

Interview With

**RALPH WADSWORTH**  
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted At Office Of David Byrnes  
Kaufman County Sheriff's Office  
Kaufman, Texas  
Saturday—January 7, 2006

Interviewed By: Robert Nieman  
Longview, Texas

Present At Interview: Ralph Wadsworth, David Byrnes, Robert Nieman

**E-Book Project Staff:** Robert Nieman, Volunteer; Byron A. Johnson, Christina Stopka  
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## Introduction

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Ralph Wadsworth

Retired Texas Ranger

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I am with Ranger Ralph Wadsworth of Mesquite, Texas. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Wadsworth's involvement in and with the Texas Rangers. Ranger Wadsworth, do I have your permission to record this interview?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes you do.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Ranger Wadsworth, you understand that this videotape will belong to you and to me?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And finally, Ranger Wadsworth, do I have your permission to present copies of this tape to various historical organizations such museums, libraries and schools?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Sure.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What is your full name?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Ralph Jackson Wadsworth, Sr.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** When and where were you born?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** October 30, 1932, in Ellis County on our farm.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And what is the largest town in Ellis County?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Waxahachie and it is also the county seat.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who were your parents?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Lone and Martha Wadsworth.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And how do you spell their names?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** MARTHA and Lone, L O N E Wadsworth.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And what is the chronological order of your brothers and sisters, and would you name them?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** There are four boys and four girls. Louis was the oldest, then Orvil, Marie was next, Ruth was next and then Ray my twin brother and I were born next. I believe Ray was born first. Elaine was born next and then another set of twins were born, twin girls but they died at birth. And then my youngest sister was Wanda. That left us with four of each; four boys and four girls.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And who is your wife?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Peggy.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And do you have any children?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Three children, our daughter Sherri Lynn....SHERRI, Ralph, Jr., we call him Jack. Then our third child was born about ten years later and that's Jody Glenn.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** J O D I E?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** J O D Y.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** He or she?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** He, he's a male, Jody Glenn...G L E N N.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Where did you go to school?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I started and completed the first grade at Plainview, a rural school in Ellis County but we moved a lot. My parents were primarily cotton farmers. I was born on a 100 acre farm in Ellis County owned by my grandfather; the farm was adjacent to his 100 acre farm.

My parents lived there a total of eleven years. However, we began a succession of moves starting during the depression after my grandfather lost this farm. So from the time I was about four, we moved almost annually from one farm to another. In other words my parents were sharecroppers. It was what you call, renting on the third and fourth, when we had mules and other farming equipment, we would get three-quarters of the yield from our crops and the owner would get one-fourth. One year because we lost our equipment, we farmed on the halves, whatever the crops produced we got one-half and the landowner got the other half.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And where did you graduate from school?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I quit school during the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Midlothian High School. I also went to Midlothian during the second grade, Sardis in the third grade, the fourth and fifth grade we were at Cahill in Johnson County where we skipped a grade, so I made two grades in one year. This was when they extended the school system from the 11 to the 12 grades. The sixth grade we went to Mountain Peak, a small community in Ellis County about eight miles south of Midlothian. My parents and several relatives are buried in the cemetery at Mountain Peak. When this school shut down we went back to Midlothian, staying there until the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Like a lot of kids who lived on a farm during that time, we would go get our books on the first day of school and then go back to our farm. We'd continue our work in the fields, weather permitting, for another six weeks. After all the crops were gathered, we would go back to school and try to catch up with everyone else, but it was an improbable task. My oldest sister Marie was the only one from my family to graduate from high school. The rest quit for various reasons. I remember going to school when we started the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and getting our books. Then several weeks later

when we went back after the crops had been gathered; Ray, my twin brother said, “We’re so far behind we’ll never catch up, I’m going to quit,” so we both quit.

**(Ralph asked that the following information be added to his interview: “I quit school during the 10th grade in 1948. Belatedly, in 1954 I received a diploma from Midlothian High School [Ellis County, Texas] after passing the GED General Equivalence test. In the fall of 1970 I enrolled at El Centro Junior College in Dallas finishing in the spring of 1973 with an A. A. Associate Arts degree in Police Science. In the fall of 1973 I enrolled at Abilene Christian University [Metro at Dallas] graduating with a 3.33 GPA in the spring of 1976 with a B.S. in Criminal Justice.”)**

Eventually we found odd jobs where we made a little money and survived until I joined the Air Force when I was 18 years old. Six months later Ray enlisted. But I was the first to volunteer for military service. It was sort of like what David said awhile ago, when we were talking about were you crazy by becoming the Sheriff. Well I’d always said I’d never join the military, but three days after I was approached by a recruiter I was sworn in. Harris Hollabaugh a friend of mine was about to get drafted and with his encouragement, on 31 August, 1951, he and I joined the Air Force and began our basic training in San Antonio.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Lackland?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Lackland Air Force base, which was basically, where they sent recruits to indoctrinate you into military service and discipline. From there my friend went to

airplane and engine mechanics school at Chanute Field in Illinois. I was sent along with several members of my basic training class to military police school at Camp Gordon, Georgia. There we received excellent classroom instructions along with a daily routine of physical training. The last week there we spent a week in the field on bivouac. Then we had to march back about 15 miles to Camp and this completed our training.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Camp Gordon, isn't that down around Savannah?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It's near Augusta, Georgia.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay. Well now if you were 18 and born in '32, the Korean War was still going on, and did you go to Korea?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No, but after military police school, which was run by the Army (even though I was in the Air Force) they sent me to Holloman Air Force Base near Alamogordo, New Mexico. My first job there was on walking a post in an isolated area where they had parked several airplanes. Eventually I was promoted to working the back entrance gate, which was about 20 miles from the post and further out in the desert. Then as I got better trained I was assigned to work the main entrance to our Base. Finally, I got a choice assignment working town patrol. There I had the opportunity to work with the Alamogordo city police every third night, we worked three nights in a row (there was three of us each night) one of us would ride with the Alamogordo police officers during our shift. So every third night I would work with the Alamogordo police and in this way I became acquainted with most of the local officers and the New Mexico state police working that area. Now that was real exposure to law enforcement. Although, as an Air Policeman, I carried a .45 automatic pistol, yet it was not traditional law

enforcement work. Six months after I had enlisted, my twin brother also enlisted and after basic training at Lackland, they sent him to Wichita Falls to airplane engine mechanic school. He completed his training in Wichita Falls and then they sent him to Gary AFB near San Marcos for helicopter engine school. On completion of helicopter engine training he was permanently assigned to Gary. No doubt, San Marcos is much closer to Dallas than New Mexico. So I put in for a transfer to be with my twin. After a lot of red tape, my request was approved and I transferred from Holloman Air Force base to Gary Air Force base effective 15 August 1953. There I went back to working either the main gate or base patrol. During my tenure at Gary I got acquainted with J. P. Lynch and Bobby Kinser, the two Highway Patrolmen stationed in San Marcos.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Lynch is going to become a Ranger Captain.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Right. And I think Bobby Kinser wound up as the Hays County Sheriff for one term after he retired from DPS. I got a little bit closer acquainted with Bobby Kinser than I did with J.P, even though I knew both of them as they frequently came to the base. But when I was about to finish my Air Force enlistment, my wife told me about an ad she had read where the state of Texas was wanting to hire 200 more Highway Patrolmen, (Peggy and I married in October 1954 while I was still in the Air Force). I filled out the necessary paper work and in August of '55 they tested applicants at the State Capitol. The tests were administered in the House of Representatives where several hundred people tested for the open positions. And as I recall it wasn't really a knowledge test, it was more of a psychological test. I forget what you call that test, but supposedly they could determine if you were mentally qualified or had loose

nuts. As far as I know, everyone who took the test went before the interview board that day as I don't remember going but one time. As it turned out W. J. Elliott, Chief of the Highway Patrol was on my interview board and he liked country farm boys. Bobby Kinser was there as an observer and he told me after we got through, "Chief Elliott liked you, and I think you're in."

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Just so we'll have it for the record, we're in Captain ...or Sheriff David Byrnes office here talking to Ralph Wadsworth. But I told David a funny little story that Ed Gooding told about W. J. Elliott. W. J. of course was from Tyler, Texas, I don't know if you're aware of that or not. But on the day they graduated from DPS School he said Chief Elliott gave us our graduating speech. He said he walked up there on the stage, had a big wad of tobacco, and looked over them kind of slow, he said, "I can still quote our graduation speech word for word. 'We brought you here with a three cent stamp; I can replace you with a three cent stamp.' And turned around and walked off the stage."

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, he made his point and was good with words. I remember what Chief Elliott said to our graduating class, "When you go out to this little town in Texas wherever you're stationed, and the speed limit in that town is 30 miles per hour, but everybody there is going 40 to 45 mph; if you start trying to enforce that speed limit," he said, "The people in that little town are going to help you learn the geography of Texas."

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What recruit school did you go to?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** The school started on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1956, and it was either the 20<sup>th</sup> or the 24<sup>th</sup> school...let me think about that.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Was Camp Mabry still there?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No, and it was the 24<sup>th</sup> recruit class. It was the second school at their present location. The first one was in October of '55, and by the way I had an opportunity to attend that school. After I passed all the hurdles, they told me that I could go to school in October or January and gave me a choice. I had just been out of the Air Force for a month and had landed a real good paying job at Ford Motor assembly plant in Dallas. I was making \$1.25 an hour, big money for this old boy so I used the expression, "I've got a lot of unfinished business, and so put me down for January." Initially, I was unsure if I wanted to make big money or get into law enforcement. But it didn't take me long to figure that out. I did not want to stay in that assembly plant. After three months, when I'd made my probation, I told them I was going to give them two weeks notice. They said no one else ever gave a notice, but if you're leaving thank you for telling us.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** How long was your training school?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Eleven weeks I think...well it started January 4<sup>th</sup> and we graduated March 16<sup>th</sup>.....whatever...

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Quite a bit shorter than their current schools.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I believe it was eleven weeks. Yeah, it was not as long as the school they now have.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Where was your first duty station?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Brenham, in Washington County.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And who else was there....well let me first ask, in your graduating school, did anyone else out of that school make Ranger?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Charlie Hodges made it first and then Jessie Priest made it not long after that.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And then you made it.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Then me, yeah. We were the only three from my recruit school that went in the Rangers.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** How many highway patrolmen were there at the duty station in Brenham?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** One man, until I got there. We had the responsibility for five counties.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who was your partner?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Roy Moody; and he had worked without a partner for more than three years.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Roy Moody?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Roy Polk Moody.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** He was quite a guy; although a practical joker, he was a good man and an excellent training officer. Our wives; Peggy and Sallie, became good friends and supported each other.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Let me ask you before we get off in this, is your twin brother still living?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No, he passed away at age 42, had cancer .....He was being treated for high pressure in one eye and they finally found out he had a cancerous mass behind it so they removed his right eye. I think we were about '38, or '39, when the cancer was discovered.

After his tour with the Air Force Ray worked in the aircraft industry a number of years despite sporadic layoffs before taking a job as produce clerk with the 7/11 stores. There, he worked through the ranks to become a store manager and soon earned a district manager position. But he resigned this position after ten years due to a protracted shortage in store personnel. Then, Bill Caffee a friend of mine and a former highway patrol Sergeant who recently had been put in charge of security at SMU talked to Ray about a vacancy there. He was hired and worked there for several years. It was the most enjoyable job he ever had. Ray had been at SMU for about three years the eye problem began. Eventually, his cancerous eye was removed without any other problem except now he only had one eye but it worked well. A year later, a tumor was discovered on his brain. Subsequently, I went with Ray and his wife Mary Ruth to M. D. Anderson in Houston, where they removed an orange size tumor. The surgery was deemed successful and it didn't otherwise affect his ability. Yet through chemotherapy he lost his hair and encountered a lot of sickness due to the treatments. However, about a month later, he was able to go back to work, hardly missing a beat for almost a year. Then as time wore on it became obvious that the cancer was taking its toll on his body. One day, Bill Caffee called wanting to see me, during our meeting he said, "You know Ray was promoted to Sergeant, after he'd only been here a year or two." But said, "Now we're getting ready to create the Lieutenant's position and if he wasn't sick he would get the promotion; and I just wanted you to know or rather wanted to ask you what you thought about him being a lieutenant." With a great sigh of relief, I said, "If that's what you want to do, I think that would be great." But privately I had been afraid that Bill was going to ask me to tell Ray to stay at home, because of his illness, loss of weight, and

diminished physical abilities. In fact, he couldn't have performed his duties without the full cooperation of Caffee and the entire security team at SMU. So I was relieved to know that he wasn't asking me to tell Ray to stay at home. Then, as Caffee had predicted Ray was promoted to Lieutenant and held the position for several weeks before passing away on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April 1975.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Were ya'll exact twins?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No, I was always better looking and bigger. Ha! He was smarter.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** You got the brains, he got the smart. Okay, how long were you in Brenham?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I spent 3 and one half years at Brenham. But after I'd been there about a year I heard that a highway patrolman in Hillsboro had got fired or had left for another reason. So I made a comment to Captain Glen Rose, our District Commander, and said "I'd like to have that job in Hillsboro." His response, "Nobody in my district transfers out until they've been here at least two years." So at the end of two years I made a formal written request for transfer to the Dallas district. About fifteen months later I got a letter saying my transfer request had been approved, but for some reason it was being held in abeyance. A recruit school graduated about that time and they sent my replacement to Brenham, a young man named Mickey Walker, and so for 3 months three patrolmen were stationed in Brenham. Subsequently, my transfer became effective on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1959 and we actually moved to Mesquite, in the Dallas district.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well before you come up here are there any experiences you had while you was in Brenham that you would like to relate to us?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Made a lot of good friends there, it was just a good place to live and work. Tieman Dippel, the Sheriff was a super nice guy; he'd been elected Sheriff and held office for 16 years and then served another 2 or 3 terms before he finally retired. He set the right example and his staff was good to work with, it was just a good place to live and work. If it hadn't been so far from Peggy's parents, we might have stayed in Brenham my whole career. Roy Moody, my partner, broke me in, moved there in 1951 and retired there in '79 or '80.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** When you transferred from Brenham, you're stationed in Mesquite or Dallas.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** In Mesquite.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay. And how long were you there?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Seventeen years.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** As a Highway Patrolman?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes, as a Highway Patrolman.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well you're in the city and who are some of your Captains, what was some of your experiences there that you could relate?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Captain Harry Hutchison was the Highway Patrol Captain. C. H. or Clayton Cheshire was the Lieutenant, both were super nice. Sergeant O.C. Wheeler was my Sergeant, who by the way had been my counselor during recruit school and at that time he was stationed in Amarillo. By the time I moved to Mesquite he had transferred to Dallas. He was a

real nice guy to work for, and was just a super nice guy. He passed away of a heart attack in 1964. The first work related thing I can think of that happened in Dallas was in 1963 with the impending visit of John F. Kennedy the President; several DPS officers were assigned to meet with the Secret Service to prepare for the President's arrival. We met with Forrest Sorrels, the Secret Service agent in charge at Dallas, and he briefly explained our duties. He said, "On the day of his visit just go over to the Lincoln Mercury dealer and they'll be cars waiting there for you. We prefer to use state police officers as drivers in the motorcade due to your training and authority". We were instructed to wear civilian clothes along with our uniform hats during the presidential visit. And that's about the only indoctrination we had. On the morning of the President's arrival we went to the dealership on Lemmon Avenue and parked our patrol cars. Forest Sorrels was there and said pick from those cars on the lot. So I drew a Mercury four door sedan, My former partner, Hurschel Jacks drew a Lincoln convertible and he drove Lyndon Johnson during the parade. Five congressmen were assigned to my car; (they had flown with the President from Fort Worth) Albert Thomas from Houston, Olin Teague from Bryan/College Station, Jim Wright from Fort Worth, Jack Brooks from Beaumont and there was another one, but right now I can't remember who it was. But I do remember that there were three of us in the front seat and I believe there were three in the back seat. Everything was going as planned along the parade route and the crowd was just fantastic, everybody was just happy to.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Let me interrupt.....are you in front or behind the President's car?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** We were probably eight or ten cars behind the President's car. The lead vehicle was driven the Chief of Police, Secret Service agents were driving President

Kennedy's car, and the Secret Service drove the follow up car behind the President. Hurschel Jacks was driving the next car carrying Lyndon Johnson. The Secret Service follow up car behind him was driven by Joe Rich, who later became one of my Highway Patrol partners. Milton Wright (A future Ranger.) was driving Earl Cabell, the Mayor of Dallas in the next car. Then I'm not sure who was next in line but I remember at least two other cars were in front me, Charlie Brock, a Highway Patrolman out of Terrell was driving one convertible and Dick Thompson, a DPS License and Weight patrolman from Waco was driving another convertible, and behind me, William "Bill" Essler, a DPS Motor Vehicle Inspection patrolman was driving another car carrying other dignitary's. But anyhow, when the shots rang out I was on Main Street, about to turn right onto Houston Street. The two convertibles directly in front of me had turned onto Houston Street and the lead vehicles had turned left onto Elm Street as the gunfire erupted. I had just pointed out to my passengers, the new unoccupied courthouse building to my left. And to me, the gun shots sounded more like 2 x 4's falling in a vacant building. However, Albert Thomas, sitting in the front seat next to me, immediately said, "My God, they've shot him." Just that quick. So when we turned the corner onto Houston Street, we could see all kinds of bedlam, including motorcycle police officers, who had stopped their motors and laid them on their sides, trying to determine what had happened. The two convertibles directly in front of me carried UPI/AP newsmen and White House photographers. Some of them were distracting the drivers saying "Stop the car; we got to find out what's going on." So they had to control their passengers before they went on, as a consequence, the President and the other cars got away from us. The President was scheduled to stop at the Market Center on Stemmons Freeway for a

luncheon. We momentarily stopped at the Market Center but the motorcade wasn't there, So we drove on out to Parkland; we found the President's car along with the other cars at the Hospital's emergency entrance but no one was with the cars. We learned that President Kennedy and Governor Connally had been critically wounded by bullets from an unidentified source. The Congressmen got out of my car and entered the hospital. Not knowing what to expect we stayed with our cars. Brock, Essler and Thompson got in my car and we listened to the news on the car's radio as the events of the day unfolded. This was before today's means of rapid communication; we had no police radios, cell phones or beepers. Actually, we were just waiting on direction from someone in authority. Eventually we heard on the car radio where the President had died. Subsequently, we noticed the Chief of Police leaving with Lyndon Johnson. Afterwards, we got word that the Congressman had found other rides and that we should go to Love Field and stand by in case we were needed. We drove out to Love Field and stood by while the new President was being sworn in. Then after his plane left, we took the cars back to the dealership. We were hungry and all of us went to a bar-b-que place and ate, because it was about four – five o'clock in the afternoon. After that most everyone who used good sense went home, it had been a long day. However, for some reason, I felt the need to find out what was going on. So I went to Parkland Hospital where we had a contingent of DPS personnel being assembled. I don't know if somebody in authority asked me to pick up Ben Barnes or not, or if he just said, "Hey buddy I need you to take me over to Henry Wade's house." At that time Barnes was a state representative, and he was an up and going politician. So I wound up taking Barnes over to

Henry Wade's house. I sat in the car while they were discussing the day's events, or whatever; they were in there for a long time.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well let me interrupt, who is Henry Wade?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** He is the District Attorney of Dallas County and Ben Barnes was a State Representative who later became Speaker of the House and Lieutenant Governor.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** But, anyhow I wound up getting home about midnight. The next morning I was up drinking coffee intently watching the news on TV, when I got the call to immediately report to Parkland Hospital. For at least two weeks we worked at Parkland Hospital in twelve-hour shifts. And believe me, the twelve-hour shifts started and ended after we got there.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Why?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** We provided security for Governor John Connally, and his staff who set up a temporary office at the hospital. That's the main purpose for us being there. For several days, my assignment was staying in ICU with Governor Connally. Of course he was incapacitated and didn't feel like talking to me or with anyone else for that matter. Eventually, he improved and in my presence held a televised national news conference with ABC newsman Murphy Martin. Prior to the conference, they discussed the facts wanting to assure the public that there was no conspiracy and that the government had everything under control.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Mentioning Connally, I was in the State cemetery one time in Austin, there was Stephen Austin and Homer Garrison all buried up there, and John Connally who's buried up there too. And one of the directors or somebody from the cemetery I got to talking to

and I said “You know you’re interested in a story.” He said, “Well yeah,” cause we was right there by Connally’s grave. And he said, “Once or twice a year,” he said, “There will be a pickup or an SUV will pull down here,” and he said, “I always know who they are, they’ll get out and they got these big hats on,” and he said, “I know where they’re from.” “About all they’ll ever say, where is the man.”

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** All right.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** They’re looking for Connally. So...did you have any opportunity during this time or through your years in Dallas, to ever get to know Will Fritz with Dallas Police?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I got to know Captain Fritz after he retired from the Police Department. Through special assignments, I got to know several officers who had worked under him. On numerous occasions the Secret Service would request our assistance, In fact, every time the President, Vice President or candidates for the office visited Dallas, I would be usually be assigned with two or three other Highway Patrolmen to provide security. Vice-President Hubert Humphrey made the first official trip after the assassination; in what was never again to be considered a routine visit. Post assassination visits required extensive planning and enhanced details for security. Afterwards, on multiple occasions, I was assigned to assist the Secret Service, in this capacity. I had many brief conversations with notable individuals including Hubert Humphrey.... I visited with him, one on one, on several occasions, I didn’t like him politically, but he was very nice, personable and of course, he was the Vice-President. Within the scope of my duties, I made frequent inquiries and visits with Dallas Police Officers. At times someone would say, let’s go see Captain Fritz. In retirement, Fritz lived at the Plaza Hotel across

the street from City Hall. We'd meet him and drink coffee. Usually they'd talk about events that I wasn't aware of, but I always enjoyed our visits. That story reminds me of a time I took a vacation out in far West Texas. A friend of mine....actually two friends Darrell Watkins, E. B. Peters and our sons took a bunch of donated clothes to a mission organization in Marfa. Although, we had another reason and purpose for the trip; Darrell had planned a trip in conjunction with our offering for the "River Ministry". He was what might be called a "rock hound" and wanted to visit the area between Marfa and the Rio Grande to pick up rocks. Of course he knew what type of rocks to look for and collect. He would grind and polish those rocks with a certain degree of professionalism. He would make tie clasps and all kinds of ornaments out of those rocks. After delivering our mission package we camped out on a 640 acre tract of land somewhere between Marfa and the Rio Grande River. The land was owned by an old man named Means. His section of land could be compared to a city lot because nearby ranches contained several sections of land. Yet one could easily get lost on his property. No one was home when we arrived to set up camp. But not to worry, Darrell had been there before. The second day, Tinsley Means, the old mans son returned home with a friend; Jim Wheat a County Commissioner in Loving County. Wheat had brought Tinsley home as Tinsley didn't own a car, and they were pals. We learned that Tinsley's father was in the hospital in Alpine where later on we were able to visit with him. Jim Wheat told us that he was a cousin to Will Fritz and once a year or so he would go to Dallas, kick up his heels and raise all kinds of ruckus, confident that Captain Fritz could get him out of any jam.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** You mentioned Loving County; I didn't think they had enough people in Loving County to have a commissioner.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well he was County Commissioner there but he actually lived in another County, it was probably in Odessa.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Loving County is population wise, the smallest county in the State.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Right. When you look on a map of Loving County you can identify see several oil fields; including one shown as the Wheat Oil Field. I believe it was owned by him or his family.

**DAVID BYRNES:** Mentone is the only town in Loving County.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, Mentone.

**DAVID BYRNES:** Know it well.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** David Byrnes in the background there. Any other stories as a Highway Patrolman you could relate? What made you decide to try to be a Ranger?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well, there were several things that motivated me. I enjoyed being a Highway Patrolman and I think just about everybody you ever talk to with DPS enjoyed their days in the Highway Patrol.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** With one exception which every.... I tell people every Ranger I've ever talked to is as proud of his Highway Patrol days as they are their Ranger days.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes. So anyhow I was enjoying just doing what I was doing. But you did take notice it when someone was promoted. Just like in Mesquite there I was living. I first met Glen Grayson at our Church when he working in a grocery supply house. Not long

afterwards, he went to work for the Mesquite Police Department. It wasn't too long before he made Sergeant, then two or three years later he was a Captain and then the next thing you know he's the Chief of Police. And here I've got the same job that I had before I knew him. So you take notice of that, and think well.... So I took a few promotional exams for Sergeant, didn't do too well, (even lost my mind for a time going through the process to be a narcotics agent). Fortunately I didn't make that. But then my eyes got set on the Rangers and I started taking the tests and after five times I finally made it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Any Rangers that really influenced you?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well Ed Gooding was one, because Roy Moody who broke me in on the Highway Patrol had worked partners with Ed in Baytown. He was one of the first ones that come to mind because anytime Ed would come through Brenham he'd stop and we'd have coffee. Then the first few months I was in Brenham there was a guy shot a deputy Sheriff and ran off in the woods. The incident took place in Somerville, which is North of Brenham in Burleson County. As a result there was a big manhunt; officers from several different agencies took part in the hunt for the suspect. Johnny Klevenhagen and Eddie Oliver, Rangers out of Houston joined in the search. Ranger Hollis Sillavan also was there. I think Hollis may have been stationed in Bryan but was still living at Burton, in Washington County. I got acquainted with Hollis before he became a Ranger. The more I was around the Rangers the more I was impressed with their type of work and that became my driving goal. And over course of time, I had become good friends with Charlie Moore and G. W. Burks.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Did you ever have any one on one so to speak with Klevenhagen?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No I didn't.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I know Jim Ray and we all know how he described him as...he'd never seen a man with a fire inside him like Johnny Klevenhagen had.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** After I became a Ranger and went to Houston, I got acquainted with his son.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who just passed away as well.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** He was the former Sheriff from Harris County.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** He was a Major in the Harris County Sheriff's office when I was there in 77 and 78. But even after he was Sheriff, I had retired and was in a meeting somewhere with him and he was just as common and as friendly as one could be. Of course I was a Ranger when we first met. Lot's of people, in fact most everybody, when you're a Ranger they know you; they're friendly and they want to be your friend.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah. When did you make Ranger?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** January 1, 1977 when it became effective.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And your first duty station?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It was Co. "A" in Houston.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And you want to tell us about your interview. Some of the questions.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Some of the questions, yes one of the difficult questions would be ah.... suppose you're in this little town...you're a Ranger, and you get called to a disturbance and you get to that disturbance and you see the Ranger Captain there having a drink. What are

you going to do? Actually, I now believe there's no right answer to that question. Because I've been carried down that path before, you think you gave a reasonable answer, and then they would change the story just enough that you realize you're boxed in. But you try to make the best of the situation. However, I always seem to make the situation worse. I might have been better off if I just said, if I see somebody there I'm just going to leave and let somebody else handle it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Or offer to buy him a drink. He's the Captain. And you related earlier another question you got asked about moving.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Oh yes. On every interview board, the question always came up, suppose you're promoted and your station is El Paso or Amarillo or some other distant location. Will your wife and family move with you? My answer was always, sure. But personally I wasn't so sure. I didn't really become convinced of that until after I moved to Houston. Happily, Peggy and my family did move to Houston in June after our oldest son graduated from high school.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** How long are you in Houston?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Fifteen months.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And who is your Captain?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Pete Rogers was the Ranger Captain and Grady Sessums was the Sergeant.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And then who become your Sergeant when Pete....when Grady moved up?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well Pete passed away around the first of February.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Was he still on active duty when he died?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes. Early part of February I believe, of 1978. And I don't recall if Bob Doherty was killed before or after ....

**DAVID BYRNES:** February of '78.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Alright, Captain Rogers died just before Doherty got killed. At the end of January Pete was in John Sealy Hospital at Galveston and they asked me to take his car book to him. I went to the hospital in Galveston and visited with the Captain. He filled out the car book or gave me the information needed to finish the monthly car book. He seemed to be O.K. just like he always had been, except he was in the hospital. But apparently he was in bad shape at that time, because he just lived a couple of days after that and he passed away. Grady Sessums became the acting Captain and was still in that capacity when I transferred out.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Can you tell us any cases ....what year was this again now?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It was in '78 when I left Company "A".

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Can you tell us some of your cases or anything about your Houston year?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, but let me go back, to one other question about the interview board....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** On one occasion Captain Butch Albers was on the interview board and he asked me a question.....right now I wish I could remember what his question was, but I thought it was a pretty serious question. And so I was struggling to give him the right answer. About half way into my answer it looked like Butch was counting the cracks in the ceiling and

wasn't paying a bit of attention to what I was saying. I went ahead and finished answering the question as best as I could, but of course I didn't make Ranger. I have often regretted not stomping my foot and saying; you asked the question, now listen to me. Maybe that's what he wanted me to do, I don't know. But anyhow, that's history now....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** No that's fine. Well you took the test five times; you were certainly determined, but any other cases or anything while you're in Houston?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes. On June 8, 1978, during my first week back at work after moving my wife and family to Houston, I initiated a missing person investigation that ironically brought to mind something I had mentioned earlier; will your wife move with you should you get this promotion? Peggy's recent move confirmed my standard answer to that question. But now I was confronted with another question. Why would a well educated and church going man in a fit of anger, kill his wife and then conceal the crime? This missing person investigation hinged on that question; will you move to Houston with me? Starting the investigation, I returned a phone call from Ranger Max Womack where he requested my assistance and gave a brief description of the missing person. Phyllis Holley Boyd was missing from Idabel, Oklahoma but had grown up in Clarksville. Max asked me to call Sheriff Averit Vaughan, at Clarksville in Red River County for more information. I remembered Averit from years earlier when he and Max had been Highway Patrol partners at Paris. I then called Averit, he said, "This is my predicament, Phyllis Holley Boyd grew up here and called her mother every day," but said, "For a week now her mother hasn't heard from her." He further said, "I've been up to their house in Idabel, Oklahoma and they have moved out," and said, "The house is clean as a pin." He said, "But that's not my

jurisdiction, but I just know that there's got to be some kind of foul play." However, he found out that her husband Monroe Buchanan Boyd Jr. had been seen but no one had seen his wife. Monroe Boyd had reportedly called the newspaper office in Idabel where Phyllis worked and said that she had gone to Dallas to look for another job. Yet, no one has seen or heard from her. However, someone did see him moving their furniture out of the house. They even found a piece of paper showing where he had been in Houston and had ordered a riding lawnmower from Sears Roebuck. So we think he might be coming to Houston. Sheriff Vaughan gave me the information shown on the sales receipt and also gave me an address of Monroe Boyd's aged grandmother. I located her and she was a lovely 83 year old lady. We had a great visit, she was a native Texan, yet I was the first Texas Ranger she'd ever met. She was very cooperative and I still have fond memories of our visit. In parting she said that's my grandson, but she had not recently heard from him. I then called Sears Roebuck and talked with Harvey Frost in loss prevention. Luckily, I found his name and number in a membership book from the Forgery Association of Texas, listing several police detectives and forgery investigators. Explaining the situation, Frost said, "All right, when he comes in we'll call you." Later, through a chance meeting with Detective Mack McGuire at the Bellaire Police Department, we discussed the Clarksville missing person investigation. He said, "You know, that's really odd, my Dad M. E. McGuire is the ex-sheriff of Red River County". However, he was not aware of the missing person case. But he did tell me that a body of an unidentified female had recently been found in Lake Livingston, and that her body was at the Harris County morgue. Cecil Wingo, Chief Investigator for the Harris County morgue later told me, "We think the lady may be 35 or 40 years old, although her body had been

in the water for several days”. He also gave me her physical description. I said, “My missing person is only 25, it may not be her.” He said, “Hold on,” and said, “You know sometimes we’re wrong; and do you have any dental records?” I said, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.” So anyhow, I called and talked to Averit Vaughan and asked, “Does this girl have any dental records?” “Yeah we do.” So I said, “Could you send those dental records down to the Harris County morgue.” So he said they would. Well I guess it was a day or two later when I get a call from Harvey Frost at Sears who said, “The man’s in town inquiring about his mower, but he wouldn’t tell us where he is at, however, this is his phone number.” Through the help of the Ranger office we called the phone company and we were able to trace the phone number. It was listed to an apartment just off of the North Freeway in Houston. A few minutes later, Cecil Wingo called and said that they had received Phyllis Boyd’s dental records and they matched the body at the morgue. I told him that we thought her husband might be in town and he suggested that if we found him we should bring him by the morgue to make a personal identification. Headed towards the suspect’s location, I thought I probably should get someone to go with me. However, Kelly Whitehead and Henry Manning were both out of town. I went by the DPS office looking for assistance. However, the only plains clothes officer there was a narcotics Sergeant. I told him I needed some help. He said, “All my men are tied up and I too, am busy.” So I got in the car radioed Jimmy Jacobs, my former Highway Patrol partner, now with DPS auto theft stationed in Houston. I spoke with him but he was 70 miles away. However, he said, “Charlie Cook should be back in the car in a few minutes.” At that time, Cook was the other DPS auto theft investigator stationed in Houston. (A year later he became a Ranger) In a little while Charlie was

back in his car. I radioed him and said, "Charlie, can you help me?" So Charlie met me and we went out to the apartment house. When we got there the suspect's car was parked nearby. We confirmed the identity of the suspects' car but found no one in the apartment. We located the manager of the apartments who said, "I'll tell you what, we can go over there as we need to change the filters in the air conditioner". "Ya'll follow us over there, the man renting the apartment works at the flea market across the street. We will call him and ask him to come home, so we can get into his apartment." He quickly came home and we asked him about his roommate. He didn't know much about the suspect except to say "He's down on his luck, and he's over there selling some of his furniture. I let him stay with me because he had no other place to live." We found the suspect, Monroe Buchanan Boyd at the flea market. He was very easily identified, although he gave us a bogus name. So I said, "I want you to go with me, there is someone I want you to see, come on get in the car." I didn't handcuff him because he was a small guy, but I gave him his Miranda warning. "Because you never know what might happen, I want you to know that anything you say or do can be held against you." So he got quiet for awhile and then on the way to the morgue, he said, "Who do you want me to see." I responded "You'll know when we get there." And then I'd ask him a few more questions, he'd answer them, then he'd say, "Wait a minute, you told me I didn't have to say anything." I said, "That's right, you don't have to say a word, there's just somebody I want you to see." But anyhow we kept that dialogue going until we got to the morgue. I had earlier called the morgue and told them we were on our way. When we got there Cecil Wingo met us and carried us down to the refrigeration unit where the body was kept. In short order, they brought her out and removed the sheet covering her body.

Immediately the suspect said, “That’s Phyllis, that’s Phyllis all right; now let’s get out of here.” I said “No wait a minute, let’s stay here and talk about it.” So pretty quick he begun to cry and said, “I did it, I couldn’t help it, I killed her.” He said they had got into an argument that turned violent *because he wanted to move to Houston but she would not agree to it*. Boyd said that she threw some things at him, leaving some whelps on his arms. Of course she was not around to tell her side of the story. According to the suspect, his father had been the electrician for the State Capitol in Austin where he grew up. The suspect also said that he had become an Eagle Scout and had also earned a degree in music from the University of Texas. He told me he had taught at a public school in Austin for a year or two, but because he had no forcefulness about him in commanding people, he lost this job. Subsequently, He found another job in Clarksville, teaching music there for two years and married Phyllis Holley. She was one of his first year students. The second year at Clarksville, his contract was not renewed, again it was because of his lack of forcefulness or possibly some other reason. Next he took a job teaching music in Idabel, Oklahoma only 30 miles away. This allowed Phyllis to live nearby and stay in daily contact with her mother. However, after two years in Idabel her husband again lost his job. This caused him to see a need to change professions. He told his wife that he wanted to move to Houston and start a new career in Landscaping. This caused a whirlwind of discussion between the two. On the eve of the crime, they went by the First Baptist Church in Idabel to deliver a birthday gift for the choir director where they both sang in the choir, but didn’t stay for Church. Going home the dispute escalated resulting in a bitter and deadly argument. He persisted in wanting to move but she refused to move that far away. As the evening wore on the argument continued becoming

combative and violent. According to him, she threw some things at him leaving some whelps on his arms. As the battle continued he became infuriated, picking up an iron skillet he hit her on the head killing her. In panic and shock he decided to conceal his crime and dispose of her body. Then he thoroughly cleaned the house and wrapped her body up like a piece of meat; I mean he did a good job cleaning the house and wrapping her body up. Afterwards, he remembered that during their marriage they had been to Lake Livingston where she fell in love with the peacefulness and serenity of the Lake. So he hauled her to Lake Livingston, rented a boat, went out in the middle of the lake and dropped her body off, just chunked it off, didn't put a weight on it. Went back in and docked the boat, got in his car, returning to Oklahoma by way of Houston. While in Houston, he ordered a lawnmower and bought a trailer. He got back to Idabel and loaded all his furniture on the trailer. However, he was not good at loading furniture as some of it fell off and that's how they found the Sears sales receipt showing where he had ordered the mower. He left Idabel that night going through Arkansas where the police stopped him because he didn't have a light on his trailer. He convinced them he couldn't pay a ticket. He also told them that he was tired and didn't have a place to sleep, so they let him sleep in their jail. The next morning he proceeded to Houston and found a place to stay. Unfortunately, he had already sold the skillet before we arrested him at the flea market. But anyhow, after he confessed, I put him in the Harris County jail and because I didn't have a warrant for him, and because the crime didn't occur in Harris County; I had a little trouble getting him incarcerated. I did carry him before a JP that I knew that would be cooperative. Because he was not handcuffed, I recall that those ladies who typed out the arrest information became very anxious about their safety.

However, the suspect was small in stature and very cooperative. After a very long day, I finally got him put in jail and I said, "I need a statement from you." And he said, "Just give me a pencil and some paper and I'll fix it up." I thought, I don't know if this is a good idea or not. But he convinced me to do it, so I gave him the pencil and paper and went home to get some rest. I went back the next morning and he had completed his written statement, even though a lot of his fellow inmates tried to tell him not to do it. After his statement was typed, properly signed and witnessed I took him to Livingston and put him in the Polk County jail since that's where the body was found.

The next morning, Polk County Sheriff Joe Nettles, put the suspect in his car and said, "We need to find out where you put that body." We got in the Sheriff's car and drove towards the Lake ignoring the turn off to boat rental area and was going at a fast rate of speed as we were passing the turn off. The suspect said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you're going too far, you need to turn there." Of course the Sheriff knew where he was supposed to turn, but he wanted Boyd to tell him without being coached. Unknown to Boyd, after he dumped the body in the lake, it floated right back into that same boat house where he had rented the boat, apparently following the wake left by his boat; and this is where the body was found. Subsequently, I got a subpoena to testify against Boyd in Idabel, Oklahoma. However, just as I was ready to leave I got a phone call notifying me that Mr. Boyd had pled guilty to a life sentence and my services would not be needed.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well you said there were three of you in Houston, three Rangers, who were the other two?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Kelly Whitehead and Henry Manning.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And they're both gone now.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Both are now dead.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Kelly Whitehead was a Highway Patrolman up in Marshall for awhile. So he's got some people still live up there.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I never knew him, but I know Ed Gooding thought the world of him.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Highway Patrol in Pecos and Midlothian too.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** He was?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, sure was. *But you are probably thinking of Ranger Kelly Rogers who at time was stationed in Amarillo.*

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** That's right Kelly and ED were partners up in Amarillo, when Ed went up there. Ed said he had a major heart attack and he thought he was dying. But he'd just got to Amarillo, Ed had a massive heart attack and he called Kelly and said, "Where is the place where's there a doctor." And he said, "I hadn't hung up the phone when Kelly was coming in my door." Anyway, do you have any more on your Houston years?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** The Boyd murder case was probably the highlight of my Houston years. The working conditions were great and Grady Sessums was a prince of a guy; most of my dealings were with Grady, even though I had great relations with Captain Rogers. I thought a lot

of him. One day, Grady told me, “We realize that you’re from North Texas, we appreciate the job your doing.” And said, “At some point you may want to go back home and if you do, it’s not going to hurt our feelings one bit, so just don’t be afraid, to ask for a transfer because we want what’s best for you.”

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Did you work Galveston any, or was that part of your territory?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I worked quite a bit in Galveston County. I worked in one little bitty town just inside Galveston County, can’t recall the name of it, probably had a about a six man police department. We had a call that there was money missing from the police department, so I start an investigation and pretty quick the Chief of Police disappears. Through our investigation we find out he’s the likely culprit. Captain J. D. Erwin with the Galveston County Sheriff’s office teamed up with me and we wound up finding the ex-chief in Orange County, California where he was arrested. We flew out there to Orange County and spent the night, toured the town a little bit before we went to the jail and picked him up and flew back. A lot of fun going out there. We even flew first class because Erwin knew someone in authority. On the way back we had the prisoner handcuffed to us and so it wasn’t much fun coming back. Even though he’d been a Police Chief, a small town Police Chief, he was tried and convicted.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** The opportunity arose for you to transfer back to Dallas?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** This would have been in what....’79 or ’80?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It would have been in March of ’78.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** ’78.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** In fact I had talked to Captain Burks about filling Red Arnold's slot when he retired. I believe he was scheduled to retire on May 1 of '78. Captain Burks told me that other people had asked for his station, but said I could have it. Some time afterwards I spoke with Captain Rogers about my conversation with Captain Burks. Although Sergeant Sessums had assured me that it would not hurt their feelings, I think Captain Rogers did get his feelings hurt when I told him about my conversation with Captain Burks. This took place around Christmas when I'd only been in Co. "A" for almost a year. But as it turned out Bobby Doherty got killed during a Denton County Narcotics Raid in February of '78. I remember that James Moses was a (DPS) helicopter pilot in Houston and through arrangement flew me to Fort Worth to go to Bobby's funeral. There could have been somebody else aboard, but off hand, I don't remember. I saw Captain Burks at the funeral and he said, "This is not the time to talk about it," but said, "I want you to replace Doherty."

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well were you close to Doherty?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Not really. Doherty went to work for DPS a year or two after me. We first became acquainted when he was stationed at Wharton. One time he had sent a request for holiday leave to the district office in Houston. It was approved, but instead of sending it back to him they sent it to me in Brenham. When I found it in my mailbox I sent it on to him with my remarks saying this has gone through the proper channels; you now have my approval. Go ahead and enjoy your time off.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What were you just going to his funeral representing Company A?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah. And Charlie Neal had driven up there and I rode with him from the church to the gravesite. Glenn Elliott might have been in the car with us. The procession must have been seven or eight miles long with 400 or more cars. I don't know what part of the procession we were in, but three of us were in the back seat and Charlie was paying more attention to us than he was to his driving, but as we inched along, he'd always stop just at the right time, I guess he had above average peripheral vision, but I was eatin' that back seat up.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** So you transferred to Denton?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Actually I got to go right back to Mesquite ....well there's a story behind that too. Our daughter Sherri, her husband Billy and their baby girl Karri was living in our home so we had to quickly look for another place to live. I came to Dallas around the first of March to talk with Captain Burks. He said, "I want you back by the 15<sup>th</sup> of March." I said okay, even though I wasn't prepared to move that quick. But before I finish explaining my transfer to Dallas, I want to share another Houston story when I had only been there a short time. It happened before my wife joined me. Skippy Rundell was the Assistant Senior Captain and was in Houston and says, "Ralph, what kind of work does your wife do?" I said, "She works as a teacher aide in the Mesquite School District." He said, "Do you think she wants to work here." I said, "Well yeah I think she would." He said, "Well go see my friend Wayne Scharper, at Spring Branch High School, he's the principal." He started to give me his phone number but said, "Oh better than that, let me call him." So he picked up the phone and talked to the principal and then he said, "He wants to talk to you." So he introduced himself to me over the phone, and said, "I'm going to send you an application," but said, "When your wife gets here she's got a job." So that's

how easy it was for Peggy to get a job. True to his word, Wayne hired Peggy and she was put in charge of the books assigned to the students. She enjoyed her work and her pay helped put groceries on our table. Now, getting back to your question, I went to Dallas around the first of March of '78, and learned that I only had two weeks before I had to be there. Our daughter and son-in-law were living in our home and we did not want to evict them, so I started looking for a place to rent. I found an apartment in Mesquite, but it didn't have washer and dryer connections, but I rented it anyhow, and put down a deposit. I went back to Houston but caught a lot of flack from Peggy because I had rented the apartment without a washer and dryer. She emphasized how I should have known how badly she needed a washer and dryer and that flack continued until we made the move. Kelly Whitehead and his son Michael helped us load our furniture onto a truck that J. H. Rose provided at no cost to Rangers, or well to anyone in DPS. Anyhow, we loaded the truck and the driver said I can be in Mesquite in at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Then I gave him the address of the apartment where we would meet. Well I went over there that morning after enlisting Jim Bryan, a Highway Patrolman, to go with me to help unload our furniture. I may have enlisted Hurschel Jacks too, I don't remember. But anyhow, I went in and told them I was there to take possession of the apartment. They gave me the keys and I went over there and I unlocked the place. But oh there was a strong odor in the apartment that would knock you down, flat knock you down. So anyhow, I turned around and went back and I said, "Lady I don't know, I may lose my deposit, but I'm not taking that apartment, because the odor in there is terrible." So she said, "I understand." She reached in her desk, and returned my check; she just gave it to me. So anyhow, I left Jim Bryan there and I said, "When J. H. Rose gets here...or his truck, tell

him to hang on and I'm going to find another place." So I went back to the Ranger office not sure of what I should do. Mary Frances Witherspoon the Ranger secretary and her husband had just bought a new home. They had been living in a townhouse located behind the Mesquite golf course and it was now vacant. It seemed like it took me almost two hours to convince Mary Frances that it would be alright for us to move into her town home. I didn't get on my knees, but I would have, but anyhow she finally consented and got me out of my predicament. It was a lovely townhouse and we lived there about six months. Then, our daughter and son-in-law found them a house to buy and we moved back to our home. Mary Frances and her husband sold the town house right after we moved out, so it worked out good for them and us too.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** You insinuating Mary Frances kind of ruled the roost?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** She did, absolutely, yeah, she had her way.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I kind of heard that in other places.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Tell us about some of your work in Dallas.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well I got there in the middle of March. I felt very fortunate to be a Ranger in Co "B ". However, initially it wasn't the same; some of it could have just been my feelings or imagination, in Houston working conditions were so good that I just felt like anything I did was alright.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well let me interrupt you....or go ahead, finish that statement and then I've got something I want to interrupt back on.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Okay. But it wasn't long before I felt like I had made a mistake by moving back to Dallas. Because it seemed like I was being watched by everyone and especially by Mary Frances and Captain Burks. On several occasions I'd work eight or ten hours and go back by the office late in the evening. Captain Burks would be there, and he'd say, "Before you go home would you go down to Wills Point (or some other place) and check this out." "Yes sir." I'd go to Wills Point, or always accomplish whatever I was sent to do. That happened on several occasions. This led me to believe something's not right here; it was not a good feeling and unlike what it was like in Houston. After six months in Co. "B" everything improved and then I couldn't do anything wrong.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who was your Sergeant?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Lester Robertson was my Sergeant.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Lester Robertson.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes sir.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Was your duty station Denton or Dallas?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** In Dallas, actually Garland was my station.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who did you replace?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** My assignment was Denton County, Tarrant County, and some of Dallas County. I didn't do much work in Tarrant County but I did a lot of work in Denton County.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Okay, so you did succeed Doherty?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well had he officed in Dallas or Fort Worth?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** In Fort Worth.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Fort Worth.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah. And he spent a lot of time in Denton County, but he also worked some in Tarrant County. But at that time John Hogg and Tom Arnold were both in Tarrant County.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Tom Arnold.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Oh Tom, yeah.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, I think the reason my assignment included Tarrant County was because Bob Doherty had been living there. So it was just easier to say I'm replacing Doherty rather than saying I'm putting a third man in Dallas.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Who were the other two in Dallas with you?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Charlie Moore and George Brakefield.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Could you relate some of your cases?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** The first one that comes to mind happened around the first of June; my family had been to the Ranger cabin and spent two or three days at Lake of the Pines.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Up on Lake O' Pines.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** The minute I got home, Lester Robertson called me, said there'd been a murder at Highland Village in Denton County. A high school senior had been raped and murdered. So I started an investigation and teamed up with Captain Dwight Crawford with the

Denton County Sheriff's office. We worked on it a good while and wound up arresting John McCrory. He was charged with capital murder and thought we had a good case. There was a change of venue on it, and we had to go to Wichita Falls where it was tried. He was convicted and given the death sentence. But on appeal there was some problems with some of the paperwork, so he wound up serving about seven years and was turned loose.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What kind of problems with the paperwork?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well part of it was about his Miranda Warning. I read the warning to him before he ever gave a statement, and then after the statement was completed, I told him to read the statement and read it out loud while I tape recorded it. Well the heading up there, he didn't think was important and at the time, I didn't think it was important, so he just started reading it down from, "My name is John McCrory," and read through the statement. Well that came out in the trial, but the jury didn't think it was anything of consequence, but the appellate court did, they said, he should have read that top part too.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And they let him go on that?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Let him go. Later on after I had retired McCrory was arrested for aggravated rape in Taylor County. I went to Abilene and testified regarding his character. I don't remember the outcome of the Abilene trial but I believe he was convicted.

There were a number of other significant cases that I worked. One kidnap, robbery, murder case out of Gulfport comes to mind. Around Thanksgiving in 1982, I remember seeing a teletype message sent to all stations by Gulfport police: regarding Arthur Miller Clark, a 69 year old man missing from Gulfport, Mississippi. He was last seen in Dallas on 9-27-82 when he withdrew

\$90,000 from a bank in Dallas and disappeared. Additional information indicated that Clark had been murdered and his body had been discarded or buried in a wooded area off the highway between Dallas and Houston.

Then in early January 1983, Detective Steve Ford, Gulfport PD called the Ranger office in Garland seeking our assistance. He said, "I'm coming to Dallas and need some help. I'm investigating the disappearance of Arthur Clark who was in Dallas, withdrew \$90,000 and disappeared." One week later, Ford came to Dallas. Together, we went to Banc Texas in downtown Dallas where Clark had withdrawn his funds. We spoke with Bill Scott, the Bank Security Officer. Scott and other bank personnel said, "Yeah, we remember that gentleman." Said, "There was a young man with him and he identified the young man as his grandson, they were jolly and friendly." and, "It took us about thirty minutes get the money together because they wanted it all in cash with \$100 dollar bills." They said Clark placed the money in his briefcase without verifying the amount. The Bank gave us their videotape of the transaction, however it had no sound to it, but there was no apparent sign of duress between the old man and the young man. Clark did not have a grandson, but for reasons unknown ....he'd been at the bank with a young man subsequently identified as Michael D. Higgins. On the same day, Clark's credit card had been used three times; once to purchase a briefcase for \$90.00 at Stewart Office Supply across the street from the Bank. We located the sales clerk, who actually filled out the sales slip, but he didn't remember anything. Then we found a Texaco service station where the card was used to buy a car battery. However, we didn't learn anything there. We then went to a

Target Store in Dallas where someone had made another credit card purchase and only to learn that the card had been used to buy two shovels. We worked together for two days, following up on all leads before Ford returned home. It was later learned that two brothers had accompanied Higgins and Clark on their trip to Dallas, and all four had spent the night at a Holiday Inn on N. Central Expressway. The two were subsequently identified as 22 year old Jimmy Dean McCollough, and his 19 year old brother John Roland McCollough. Then in early April, an informant confirmed the report that Clark, Higgins and the McCollough brothers had traveled to Dallas in Clark's Plymouth Volaire. During the trip, the suspects talked about killing Clark but he thought they would let him go after they got his money. About this time, Detective Ford learned that Jimmy McCollough had spouted off in an Alabama bar talking about how he had killed Mr. Clark as they were traveling toward Houston. Supposedly, Jimmy had strangled Clark with a necktie, and then put his false teeth in a sock and threw them out the window. After receiving this information, I called Raymond Lewis, the supervisor with the Highway Department in Corsicana and said, "Has any of your men found some false teeth on the side of the road?"

And Lewis said, "No," but, "If they did, they would likely wind up in somebody's lunch box." He said, "But I will ask them." In about thirty minutes Lewis called me back and said, "You know, one of my guys reported seeing some false teeth a few miles south of Corsicana in Navarro County," but, "He just threw them back down." and said, "We will go back out there to see if we can find them." Luckily, they found the false teeth and I took them to Dr. Jim B. Hales,

a forensic Dentist who subsequently identified them as belonging to the victim. A few days later, Sgt. John Boone with the police department in Mobile, Alabama arrested Higgins for Loitering. He had no means of support and was placed in the city jail. He was unable to post a bond set at 100 dollars. The next day Higgins admitted to Sgt. Boone that he had been with Arthur Clark when he was killed in Texas. Higgins was driving and Clark was in the right front seat of his car; the McCollough's were in the back seat. Somewhere, between Dallas and Houston while headed South, Higgins said that Jimmy McCollough put a necktie around Clark's neck and choked him to death. Afterwards, they buried him in a clump of trees at the end of a long dirt road off of the highway. Jimmy put Clark's false teeth in a sock and threw them out. After taking Higgins statement, Mobile PD made efforts to convince Higgins that Arthur Clark needed a proper burial and that his body should be located and returned to the family. Higgins finally agreed to return to Texas and assist authorities only if a CID officer from Mobile PD would travel to Texas with him. Mobile PD called the Ranger office in Garland with this information. In response, DPS pilot Bill Isbell and I flew to Mobile. Detective John Boone and other police officers met us at the airport. Sgt. Boone agreed to return with us to aid in the investigation. Higgins was trying to help us and help himself, but it was the second time he had been out of Alabama. Arriving in Dallas Sgt. Boone, Higgins and I headed south and discovered that all freeways' look pretty much alike. Higgins was trying to help us find the location where they had buried the victim. We drove about 100 miles checking every side road between Dallas and Centerville. Initially, we found a likely spot near Corsicana, then another, without success. We knew where the teeth had been found, so we started looking in that general area. We didn't know exactly where he was killed; only that he

had been buried in a clump of trees at the end of a long dirt road off of the Freeway somewhere between Dallas and Houston. Higgins described a generic description of where they had buried the body but it didn't help. We made a diligent search in two or three likely looking locations in Navarro County without success and then Sgt. Boone returned home. Afterwards, I teamed up with Sgt. Victor Freeze, a Navarro County Deputy Sheriff and continued the investigation. Based on the information we had developed Navarro County issued felony arrest warrants for the two McCollough brothers. Alabama authorities quickly arrested Jimmy D. and John R. McCollough. Sgt. Freeze and I wound up flying to Mobile, Alabama; waiving extradition we brought the McCollough brothers back to Navarro County. They had killed Mr. Clark and buried him in the woods then went to Houston, where each of the three suspects's bought a Corvette with Mr. Clark's money. They drove back to Alabama and just had a heck of a time as long as the money lasted. Back in Navarro County, the McCollough's went with us one at a time to help us find the place where they'd actually buried Clark. After considerable efforts, we located the burial spot in Leon County. There we found a creek bed with loose sand covered by standing water. We didn't make much headway. A tractor with a forklift was used, but all we could do was stir up the sand and water. We decided to wait until the creek dried up. About six months later we went back to this location and recovered Clark's body. But before that ever happened we were able to convict the two brothers of murder and they got 60 years each in the penitentiary. We used Higgins as a vital witness so he was not charged him in state court, however the FBI filed federal charges against him and for his part he was sentenced to 10 years, all prior to finding the body. Finally,

about six months after the suspects were each convicted; we found and recovered the body of Arthur Miller Clark closing our investigation. A real interesting case.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Did you work the Lone Star Steel strike, or was that was long before you ever came over there?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I didn't have anything to do with that.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well as a Highway Patrolman, did you work over there any?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Was G. W. your last Captain?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** You retired before David and James came along.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No, James was my Sergeant.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Lester Robertson.....

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Lester was the Sergeant when I got there but at some point, G. W. put Charlie Moore in as acting Sergeant prior to Lester's retirement.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I've heard that he didn't care much for Lester.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I know Lewis Rigler to this day is very bitter, in fact I read a letter he wrote Glenn about some Rangers that, you know, where they'd passed and where they were buried. And I remember, he said, "I don't know where G. W. is buried and I don't give a damn."

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, G. W. he could be as mean as a snake if he wanted to be.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And Lewis didn't like him at all.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And the main reason Lewis didn't like him was because the way he treated Lester, cause Lester and Lewis were real tight.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Well Lester was a good man; he was like a lot of us, the older you get sometimes you're not as sharp as you once were. But he was a good guy. Now let me tell you about another murder case that I found most interesting, it started off when three suspects kidnapped a banker demanding ransom money. The FBI handled it along with the Dallas police. But the story that got out and I think it was based on truth, when the crime was reported the FBI had a malfunction with their electronic gate and they couldn't get their cars out of the garage. So they didn't respond as fast as they would have otherwise. I was told that the suspects were kind of ingenious; they had cut a hole in the floorboard of a car and parked it over a manhole cover. They forced the banker go to the bank and get a bundle of money and he was told to put it in a City of Dallas garbage can. It turns out the garbage can had the bottom cut out and was sitting over another manhole. While the bank president's family was being held hostage he obtained the ransom money and as directed placed it in the fake barrel. A suspect waiting underground got the money, climbed through the manhole into the parked car making his get-a-way. Much later the FBI got me involved after they had arrested the three suspects; Steven Scott Nail and two brothers; Michael Ray Moore and Larry Paul Moore. All three were subsequently charged with the crimes. One of the suspect's, Steven Scott Nail in trying to win some favor said to his attorney "If I tell the authorities about a murder committed by Michael Ray and Larry Paul Moore; will it help me?" This information was fed to the Rangers and I got assigned to it. Nail's

attorney lived in Fort Worth and I met with him to discuss the statement. He was pretty coy about his client and didn't want to give up anything without getting something in exchange. Well I couldn't offer him anything although the attorney did allow Nail to show us where the body had been buried. The murder had occurred in Mesquite and they buried the victim in an isolated and wooded area. I teamed up with Detective Gary Westphal with Mesquite Police and following Nail's direction we found the shallow grave. The burial site was in Dallas County near the Ellis County line, and just East of I-45. We recovered the body and his wallet was still in his pants making it easy to identify the victim as Linton Mulder. His two older brothers were convicted robbers and I'd dwelt with them before. But I didn't know Linton. He was killed while trying to peddle some stolen jewelry. The two Moore brothers reportedly told Linton to shown them the stolen jewelry. So as he bent over to show the merchandise, one of the brothers used a hammer and hit him on the head causing his death. That was an unusual case.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What was your most satisfying case? If there was one in particular.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It was probably the missing person case out of Gulfport, Mississippi. It involved several jurisdictions and we received full cooperation from many different agencies. Arthur Clark had worked for several years in Dallas. He was a native of Gulfport, Mississippi and from a family of some stature. But after he retired he moved back to Gulfport where he frequented a pancake house. He got acquainted with Michael Higgins, a 19 year old fry cook who worked at the pancake house. After a period of time, Higgins and his two buddies decided to kidnap him, so they forced him to drive to Dallas where he withdrew his money. He probably thought once he gave them the money they'd let him go. It was not an unusual case because it

could have been handled by anybody. However, since it became a multi-state crime several months passed by as the facts were being assembled. I remembered reading the teletype alert in November; However, it was not until January when Steve Ford called me that an investigation was initiated. Later on, we learned that Dallas police had a checked out two or three leads but suspended their investigation with nothing else of significance to work on. This is not unusual, whenever you have a heavy work load. It was real satisfying case because of the combined investigative work by the aforementioned police officers. The case was resolved and the suspects were convicted of the crime. A humorous incident happened while we were digging in Leon County. Sheriff Royce Wilson called Ranger Bob Connell who worked that area called him up and said, "Bob, you need to get over here." So Bob showed up while trustees from the Leon County jail were digging with shovels and getting very dirty. And he said, "Bob the reason I called you over here," is this "Ralph has a new car and he doesn't want to get it dirty." "We want you to take the trustees back to the jail".

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Probably didn't like that did he.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Of course he didn't do it; but it added a little humor to our situation. Besides, the County's Van was there to carry them back.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What would you call your most frustrating case?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I worked the Phillip Roberts missing person case out of Van Zandt County. After his disappearance we learned that he had threatened suicide on two separate occasions. And he may have committed suicide, but usually when a person commits suicide they're making a statement. Yet his body was never found. His ex-wife had argued with him

regarding custody of their daughter and threatened to even with him. Although lately life was beginning to get better for Roberts and he had recently got a new job. He had married again, to a much younger woman, and they had a small child. He had got a job at Holly Ranch close to Tyler. The morning Roberts disappeared he had worked an overnight shift and was on his way home stopping in Fruitvale to buy gas but was not seen again. Two or three days later his abandoned car was found in the woods off the county road towards his house. Van Zandt County Sheriff Travis Schafer investigated the case and called it a suicide because Roberts' had threatened suicide once before. I spoke with Roberts's brother and he too had heard Phillip threaten suicide on yet another occasion. The ex-wife made her threat to get even with him because of an on-going child custody dispute. They often battled regarding the shared custody of their 10 or 11 year old daughter. However, to cloud the situation, we learned that the ex-wife had also married again. But her second husband had died under mysterious circumstances. She and her second husband were living in Carrollton when the police responded to his reported suicide. She told them he was despondent over his mothers' suicide from exactly one year earlier. Seemingly, the police and medical examiner agreed with the death by suicide. Apparently, they had insufficient leads to complete an ideal investigation. Her second husband supposedly took his life around midnight while she went to the store to get some shampoo. When she returned she thought he had gone to sleep on their couch. However, according to her story, she tried to wake him up and discovered that he had shot himself in the head.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** According to her.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes and their house burned before I began my investigation, so it appeared that the woman had something to do with the death of both husbands. But I could never prove it as my investigation was stymied and incomplete. Of course, Roberts' might well have committed suicide, but like I mentioned before, usually when a person commits suicide they're making a statement and they want to be found. Roberts has never been found; and in fact, he is still listed on the (DPS) missing person's roster. About two years after Roberts' disappeared and at the family's insistence, and through their civil attorneys; I gave a 40 page deposition regarding my investigation so they could petition the district court in Van Zandt County to have him declared legally dead. There was some concern for his young wife and small child who would qualify for death benefits. And as long as he was missing they couldn't do it, but if he's dead they could, so Roberts' was legally declared dead based on my investigation. But he was never found. So that was very frustrating.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I've been told by various Rangers in law enforcement that suicides, between a man and a woman, they are totally different. You know a man just takes a shotgun blows his brains out and that's the end of it. But women typically, they'll go get their hair fixed and they'll get their nails done and then they'll usually if they....they won't ever shot themselves in the head or the face, and they'll get in the bathtub or they'll lay some old quilt or plastic up on the bed cause they don't want to mess things up. Where you know, like I said, a man he just puts a shotgun to his head and blow it off.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** And the bad thing about suicide is that surviving family members never want to believe it's a suicide. Even when hard evidence is found yet in many cases the hard evidence is not there, and it's hard to know their intentions.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** You know Max Womack's brother-in-law committed suicide, and it was particularly nasty, he just stepped inside the door and pew with a shotgun. And in fact Max's sister is a survivor of the New London school explosion and I've really got to know her. She is Max's sister and it was her husband. She's been eternally grateful for Billy Crawford, she lives in Henderson and Billy came down there, after it was all done, and cleaned it up and everything for her.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** There's one other case that I worked on quite a bit, even though I had a lot of help. In fact at the trial I counted up all my time found that I had actually worked 44 days on this investigation. Kay Wallace a housewife from Sulphur Springs had been reported missing. Her car was found in Rockwall County out of gas and headed back toward Sulphur Springs. Her husband had reported her missing, and then later on he and their four kids drove towards Dallas looking for her. They found the car and reported foul play. He said she'd gone to Dallas to shop or whatever and disappeared. Fred Cummings was working with me at that time and we met the suspect, Billy Don Wallace at the Sheriff's office in Rockwall. At that time Wallace was 38 years old but his Daddy hovered over him like he was a teenager. Initially, I thought he was only trying to comfort and support his son. Later on those thoughts were reversed. Our first interview with him was complicated due to several factors. The Rockwall Sheriff's office was very small with the dispatcher taking up one fourth of the office. There was

little space left to interview or interrogate suspects. It just wasn't a good situation. Afterwards, on numerous occasions when we tried to talk to the suspect his protective daddy was present. Eventually, we obtained consent to search his house. Nothing unusual was found except a wet spot on a mattress. I didn't think too much about it as they had four small children and one was a small child. In retrospect, he apparently had killed his wife on this bed and the bed may have been wet from cleaning up some evidence. With nothing more to go on, he agreed to take a polygraph exam. However, on the day he was to take the polygraph his house caught on fire and he didn't show up for the polygraph. Several months later, Jessie Shaw admitted his part in the murder and led us to where they had buried body. Subsequently, we arrested Billy Don Wallace for killing his wife.

The local newspaper ran a picture of three Texas Rangers, me, Fred Cummings, and Lloyd Johnson, taking Wallace who is 5'8", 137 lbs to the county jail. Jessie Shaw pled guilty for his part in the crime and was sentenced to 60 years in prison. On a change of venue, the murder charge against Wallace was tried in Delta County where they convicted and sentenced him to life in prison.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Tell me about your involvement in the Amy McNiel kidnapping.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Okay, this is an interesting case too. Sergeant James Wright, called me and assigned me to work with (DPS pilot) Reggie Rhea. We were to go to Alvarado and do whatever was necessary in the kidnapping of Amy McNiel. The kidnapping had happened day and a half before and ah.....

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Amy McNiel was about ten years old at the time.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** This would have been around noon on a Saturday. I met Reggie at the Mesquite Airport that afternoon and we flew over to an airport between **Fort** Worth and Alvarado. Rangers Jack Morton and Stan Guffey met us there.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Stan Guffey?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes Stan Guffey, they took us to Alvarado where we met with Captain Bob Mitchell and received our assignment. Mr. McNiel had obtained the ransom money and would be following directions from the kidnapers. Initially he was told him to go north on I-35 to **Fort** Worth and then east on I-30 to Dallas. At that time, pilot Reggie Rhea, myself and Stan Guffey got in the airplane. Stan was in the front of the airplane with Reggie. I was seated behind Reggie as I had been appointed as the aircraft observer and communicator between ground units. Reggie would fly the plane at an angle where I could have a good view of the vehicle movements. I felt sorry for Stan because his vision was hampered due to the angle of flight. For the most part, all he could see was the darkness of the sky. So it had to have been a real boring night for him. Yet, my vision was unrestricted and the action kept me very busy. One of Mr. McNiel's tail lights was disconnected so that we could distinguish between his car and the other cars. He made his first stop at Jim Miller and Interstate 30 in Dallas, McNiel got a phone call from the suspects and new directions. We then we flew on to Tyler where McNiel was to receive another phone call. Once there and while he was waiting for that phone call we flew to Pounds Field near Tyler and refueled the aircra**Fort** When the phone call came in he got more orders from the suspects and we followed McNiel to Mount Pleasant.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Helicopters, were they in the air also?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I don't think Helicopters were used. However, I was more concerned with the ground units but I knew the FBI also had their aircraft in the area.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What kind of car was McNiel driving?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I don't remember, but it was a big limousine.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Wouldn't that be kind of odd, using a limousine for a kidnapping?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah it would be kind of an unusual car. Maybe, he was told to drive that car, I don't know. But apparently they had driven by his home, and knew what kind of car he had. I don't know if this is the car they normally use or if it was a family car they only used on special occasions. If so, it may have not been maintained as well as the car they drove everyday.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And it broke down.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes it broke down.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** But the kidnappers told him to drive the limo?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Apparently, but, I don't know all the details. McNiel was late arriving at the abandoned service station east of Mount Pleasant. He was told to stand by the phone booth and wait. For a time there were no phone calls and nothing unusual was going on. During the lull in activity, we returned to Pounds Field and refueled the aircraft. We returned quickly and learned that nothing had happened during our absence. Suddenly, Aycock and Foster spotted the kidnappers driving slowly near the service station.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And you got Aycock and Foster.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Johnny Aycock and Brantley Foster were near the service station and had it under surveillance.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And it was cool that night.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, I had a much better job than they had.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** They were out there on the ground weren't they?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** They were on the ground.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** In sleeping bags, because it was bitterly cold.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Joe Wilie and Jim Ray were close by in their car and the first unit to close in on the suspects who shot at them.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Jimmy Ray.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Jimmy Ray, yeah, got their radiator shot out. I think their windshield was also damaged. I'm not sure just how, but the gun shots disabled their car. Other ground units took up the case and finally stopped them near Saltillo in Hopkins County. From the air, I had a ringside view; a few days later, it was told that I communicated by radio that it was a hell of a gun fight. I could see the muzzle fire clearly but was unable to help.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Slick Alfred and Johnny Waltrip were in one car and John Dendy and Bill Gunn was in the other car.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, it was an awesome feeling.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** And all you could do was sit and watch.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** But it turned out good.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Turned out good, it sure did.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Going back in the time, did you ever use the Merry-go-round?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What about any other cases?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** There was one that I helped Mesquite Police with an investigation where we found two bodies in a Kaufman County well. One of the victims was the suspect's father and another one was a former associate. Detective Don Robertson and I teamed up on this investigation. After finding the well, Bill Lene' with the medical examiners office in Dallas volunteered to go in the well. John Raymond Briggs volunteered the use of his wrecker. We used the winch on the wrecker to lower Lene' down into the well. But found the bodies but first had to remove some debris. One of the victims had been in the well for over a year. The suspect had put lime over the bodies thinking that the lime would eat the bodies up, but it did more to help protect them. But I guess it did help to keep the smell down.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** That was here in Kaufman County?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** In Kaufman County, on the south side of Interstate 20 and FM 429. His grandparents had lived there when he was a child. We filed the case in Kaufman County and thought we were ready to go to trial. However, on the eighty-ninth day the Kaufman Co. D. A. called us and said, "Hey this case needs to be tried in Dallas where the murder occurred". Detective Robertson and I stayed up all night, revising our report so we could file charges in Dallas County. Getting the paperwork done, we met the 90 day deadline and filed two counts of murder against the suspect. At his trial, he was convicted and sent to prison for life.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** But the lime didn't eat the body up?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** No, the torso was still intact on both bodies.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Any other cases?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes there were a whole lot of them. But one other situation comes to mind. It was not unusual for me to work all week and on then on Friday afternoon an officer would call wanting my assistance. I never turned anyone down. Yet from my perspective, when I wanted help, I needed it now; not next week. Although, in the back of my mind, I felt some who chose to work on weekends had already had a day off and was unaware that I had already worked 50 or more hours. It did take away time from my family but I never turned anybody down; I always worked and enjoyed every minute of it. On one occasion a Deputy Sheriff from Flagstaff, Arizona showed up in Dallas without notice. He was working a case where a police officer had been shot. And as I recall it was around noon on a Friday when we got together. He needed to locate and interview several individuals. That night by midnight, we'd rounded up just about everybody and he was ready to go back to Flagstaff. It was interesting work but it was very time consuming.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** When did you retire?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** August 31, 1985.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What made you decide to retire?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Jim Baker a former Dallas Police Officer wanted me to work for him. He was now the Corporate Security Director for Sunbelt Savings and he wanted me to retire to be his Chief Investigator. Sunbelt was in an expansion mode and buying more Savings and

Loans. He said, "I need you to help me over there." And on two or three different occasions he would approach me and say, "I need you now." Finally, I agreed to do that, but about the same time, I got involved in a robbery investigation; actually it was a burglary and a robbery at the same time. A group of people went through the ceiling at a jewelry store in Arlington intending to burglarize the jewelry store. But the manager was still there, so they tied him up and stole all the jewelry. I became involved after an informant identified a piece of the stolen jewelry that was in a suspect's motor home. He provided an accurate description for some of the stolen jewelry, and said it was in the motor home two days after the robbery. The informant came forward about two days later allowing me to obtain a search warrant for the motor home as well as the suspect's home. Arlington police teamed up with me on this investigation. We went to his home in Garland and with additional help from the Police Department; we searched his motor home and his house. However, we didn't find one iota of the stolen goods. Afterwards the police officers who helped with the search left and resumed their normal duties. An Insurance Investigator representing the victim was working with me. He had more than a monetary interest in the case and didn't want to stop. I had an arrest warrant for the suspect so we waited hoping he would return home. Between midnight and 1 A.M. the suspect and his wife drove up and parked in his garage. I started into the garage with my gun drawn shouting, "Police." What I didn't realize, there was a 2x6 lying in my path. I'd been around there earlier but didn't see it. So I tripped and fell hitting the driveway with my knee and tearing my pants. Luckily I didn't get hurt and my gun didn't go off. I arrested the suspect without further incidence. However, none of the stolen jewelry was recovered. The next day or before I can finish the case James Wright said, "Hey, if

you're going to retire, you got to get with it and turn in all your equipment. So I retired in the middle of that investigation. Dee Vickers had to pick up the reins after I retired. About six weeks later, they had to release the subject due to insufficient evidence. But it was one of those things that helped me make up my mind to retire. While I was considering my options, a similar incident took place. A Dallas police detective called me and said, "This old boy named Weatherford been on the wanted list for a long time," and said, "I think I may have found him living in Rockwall. I can't find out anything about him" but said, "He's selling sunshades down at the flea market in Canton and they're there this weekend". So I get up on Sunday morning and the Detective and I proceed to the First Monday Trade Days in Canton. We locate the sun shade salesman but still cannot confirm his identity. So we put him in a holding cell at the Flea Market. Then we find out that Weatherford has fingerprints on file at Tyler, so we send and get his prints sent to us. Once the prints arrive we compare his prints with those of the fugitive named Weatherford; and they do not match, we do not have the right man. So I turn him loose. He was glad to be released but I think that he wanted to hit in retaliation and I couldn't have blamed him if he had of hit me. We had detained him about three or four hours.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Messed up his Sunday.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah. But that was another thing that caused me to think, well maybe I ought to go ahead and retire now. Finally, my last day on duty as a Ranger, Jim Baker picked me up and carried me over to his office at Sunbelt. There he gave me the keys to a '85 Chrysler. He said, "This is a company car, you drive it anyway you want to and here's a credit

card.” Of course I was used to a car with a credit card, so I thought; it works for me and for about two years it worked very well. I even had reserved parking at the bank.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** How long did you work there?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** I worked there fourteen years. After two years they said, you’re going to have to buy your own car. But they told me to take that Chrysler out and get bids on it and you can buy it for the bid price. Also, in lieu of a company car they agreed to pay me 100.00 a month extra for two years. That was okay with me and I paid for the Chrysler with the extra money they provided.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** So what do you do in your retirement years now?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Not much of anything.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Had a friend of mine tell me when he retired was like having six Saturdays and one Sunday every week.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yeah, that’s about right. I enjoy being off, sleeping late when I can, enjoy drinking coffee with my wife. And on occasion I enjoy drinking coffee with a friend like David or Dee. Once or twice a year we get together over in Royse City and that’s always a real enjoyable get together.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** What about over at Kilgore.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** Yes I like to go to Kilgore. I enjoy the firearms training and visiting with everyone. I have only missed the event at Kilgore maybe once in all my years of retirement. Then it was because the bank was sending me to San Francisco.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well Ralph would there be anything I should have asked that I didn't, or you want to add?

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It was a great experience being a Texas Ranger. It went from having a respectable job with the Highway Patrol to being honored with the Ranger badge; once you become a Ranger people just thought you were the smartest man in the world. However, I knew wasn't any different than before but that's just the weight that it carried with it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Well as David and I talked earlier, it's a real small badge really, but boy it's one of the heaviest badges in the country.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** It is, sure, it's great, and just one more incident that happened while I was in Houston. Sid Merchant had sent an arrest warrant to the Harris County Sheriff's office for someone. But because of their volume and insufficient information, they sent it back as "Unable to locate". Sid was not satisfied with their response and sent it to the Ranger office for service and I wound up with it. So I go out near Tomball with the information that Sid had provided and found a vacant office suite. The lady who had an office next door saw me over there and said, "Can I help you." So I told her who I was, she said, "Did you just give a speech to the school here." I said, "No I didn't." but I said, "It was probably Grady Sessums." She said, "Well my son is in that class and he was real impressed with him and with his speech. Then she said "What can I help you with." I told her who I was looking for, she said, "I know that cad, he used to office right there," but said, "He borrowed \$5.00 from me one day and never did pay me back. Let me see if I can find him." So in less that five minutes she said, "He's two miles down the road,

you'll find him in a big office on the top floor of that building." I quickly found him and made the arrest. In this instance I was successful due to another Ranger setting the right example.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** Yeah. Well Ralph if you don't have anything else, I think that's about everything I've got.

**RALPH WADSWORTH:** All right, good deal then, I enjoyed it.

**ROBERT NIEMAN:** I did too. I appreciate it.