JOE SANDERS:** No, I really can't think of anything...

**NANCY RAY:** Nothing major then?

**JOE SANDERS:** Nothing major. Uh... no, because I'm proud of everything I did.

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

**JOE SANDERS:** I'm proud of everything I accomplished. I would have loved to have made captain but I was not going to... OK

**NANCY RAY:** Did she say cut it? (laughter)

**JOE SANDERS:** Yeah. Uh, my friendships with the, the guys meant more to me than uh... their respect...

**NANCY RAY:** Than proceeding? OK, I understand. Did you ever get into any situation where someone saved your life?

**JOE SANDERS:** I'm sure it was done just on numerous occasions that I don't know about.

**NANCY RAY:** You don't know about. OK.

**JOE SANDERS:** But any running gun battles and things like that... not in the, not in the Rangers. No.

**NANCY RAY:** Is there anything else you'd like to share? Anything about cases or anybody... who was really special that you'd like to mention?

**JOE SANDERS:** They're all special (*emotional moment*). Uh, I've got, there's probably, I was probably closer to two Rangers, uh than I was to any of the rest of them. But I was close to all of them but I was probably closer to two guys, and we remain friends. I haven't talked to one of them and I'm extremely ashamed of myself and I hope ya'll get to talk to him tomorrow when you go to El Paso because I haven't talked to him in a while and I'm ashamed of myself because I know it's my turn to call and not his. Uh

**NANCY RAY:** Well, call and let him know.

**JOE SANDERS:** He's very special to me.

**NANCY RAY:** And his name?

**JOE SANDERS:** Buster Collins. And the other one is Bobby Grubbs, the sergeant down or, the Sheriff of Brown County. But they're all special, you know. I can't say one's anymore special than the rest of them it was just that we were closer as far as friends when we were, when I was still a sergeant and not their supervisor. But they both told me when I became their supervisor that our friendship would not get in the way of me being their supervisor... which meant a lot for

me, to me for them to tell me that. But those guys never needed supervision, they're grown men, they're Texas Rangers by all means. My gosh, they don't need supervision. Uh...

**NANCY RAY:** Eddie, do you have any questions? Is there anything else you'd like to add?

**JOE SANDERS:** Not that I can think of except that I've already said it a thousand times or a hundred times... however many times I said it... that I'm extremely proud to have been part of the most elite organization in the world.

**NANCY RAY:** Well, we thank you very much for your service and thank you for your time today too.

**JOE SANDERS:** Well, thank you very much. I just hope you can use what I've said.

**NANCY RAY:** Oh, we can.