

Interview with
JOHNNY WALDRIP
Texas Ranger, Retired

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Project: Texas Rangers

Interview Conducted at the Grayson County Courthouse
Sherman, Texas
Monday—October 20, 2008

Interviewed By: Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray
Longview, Texas

Present at Interview: Johnny Waldrip, Nancy Ray and Eddie Ray



Introduction

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**JOHNNY WALDRIP
TEXAS RANGER, RETIRED**

NANCY RAY: My name is Nancy Ray and I am visiting with Johnny Waldrip of Sherman, Texas. Today is Monday, October 20th, and we are at the Grayson County Courthouse. The purpose of this interview is to discuss Ranger Waldrip's career as a Texas Ranger. Mr. Waldrip, do I have your permission to record this interview?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes.

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

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes.

NANCY RAY: And Mr. Waldrip, do I have your permission to present copies of this video to various historical organizations such as museums, libraries, schools, and once transcribed, to place on the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum's website with the stipulation that you review the final product first?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes.

NANCY RAY: OK, let's start with what is your full name?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Johnny Lee Waldrip.

NANCY RAY: And where were you born and when?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I was born in Florence, Arizona, in 1948 (January 11th). My father was a prison guard at the state prison in Florence, Arizona.

NANCY RAY: Is that your first, uh, connection with any kind of law enforcement?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes.

NANCY RAY: OK, all right. And did you grow up in Arizona?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No, I actually, times were pretty hard back then and, and my grandfather, my mother's father, lived in Whitesboro which is here in Grayson County. And so Dad loaded all of us up in an old Chevrolet, there were five boys. Mother had six boys in seven years.

NANCY RAY: Ooh, bless her heart.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: And so Dad loaded us all up in the backend of an old Chevrolet and threw a mattress on top and we came to Texas and to uh, to start a new life. I was, I believe, about five years old then.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well tell us your parents' names.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: My dad's name was Jack Waldrip, my mother's name was Lois Waldrip.

NANCY RAY: And what about, I know you have brothers...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: My oldest brother is Bill, Bill Waldrip. And then of course I'm number two. The brother after me was Grady Waldrip, he passed away. And then they was Robert Allen Waldrip, we called him Pete. And then there's Randy Waldrip and Tommy Waldrip.

NANCY RAY: OK. No sisters?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No sisters.

NANCY RAY: Um mmm. Well where did you go to school?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: I started to school at Sadler and, and later they consolidated with Southmayd and called is S&S. And about my Seventh, Eighth Grade, Dad moved us to Bells. He bought a little old farm over in Bells on the east side of the county, and I graduated from Bells High School. And then later, when I was a Highway Patrolman, I went to Paris Junior College

and then from there I transferred to East Texas State University where I graduated with a bachelor's degree.

NANCY RAY: OK, and what was your degree?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: My degree was in Criminal Justice with a minor in Management.

NANCY RAY: OK. Did you have any favorite subjects say when you were in high school?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: In high school? Math was always good for me. I always like math and accounting. I took a lot of accounting courses in college and, and I always kind of liked that area.

NANCY RAY: OK, sure. Are you married or have you been married?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: I am married. When my dad moved us to Bells, I was uh a freshman in high school at that time. And I went to town... my wife hates this story by the way. I walked... Dad bought a place out and I walked into town, it was about two miles, two and a half miles and met a guy named Bill Washburn. And I told Bill I come to town to see what the women looked like, I'm new here. And so Bill pulls out an annual, a high school annual and looked at it and there was the prettiest girl I ever saw in there. She was the football sweetheart and the FFA sweetheart and I told old Bill, I said well that's the girl I'm gonna marry. And Bill said you're not in her league, I can tell that. And I said well, we'll see. Well this summer we were married 42 years.

NANCY RAY: Well, congratulations. And what is her name?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Carol.

NANCY RAY: Carol, OK. What about children?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: My oldest boy is Paul. He's a police chief in Joshua, Texas. And then my youngest son, Daniel, lives in Austin. He's a building contractor. I have one grandson.

NANCY RAY: Yeah?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, John Riley, lives in Burleson with my oldest son.

NANCY RAY: OK, well good deal. Well, OK you went from high school did you... were you in the military? What did you do after that?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No, I went straight uh... well I worked here locally right out of high school. Got married and worked locally and then I went to the Department of Public Safety in 1969.

NANCY RAY: OK, so do you remember, who were your monitors?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Oh gosh, you have to let... with an old brain like mine, I'm not sure I can even... I remember one of them was named Moxley, it was an older gentleman. Uh Ed, gosh, Ed was a lieutenant in Tyler in Driver's License. Ed Phillips. And the other one was a sergeant in Lampasas, an old sergeant looked just the spittin image of Johnny Carson. Uh and I can't remember his name.

NANCY RAY: OK, what year was this you went to the school?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: 1969. March.

NANCY RAY: OK. What do you remember about the school?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: It was pretty tough. Uh I, during... what got me started, I was working here in Sherman for Mrs. Tucker's Shortening. It was called Anderson-Clayton was the real company name. And I was working the night shift and there was a trooper, had worked over in a neighboring county and had got fired. And uh he came to work there and he started telling war stories and showing me pictures. And you know, I really thought at that point I hated cops, you know. But I got to looking at that and that looked like fun. And so the next thing I knew, I was here in Sherman and talking to Sergeant Everett Brandon about going to work as a Highway Patrolman. And uh one of the troopers here was Buddy, B. F. Wade. B. F. later became a

Highway Patrol captain. And he told me all about it and how that lots of time the shift would be over and he didn't even know it, how much fun it was and so forth. So anyway, I applied and that was in November of '68. And the school had filled up and I was approved for the first school of March of '69. And they were 102, if I remember, started the school and we graduated 64. In those days, they, you know they, they went out of their way to make sure that you were going to graduate because if you were, had any weakness at all. They knew you wouldn't survive or make it for a long term. So they really made it pretty tough on you. You know our days would start at five in the morning and we would get up and do PT, run four or five miles. Do lots of physical exercise and we got to clean up the gym, clean up the barracks, make the beds and then we got to go eat breakfast. Then we'd go to class and we would go to class 'til Noon, have lunch. And then at one, we'd go back to class until about four and then we got to play PT and run around the buildings six or seven more miles. And from six to eight was supposed to be study time. And then we went to bed by ten, lights out. And then about twelve or one, one of the geniuses there would think about how they would get us up, run us around the building four or five times, and then give us a spelling test. Or get us up and show us a bloody movie, and it was a constant thing.

NANCY RAY: We talked with someone who talked about the spelling test. What is your take on why they did that?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I mean after it.... Of course at the time I just thought they were *mean*, you know. But everything they did you know later on the Highway Patrol made a difference. Because in the middle of the night, you got called out, you were on call. And you'd get called out, you had to get up, be alert, ready to go and your mind fresh. And you would go out to a bad car accident or whatever you got called out on. You had to be fresh and ready to go.

And there are people, and my oldest boy's one of them that you've gotta drag them out of bed, throw water on them and everything else to get them awake. And so this was the way they able to weed the people out and you know... If you couldn't get and be fresh and ready to take a spelling test, you probably couldn't make it.

NANCY RAY: OK. What is the most important thing you took away from that school do you think?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I think mostly was the fact you know that I was able to accomplish... I really didn't know I was going to make it. I quit every week, I just didn't tell anybody. And uh but it was the hardest thing that I had ever done in my life. And it was, you know, it was constant. The schoolwork you had to maintain at least a 75 average. And you had to, the physical training was just horrible and it just kept you beat down. And you were *so* tired. And you got to go home uh Friday afternoon but you had to be back by Sunday at Noon so you didn't have a whole lot of time. And I had a 300-mile drive, one way. So you were beat, tired, want to go home and every day, you know, they would be out there yelling at you. And then they would say and if you don't like it, your car is right over there in the parking lot and you can go home. You can leave anytime you want to. So it made it a little bit tougher but it gave you lots of later-in-life things that really worked out. You know you learned about discipline, there was a lot of discipline in there. And you learned a lot about yourself. You learned about self control and how to control your temper. There were a lot of guys who went through the school... of course growing up with five brothers I didn't have this problem but there were a lot of guys came through who never had a fight. And they didn't know if they would or not. And so they would put up a boxing ring and they would call out two names, and you would box. And they would say you would have three, two-minute rounds which doesn't sound like a whole lot. But first of

all you didn't know what you were gonna get. Uh, I boxed Bobby Delafield. I'm 5'11", Bobby Delafield was 6'6" and we boxed. He beat the top of my head nearly off.

NANCY RAY: Now what is his last name?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Delafield. He was a trooper stationed at Mineola, he passed away a couple of years ago. But anyway, the thing about the fighting was that people, there was a lot of guys that didn't know if they would fight. And when they got in there, some of them didn't. They went home. And so... and you want to know when you're out on the side of the road your partner's gonna be there for you. And so they was a lot of that you know. During those days, you had to have a minimum of three fights. Some of the guys had five, some of them had seven. Uh you know that two-minute fight, you get in there and you're fighting and you're fighting and you're fighting, and after a while the PT instructor would say whenever you boys start fighting the way I want you to, I'll start the clock. You might have been fighting fifteen minutes so... We had a lot of people you know that, that really... it made you prepared for being out on the road. It made you really ready to go. There were a lot of good things in the school. It's, I think, was a lot better then than it is now.

NANCY RAY: Now you were there 18 weeks, is that right?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: At that time it was 18 weeks.

NANCY RAY: OK, so what do you think was better about it then?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, it was tougher and you know today, they start a 100-people school and they graduate 100 people. And I mean, you know, that's why we have such a large turnover in the Department. The 64 guys that came out you know I would go back and look but probably 50 of the 64 retired. And today you don't get that. And you don't have the uh, the

family closeness that we had. You don't have the ownership in the Department today that they had.

NANCY RAY: OK, that's good. I have not heard that before that's, that's good information. Well, where was your first duty station?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: I was stationed in well actually I was stationed in Paris as a trooper. Uh as the Department often does, they tell you one thing and then go the opposite direction. My poor little wife and I, she... we were living in Bells and I had a son then. And when I came out uh in June, they did not have a vacancy right then. And they said you'll go back to your home station, work there with the troopers and then you will be, go into wherever the opening is. And we anticipate the openings will be in September, that's when the new budget starts and so forth. Well when I came out that sounded well and good but uh Major Guy Smith in Dallas decided I needed to come to Dallas. So I had to move my wife and kids to Dallas, and we were making, I think, \$380 a month at that time. And the rent in Dallas took all of our money. I worked in the dispatcher's... as a dispatcher in the regional office there for three months before the paperwork came through to send me to Paris. Of course times were pretty tough then. We uh, we lived there in Dallas and I'd go home on weekends. Haul hay. Try to make a little money to buy food with. I know there for weeks, my wife made biscuits and gravy you know, we was out of money. So but... Paris was my first duty station that they sent me to and of course as luck would have it, my first month I got a blank envelope. Somebody in Austin failed to put my check in it.

NANCY RAY: Oh my.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: And that's back when we got real checks. And when... Fred Hurst was my first sergeant in Greenville. Fred was a graduate of 37th School and a great man. Anyway, I called Sergeant Hurst and said hey, I got an envelope and there's nothing in it. And I'm hurting

right now because we lived from paycheck to paycheck you know. The last... you got paid one time a month and the last week, you were down to biscuits and gravy again. Anyway, I called Sergeant Hurst and told him and he asked me how much my check was and I told him. And he wrote a personal check and brought it to me. And then of course when mine came in I gave it to him but he was a great guy.

NANCY RAY: Well what about your partner then? Who was your first partner?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Uh my first partner was Avert Vaughn which was a character in himself.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell his first name?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Avert, AVERT. Uh Avert was raised over in Red River County and uh Avert was a throwback to about 1840 I think. Uh when I came in, walked in... Max Womack had just made Ranger and I took Max's place there in Paris. And they assigned me to Avert which wasn't happy about getting a rookie. But Avert, first thing he did was he carried me outside and he popped the trunk on that old '68 Plymouth and showed me a wooden keg in the trunk. And he said now son, that's moonshine whiskey being cured out so you leave it alone. And so I did. (laughter) And I was, as I said, Avert was a little different. Avert was, he was very intelligent but he had his own way of doing thing. Avert, he quit a few years later and one day I got a call from a uh ATF agent who stopped by. And they were asking if I knew Avert Vaughn and I said sure. And they said are you aware he's running a grocery store in Rosalie, Texas. And I said sure do. And they said do you know why he's selling sugar in 50-pound sacks? And I said well I think he does a lot of canning. (laughter) But Avert, he later became the Red River County Sheriff but Avert had a place that he inherited in Cuthand Bottoms in Bogota. And to the day he

died, he had a whiskey still. He had a whiskey still as long as I knew him and they never caught him.

NANCY RAY: Well, what did you learn from Avert?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well... (laughter)

NANCY RAY: Other than that.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, not... actually Avert was uh... Avert was not really fond of having a partner. So there was an old trooper named Jack Gibson. Jack was a License and Weight trooper and a good man. And I know, my first few weeks I... Avert cut me loose after the second day and I was scared to death. Of course back in those days in Paris, there were only, they was, there were three troopers and one License and Weight trooper. But on the nights, there were three troopers and the deputies were all 65 plus years old. We dispatched out of the jail and the jail was shut down at five o'clock, dispatch was gone. And we had two radio frequencies. The state operated off of 42.9 and the county was 32.180 I think it was. But at five o'clock, the county shut down and we... Sulphur Springs was the closest DPS station. And unless the weather was right, we couldn't talk to them. So after five o'clock, you were on your own. There I was, a two-day rookie on my own in the county. But old Jack came along, and I told Jack up there you know I was scared and I really didn't know what I was doing. Jack said, just follow old Jack, hang onto that rope, and I'll tell you when to turn loose. And Jack basically broke me in.

NANCY RAY: So he more or less was your lead then?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: He was. You know Jack was always available anytime I had a problem. And you know I was pretty well on my own, and everything I learned, I pretty well learned from Jack. And Jack, like I say, Jack retired as a trooper up there, he was a great man.

NANCY RAY: OK. Your, your responsibilities were to enforce the law, I mean the traffic laws. Correct?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes.

NANCY RAY: Anything of significance happen while you were there?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, back in those days, of course it was a lot different from today. We did a lot more things uh, working with the sheriff's office you know. The Highway Patrol works highway patrol, write tickets... speed tickets and that to me, the worst thing that ever happened was 55. But uh we didn't write a lot of tickets. I go back and I've still got a lot of my old stuff that I had back then about... we always called them racing forms. You had to fill out how many tickets you wrote and they would kind of compare them to the other troopers and that's how the sergeants decided whether you was working or not. And uh, anyways, looking at that, we didn't have, we didn't write a lot of speeding tickets you know. We had a lot of DWI arrests or you know we worked regular traffic. And we worked a lot of stuff with the county. I can remember a murder back there. There were two kids murdered and uh we went out with the deputies and set up the perimeter and helped them you know with the crime scene search and stuff back then. And we did a lot of things different then than we do now. Uh, after I left Paris I went to Commerce and we used to do... the Commerce Police Department was a small police department and the college there uh, there was beer joints lined up and down Main Street in Commerce... kids drunk everywhere.

NANCY RAY: What year was this you went to Commerce?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: I moved to Commerce in '74. I had a sergeant that I was not very fond of named John Harold Hanna and uh... we were in Paris for several years and Fred was in

Greenville, our sergeant. And anyways along about '72 probably, uh DPS made a large mistake in my mind and they promoted a guy named John Hanna and sent him to Paris.

NANCY RAY: HANNA?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: HANNA. And anyway, John and I didn't get along. But I was going to school at Paris Junior College and I was finishing up. Because I realized back then, I was watching a lot of the younger guys come on and most of them had some college. And I knew that later on if I was gonna promote, I better get some schooling. So I had started at Paris Junior College and was finishing up and, when Sergeant Hanna came on the scene. And so we had to have permission for everything. And I asked permission to go to school on my days off in Commerce which was about 20 miles down the road, 30 miles. And he said no. So uh, I told Sergeant Hanna that you know, I said well I'm gonna do something, I said you know I want to finish my college. He said well, of course he didn't like college and thought it was a waste of time. And anyways, long story short, him and I didn't get along. One of the things that kind of followed my career for years... I was sitting one day in a coffee shop. We had a little uh Gulf station there next to the Ramada Inn. And for years and years and years and years, we would pull in and have our oil changed on our patrol car. And the guy in there, his name was Danny Bolton, he would change our oil. Put us in immediately. We'd walk next door, have a cup of coffee, and when we got through with the coffee, the car was ready. Well Sergeant Hanna walked in one day and I'm sitting there having my coffee and he said, where's your unit? And I said well it's over there being serviced. And he said you will *not* take your unit out of service. You will change the oil on your days off. And I said no sir, I won't do that. And he said yes you will. And I said no sir, I won't do that. So anyways, he said you be in my office in thirty minutes. So I drove to his office and he had written up an evaluation saying that I rejected supervision and I had a bad

attitude and so forth. And he handed it to me and said sign it. And I said I ain't going to. And so he said well, he said I'm gonna take you to the captain if you don't do something and sign this thing. And I said no, I ain't gonna sign it and I said let's just go see the captain. So anyways, we jumped in the car and head to Dallas. And this part gets worse but... Anyway, we get to Dallas and Captain Dumas was there and he read the thing. And he came in and talked to me and said you know, what is the problem? And I told him. I said you know the man wants me to do something on my days off and I don't get many you know. I like to be home with my family and so explained the whole thing. And he said well I understand. And he said uh, he said well take this and sign it. He said you don't have to agree with it and you can write what you want. And I said I can? And he said yes. I said I can write anything I want? And he said yeah, he said if you don't agree with it, he said you just sign it and you can write a rebuttal or whatever you want. I said great. So I wrote on it, signed my name and I wrote "Sergeant Hanna is a son of a bitch." (laughter) Well, Captain didn't (*unknown words*)... I did what the man said. And so anyways I got a ride back home and Sergeant Hanna and I were not friends from that day forward. And uh so I worked, worked a short time... A good friend of man who is now the sheriff in Hugo, Oklahoma, Lewis Collins, was my next partner. And Lewis and I uh we worked together quite well. We were both young and of course we were, we would work just for the fun of working and we stayed out a lot of hours we didn't have to. We worked a lot and we... we mixed it up pretty good. Back in those days was a different world than it is today because there was people that would go out on that river, Oklahoma-Texas border. They'd go out on Saturday night to get drunk and get in a fight. And it didn't matter if it was the police or not. And you know we'd stop one of them and out they'd come and the fight would be on. And you know the mud and the

blood and the beer... so we'd drag them to jail and the next morning they'd come out, shake your hand, and tell you what a great time they had... can't wait until next week.

NANCY RAY: Were ya'll actually physically involved? Conflict?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Oh yeah, fist fights.

NANCY RAY: Fist fights.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Regulars, just fun, you know. Had a big time you know. Everybody had a big time. And there wasn't any calling the FBI and anything like that. Collins and I had a little bit of a reputation. Uh Dale Drake I remember, he was an FBI agent there, and he did call Sergeant Hanna one time about you know that Waldrip and Collins is trying to whip everybody in the county. But we really wasn't. But uh... but Lewis was a good partner. Lewis was originally from Oklahoma and went back to Oklahoma as a trooper. Worked as a trooper until he retired and then became sheriff in Hugo and he's still the sheriff up there now. But I left there and I went to Commerce in '74. And I finished my college and my partner. Uh Dave Wansley was my partner at that.

NANCY RAY: How do you spell that last name?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: WANSLEY. Dave was I called the little Superman. Dave was a little guy. In Vietnam, Dave was a helicopter pilot and he got shot down and it broke his back and he was paralyzed. And the... the Army was going to let him uh take a disability and he wouldn't do it. And he worked and worked and worked in the swimming pool and worked and worked and worked and got his feet working again. And he got a regular honorable discharge and went through DPS Academy which was remarkable... and became my partner. And he was the nicest guy, everybody loved Dave. Well, Dave made a bad mistake and decided he wanted to transfer back home so he went back to Hawkins where he was from in uh, in Wood County. And he got,

was out one night, I was working and heard it. But he was out on the road and Dave always carried a big old flashlight about this long. Dave weighed about 150 pounds and he carried a big old flashlight. But anyways, he stopped two guys and the driver and Dave got in a tussle. And the passenger guy got into it with Dave and they started, one of them knocked Dave down and started beating him in the head. And it, Dave shot him and killed him. But uh they had knocked this eye out, crushed his jawbone, knocked all his teeth out... He had multiple fractures to the skull and his spinal cord was leaking. And they said that he wouldn't, probably wasn't going to live. And a couple of days later, I was up there that night, but a couple of days later they said well looks like he's gonna live. His head was about that big but they said he'll have epilepsy and brain damage and he's just not gonna make it. Well then they said looks like he's gonna make it but he's probably gonna have epilepsy. And then about a month or two later, they said well kind of looks like he's not gonna have epilepsy. And Dave later... a few months later, passed the physical and became the DPS helicopter pilot stationed in Lubbock. So you know, little Superman.

NANCY RAY: Little Superman.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: He's retired today but quite a guy. And then my next partner was Lane Akin, Norris Lane Akin, who later became a Ranger lieutenant. Uh I got Lane straight out of the DPS Academy and Lane was a good kid, just a big old 6'4" blonde headed and just a good kid. Real quiet, easygoing and...

NANCY RAY: He was learning from you.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, everybody talks about it you know. They said you know Lane would be up there trying to talk them out of the car and I'd be pulling them through the window. But uh Lane and I had a good time. We, we had some, we had some pretty good... back in those

days, again times were a little different and you can get by with a lot more stuff than we did today. Uh Lane wrote a book one time. Uh he calls it fiction but he threw a lot of stuff in there that I told him he probably shouldn't have put in there.

NANCY RAY: In writing. (laughter)

JOHNNY WALDRIP: In writing, yeah. But we did have a good time. Lane was a good partner and was very easy to train and it wasn't long, you know he went on. And I left there in 1979. Uh I had been, going back to Sergeant Hanna, I'd been taking the uh... decided to promote. You know I had my college and I'd take the Highway Patrol sergeant's test. And I would score in the top bunch and we went to the interview board. And they would interview 20 and I would come out 20. And I went three times and you know and it was the same thing. And my Captain kept saying well I'm recommending you. So I couldn't figure out what was going on so uh at that time, they had created a, a division called Motor Vehicle Theft. And there were 15 people in Texas. And a guy named Jimmy Jacobs was the agent there in Dallas in the Garland office. And he came out to Hunt County. Was doing some work out there and I got hooked up with him and so him and I worked some cases together on my own. And we made some pretty good criminal cases. And my sergeant then was Nevel Ferguson. And Sergeant Ferguson didn't like criminal law enforcement people at all and he told me you know stay away from them. And of course I didn't. But they had an opening that came open that year. They expanded from 15 to 25 and so they were hiring ten so I took the criminal law enforcement test in Motor Vehicle Theft and made it. And that was in '79. And of course good old John Hanna came up from Paris and Sergeant Ferguson was gone and uh Sergeant Hanna came up. And he walked in you know because when you go from traffic to criminal, you have to turn in all your stuff... your uniforms, your hat, your gun belt and everything. And so Sergeant Hanna came up with his nice little

happy look and he said Waldrip, I always knew I'd get your uniforms. So anyways I'm sitting there at the desk and he's calling the check off you know... five shirts. And I'd hand them to him. Five pants and I'd hand them to him. And he said badge and I handed it... and put it in the drawer. And then we went on. Well he headed off to Garland to turn my stuff in and then I got a phone call from the lieutenant. And he said Sergeant Hanna is here and he's upset. He says that you stole your badge. And I said well did Sergeant check it off the block? And he said well yeah, it shows to be checked. So I said I suggest you discipline your sergeant for losing state property. (laughter)

NANCY RAY: And you put it in the drawer?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, yeah. So uh a little while the Captain called and he said Johnny, do me a favor. He said Sergeant Hanna is having a stroke down here. And I said well Captain I would suggest that you have a conference with Sergeant Hanna about how he handles state property. And I said I think he's violated general orders in the way he handled our property. And he said well do me a favor. He said John's not gonna turn it loose. And he'll be hollering for Internal Affairs and make a big deal out of nothing. And he said if you'd give me, get the badge, I would consider it a personal favor. I said well I tell you what. I said I'll look around and if I can find out where Sergeant Hanna dropped it, I'll give it to Lane Akin and let him turn it back. And so... Of all the badges I carried in the Department, that's the only one I don't have. But anyway...

NANCY RAY: But you had to turn it in because you changed to a different division?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Changed to a different service.

NANCY RAY: OK, a different service.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: So then we went to Baytown. And that was another thing, I always said that uh if I was ever sent to Laredo or Houston, I'd quit because those were awful. Well the first thing, I got a phone call and they said congratulations, you made Motor Vehicle Theft and you're going to Houston. And I told the wife, I may have to either eat some words or quit. Well, about an hour later I got a phone call and they said well, we've decide you're gonna go to Baytown. And I said great. Of course I didn't know where Baytown was. I hadn't... you know my whole life I hadn't... The first time I was ever in town was after I was married you know I'd never... I drove to Austin as a young recruit not even knowing, never been to Austin, hadn't been to Dallas. Drove down there one time when I had my, to go to work. I just expected to see DPS you know. I didn't have any idea Austin was that big and that's the way it was. We got to Baytown and of course I had five counties I was assigned to. I had Harris County and Galveston County, Liberty County, Chambers County, San Jacinto County and there was plenty to do. Of course we were the very beginning. Roy Newman was my sergeant and uh we, you know when you say auto theft you think... we worked organized crime cases involving hundreds of cars and you know heavy equipment. We worked with the FBI. I did a lot of undercover work and traveled around with the FBI. Worked uh, did a lot of work up in Lake Charles, Louisiana... posing as a truck driver, buying stolen equipment and stuff. And you know I wasn't home a lot. But my sergeant, Roy Newman, promoted uh and went to Austin and then one of the agents there, Clifford Smith, made sergeant. And so unfortunately Clifford didn't like... he liked the money of being a sergeant but he didn't like being a sergeant. And so every week he, I would go into the Houston office and I would check the weekly reports. And at the end of the month I would go in and check the monthly reports. And get them all done and make assignments and get it all done because Clifford didn't like doing none of that. And one day I was sitting in there doing the

monthly reports and Dan North was in the Ranger office next to us and he was doing the monthly reports and we're sharing coffee pots and we're talking. And uh Dan sits there and he said did you ever think about taking the Ranger test? And at that time Charlie Cook had just been killed in a car wreck. And so I went home and told my wife, I said well you know them Rangers, I think I can get that job because the captain done said so but I said I'm not sure if I'm ready you know, just to sit in an office. Because I'd seen these city boys sit in the office. And so anyway she said well you can do that and make Ranger and stay here and we won't have to move because they have a vacancy and, and uh you'll be home. Because you know I'd go off two or three weeks at a time before.

NANCY RAY: With the Motor Vehicle Theft?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes. I didn't know where or when I was gonna get home sometimes. You know we'd get off on a case and running undercover and you just didn't know. And so...

NANCY RAY: Do you have a case you could tell us about?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Oh, there were several old cases back then that I made. I was driving down the road one day and I was headed over to Liberty County. And I looked over to my left and there was little old car wrecking yard there, probably 15, 10 acres. And I saw all these brand new parts and I said that don't compute. So I pulled in and met an old man named Fred Foust, FOUST. He was probably late 60s, 70s, I don't remember. But anyways I told him that I was there and I was gonna do an inspection on his lot like we do. And so I went over and, and made about two hits just like that on stolen cars. So I put Fred under arrest and tucked him away and I called up to the Houston office and asked for some assistance because I knew this was gonna take a lot of work. And while I'm standing there, and it's cold, kind of a drizzly day and a Black guy drives up and uh he's driving a brand new car and pulls in there. So I know what it is you

know so I kind of walk up to him. I've got some coveralls on that we worked out of and I stuck a pistol behind his ear and told him to freeze and he said, *Oh Lord, my money's in my pocket. Don't shoot.* He thought he was getting robbed. But the car was stolen so I arrested him. And before the other guys could get there, I had five stolen cars and five guys sitting in a room under arrest. Because they were just bringing them from Houston, I mean this guy had a production line. But to end a long story, uh by the time I finished that case, I had recovered or had cleared over 200 car thefts. Fred was taking the cars, stolen cars, and buying wrecked cars and doing what we call a salvage switch. Using the title and the numbers on the stolen car and selling them to a Ford dealership in Baytown. And so it was a major, major bust and we put a lot of folks in prison. Fred wound up going to prison and...

NANCY RAY: Did the dealership know that they were...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: The dealership? There was a salesman there that went. Uh we took some stolen motors out of the sheriff's car there. The sheriff was talking about what a great guy (laughter) Fred was. Said every time we blow an engine, old Fred will just give us one. Well yeah, it was kind of... but uh yeah they were kind of mad at me about that part. (laughter)

NANCY RAY: Well I have a question I'm gonna ask you. You strike me as a person who would play pranks.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, Mother always said that you know with all of us boys laying there that... we'd be laying there watching TV and a commercial would come on and I'd hit one of them and get something started but I don't know about that.

NANCY RAY: You don't know about that? Did you ever play any pranks on any of your partners?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Oh, no not really that I can remember I'd want to tell you about.

NANCY RAY: All right.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: But uh we uh, there were just a lot of things that we did back in those days that was just you know crazy... some of the stuff.

NANCY RAY: OK, you were telling us about some how you became... you got ready to take the Ranger test.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Took the Ranger test. Uh scored on the Ranger test and I went to Austin. Bill Wilson was captain. And of course prior to that, when I'd made up my mind, Pete Grimmett was the uh...

NANCY RAY: What year was this?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I made Ranger in 1980..., in January of '83 so this was '82. And uh Pete Grimmett was the commander of Motor Vehicle Theft and Pete was a crusty old codger. And Bill Wilson of course was a Ranger captain everybody knew. And those two were good friends and loved to aggravate each other. So Joe Harrelson carries me to Austin and sits down with the captain and says you know Johnny's gonna take the Ranger test. And Bill says *great*. So he says come with me which... we walk next door. And Bill says Pete... just want to let you know your best Motor Vehicle Theft agent is fixing to take a Ranger test. And you know I get about that big and old Pete looks over there at me and he ways well, *I don't mind if anybody wants to change positions. That's their business. If you want to go to the Rangers, that's OK, but you better make it.* So, I had a lot of pressure at that time. But when we got in the interview board, someone, somewhere, and I'd love to find that person, had convinced Bill Wilson that you know I was applying for, I was wanting the Houston job because I lived there. My wife taught school there and my kids went to school there. But someone had told Bill that I was going to turn it down if I didn't get to stay in Houston. And so you know we go through the scenario in the

interview board and everybody asks questions. And Bill says you know if you make Ranger are you gonna move? And I said yes sir you know. Standard answer... *oh yeah, I'll move.* And uh but I would love to stay in Houston. And it goes around again and it gets back to Bill and he says you know are you sure you're not gonna turn it down? And I said Captain, I am... I'll do whatever you tell me to do you know. So we head, the third time, the final thing and Captain, they were finishing up and Captain Wilson said I've got one last thing to say, Waldrip. He said are you going to move if you make Ranger? And I said yes sir. I have answered your question three times. And he said, we'll see. So I told my wife said I made Ranger but I ain't got a clue where we're going. Well about that time, uh they called me and they said it's kind of looking like Laredo's coming open. Remember back there when I told you I was gonna quit? Well, sweat was pouring out. An unfortunate turn of events, uh Troy Porterfield was a Ranger in Llano and Troy and Verceli, his wife, were on vacation in Arizona and got hit head on by a drunk driver and it killed Troy. So it made an opening in Llano which Captain Mitchell called me and said you know I was up for Llano. So I wound up January of '83 and I went to Llano. Of course it was kind of, kind of funny. Captain Mitchell was the greatest hero I ever had so I mean you know that guy is unbelievable. John Wayne but... the captain called me to uh to Waco and we had a bunk room and everything there in Waco at that time. And he said I want you to stay here in Waco and I want you to work with Joe Wilie and learn you know the job. And I said well Captain I said you know I've been writing these criminal reports for three years. I said I've made multiple organized crime cases. I said I've led the state in arrests and recoveries for three years. I've been the number one agent in Auto Theft for three years. And he said yeah but son you ain't done it the Ranger way. So Joe Wilie taught me the Ranger way, which we won't go into those , over the next few months. But uh then I went to Llano.

NANCY RAY: OK. Well was that an established station?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes. Yes, Troy Porterfield had been the Ranger there uh I guess going back, probably was the first Ranger actually stationed in Llano. Uh Bob Favor was stationed in Brady at one time and worked back and forwards in there. And before that uh there was an old Ranger by the name of Charlie Miller that's very famous and he worked that territory. I had five counties when I first went there.

NANCY RAY: And what, what were your counties?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: I had Llano County, Burnet County, Blanco County, Gillespie County, and uh Mason. Uh Ray Coffman, well at that time Stan Guffey was, was over in Brady and Joe Davis was over in Kerrville. And each of us had five counties but if one of us was gone, the other one carried their counties. And I was just as comfortable working in Junction as I was in Llano or and you know the same way with them. We all, everybody knew each other, our own people, so we worked cases and didn't have any problems with all that.

NANCY RAY: OK. I was gonna ask, I think you said it was Dan North who talked to you about becoming a Ranger.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Um hmm.

NANCY RAY: Would you consider him the most, the person, your biggest supporter? Or who would be your biggest supporter or most influential in your career?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I would say probably the one who had the most impact on my whole life was Bob Mitchell.

NANCY RAY: OK. Let's talk about how.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, (*emotional moment*)...

NANCY RAY: Special person, huh. (*emotional moment*). Well, why don't we talk about Llano then and we'll come back to that?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah.

NANCY RAY: Tell me about your first duty station as a Ranger.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Uh, well there in Llano, I had five counties. The DA there had five counties and the judge had five counties so we had a pretty good working relationship. The DA didn't have an investigator so I got to do his stuff, all his DA investigating. None of my sheriff's offices had an investigator. And so you know Troy did and I did, we did everything from a hot check to a capital murder. And I mean you got called out all the time. You know weekends, uh no matter what.

NANCY RAY: You weren't sitting in an office, were you?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No, you were on the road a lot. I mean you know... yeah, yeah that's what my wife said you know. I thought you were gonna be home? But no it worked out real well. There were some good cases that we made back then. Uh I've got uh one of the cases, well actually one of the cases in Llano is still being shown on television. Uh the Norton sisters, they made a uh, a film about it and uh interviewed me and uh it's been on TV now all these years. Matter of fact, it showed yesterday. And then there was a case I worked in Gainesville they filmed and it was on the "New Detectives" and so forth. And it's still showing. But uh you know it was... it was, I liked it better then than I do now because back then like I said a lot of the counties have grown so and they've got all these investigators and stuff and they don't need you as bad as they did back then you know. And all my old sheriffs then, they went with me. You know I didn't work with this little guy over here, I mean the sheriff took every step I took you

know. And we were close friends. John Benner in San Saba, you know, Gayle Ligon there and Weldon Buck. And all the old sheriffs they, they made every step the Ranger made.

NANCY RAY: Well how did you develop the relationship with those sheriffs?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well they of course you know... it's just like all the guys who came before me you know did such a great job. Troy was well respected and then on and on and on. Uh you know, in one of the better things uh, when you're on the west side of 30, you'll find out that you know the people I like better and they're, the respect for law enforcement is ten times better. Ray Coffman found that out when he went from Brady to Bryan-College Station. I mean there's a big difference in the way the people view you. In Llano you know a Ranger walked on water. When I came there you know, I met Gayle Ligon the sheriff and uh I told Gayle my wife's a school teacher. So we drove down to the school and that superintendent when Gayle said new Ranger's in town and his wife's a school teacher and she needs a job. And the superintendent said well what's she teach? And I said Home Economics. And he said well Mrs. Schepps has been here 30 years. And I said OK and he said well, can she teach kindergarten? And I said well I don't know. And he said well, she is now a kindergarten teacher. (laughter) So you know because the Ranger's wife needed a job and you know... and she taught school all the way through there then. But uh, but anyways we worked a lot of cases through there. And one of the good things Captain Mitchell did was uh, that I really liked but didn't carry on to other places, was if you had a serious murder case, you could call the Rangers from the neighboring counties... would come over to help you. And it was great you know. I had, I had a guy... he's on death row right now. In Fredericksburg he, his wife had left him and gone home to her mama and daddy and she had a little five or six-year old child. And he kicked the door in at night and took the wife and the kids and his in-laws into the kitchen and lined the mother and father-in-law

up against the wall and shot them with a shotgun in front of the daughter and the grandchildren. And then went out into a cabin and took them hostage until a SWAT team got out there and he gave up. But I was able to call and you know... and of course at that time, Joe Davis and I were sharing, sharing Gillespie County. And of course Joe called me at that time said I'm fixing to go on a trip and I've got a little light-running murder over in Fredericksburg, would you go over and handle it for me? Well a light-running murder was you know two people dead, you know three people kidnapped, and SWAT team in route. You know thank you Joe.

NANCY RAY: I wonder what's heavy?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah. But anyways, Ray came over and uh Fred came over, Fred Cummings came over from Lampasas. And you know I gave one of them the crime scene we had there and then you know the other one was at the second crime scene which was where the hostage situation was. And then you know and then I worked the interviews and stuff. And we did that many times and within a ten or twelve-hour day, we would have you know the suspect, the confession, the thing wrapped up. We could do a murder case in a day. Because you had all this expert... and you just moved so fast.

NANCY RAY: Well, what would be the primary technique for solving a crime? DNA wasn't in at that time, right?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, DNA wasn't in. It was just uh you know, just a lot of good police work. You know... good leg work that I don't think they do these days, and just plain old commonsense. We rely on a lot of stuff. And we made some cases you know off of forensics, made a lot of cases off forensics. But you know they were just some things uh... they called me down one time over to Kerrville. Joe had a murder over there. The uh, the wealthy banker's wife had disappeared. And it was the brother of an FBI agent, who were very close friends to Joe, Joe

Davis. And so Ray and I came in. Captain Mitchell was there. And several people because this guy was a real friend of the police... and did everything so everybody came in because his wife's missing... had a fancy ranch over there. And Ray and I drove up over there. And of course the first thing I see is all these you know the house is sitting here and then there's a driveway that comes in and then there's a kind of a shed deal where they park cars in. And there's cops sitting all over, over here. Cops standing around here smoking cigarettes and visiting. And as you go in the back door there, I saw a big pool of blood on the right hand side and the kitchen was full of ladies... was making coffee and cookies and sandwiches. You know kind of like a funeral thing. And the FBI was there you know putting bugs on the phone and getting ready for this ransom call. So Ray and I looked that situation over and I called Captain Mitchell over to the side and I said Boss, you know this thing ain't quite kosher here. And I said first of all, you gotta get these people out of this crime scene. Joe was so close to the family it was I mean he wasn't thinking as a Ranger, he was a friend. And he was comforting his friend and he wasn't, didn't have a clue about what was going on. So I... and Mitchell you know he said we think it's a kidnapping because they're waiting for the kidnapping to go down. And I said well that pool of blood over there, the size of it, tells me that, you know, this lady's dead. Ain't nobody going to be getting a ransom out of her and we've got some clues missing around here. So we got rid of all the people and started working the crime scene. And I... the lady was a very, very beautiful woman, and very, very religious. And so we started looking for the body and they had people searching the, the... uh the old ranch hand and his son was there, the boy was born on the place. And they were looking, everybody was looking. And I told Ray, I said well you know if you really do kind of a profile of this you know this is an attack on her. Because there was a lot of money in the house, and a very wealthy guy, and there was nothing taken... nothing disturbed. It was just her. And

then so I said it was some kind of a sexual thing just with her. They found her clothes in a creek over here. And so Ray and I were out boogying around and anyways, we drive up to the caretaker's house. And I look over in the garage and there sits the pickup that belongs to the son of the caretaker. And I said Coffman, look at that. And over there it's all caliche white dusty roads and that truck was as clean as the top of this table. I said that don't compute. So Ray and I go over there and we do a little peek and see where water is and I pull the license plate down and you could see just little balls of blood. And laying inside the bed was a slug. And uh so anyway we called Joe and, and got everybody up there. And of course Joe was saying I've known this kid all his live. ...don't believe he did it. And so I said well let Ray and I, you know, take these samples and take samples and go back and type it because we knew what the lady's blood type was. And I said let us go to Austin and get this done. And this was late in the afternoon. And Ron Urbanowski was the lab director who is a great guy. And I called Ron. Ron held his people over and Ray and I drove in and they did the stuff. And about two in the morning, we had a, we knew that it was her blood and went back and told Joe. They got the kid and the kid confessed and it was a sexual thing. And he had her buried over in a ditch and had piled a bunch of stuff on it and put a dead deer on top if it. And when the people walked by it, they'd smell it and they'd see that dead deer and walk on. But anyway... they recovered the body. Got him, got confessed, and case was over with.

NANCY RAY: Commonsense.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yes, that was it. Just being able to look around, pay attention, see what you know what was out there.

NANCY RAY: OK. Do you remember, what was your first case there in Llano?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No.

NANCY RAY: Think back.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No, I don't. There were so many. I mean I had, you know I had two file cabinets full you know while I was there because you worked everything from... Uh Sheriff Ligon really put the pressure on you when you got there. He said, he'd been the sheriff I think at that time he'd been 20 years. And he said since I've been sheriff, there is not a major case that's not been solved. Not a murder, not a robbery, not a rape, not a kidnapping. Don't count burglaries and hot checks. And of course Sheriff Ligon in my opinion is one of the smartest sheriffs I ever knew. He had you know, Llano County the population at that time was probably 5,000 people. But Sheriff Ligon had gone out and he had him two Highway Patrolman stationed there to handle his highways. He went out and had him four game wardens stationed there to handle his game violations. He went out and got him a Ranger stationed there to handle his criminal work. He went out and got him a DPS Narcotics agent, George Mabin, to handle his narcotics work. He went out and got Wilbur Grill, Texas Alcohol-Beverage Commission to handle all his liquor violations. And so whatever the problem was, he'd walk in the appropriate state office and say fix it.

NANCY RAY: Fix it. He had high expectations.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: And he did. I mean we did... I mean and so he didn't have to hire investigators and deputies. He kept a very low budget and crimes were always solved.

NANCY RAY: Camaraderie is a lot of it isn't it?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, he was a good guy and everybody go along. And we had a real close group there I mean everybody worked well.

NANCY RAY: OK. *(pause to change video discs)*

NANCY RAY: OK, We're back and you are still at Llano. Is there, are any other cases you'd like to talk about?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, there were a number of cases we were involved in. Like I said, we got involved in everything we.... (*phone rings*) I knew that thing would go off. ... There were a couple of cases in Llano that we worked. The Norton sisters... which you know were the two, were the two elderly sisters that were poisoned. It was one of the first poison cases that... it was, it was uh filmed on television, still being shown on uh Discovery Channel. But there were two older ladies there, their families were very wealthy. As you come into Llano, there'd be a big mansion sitting on the right hand side. And they said that they were five sisters which never married that lived there. And their father was uh wealthy. And the ladies had many parties and back in the 20s and 30s and 40s and were well know for their partying. But anyway, when I came along they were quite elderly. The older sister, Cordelia, was tough as a boot, been to the Navy and looked like a man, talked like a man, cussed worse than a man. And then her sister was Cathryn... was real frilly and lacy and they called her Girlie. But anyways, there was a young man that came in there and he befriended them and uh took care of them. He worked there at the funeral home and uh he... they got to where they depended on him. And during the course of time, he poisoned them. He used arsenic poisoning and poisoned them. And of course in Llano County we had one old doctor in the whole county and he was treating them for, according to medical records, for heart attack. And they were having hallucinations, projectile vomiting and so forth which was not heart attack. But they died. This young man posed as a relative, had them cremated. And uh as far as I know, he's still in prison. But anyways, I got a call uh from Joe over in San Angelo and he said that he was working a case over there that might involve these two sisters. And so we had the ladies cremated, or had them dug up. And of course when I to the lab

they said well she's cremated, ashes, there's nothing we can do. And I said well get on the phone and find somebody you know. Because if a few years earlier, Joe Davis had the case where they were, the nurse was killing the babies with anectine and they brought in a guy and so I... we had a similar thing. But anyway, they contacted A&M. A&M had a machine and they tested. Told our guys how to make it and they found the arsenic in there and we were able to make the case. And, and they made the same one in San Angelo and he wound up doing three life sentences for murder. But it was the first actual arsenic case and it was the first case that DPS had ever made, was able to make arsenic from ashes. It's a heavy metal, it doesn't go away, but it was the first time they perfected the method to be able to determine if it was.

NANCY RAY: This would be the DPS Lab?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: DPS Laboratory. So it, that's how it got the notoriety that, you know for the Discovery Channel. And they came out and filmed it because it was the first time it was ever done. Uh of course we got uh, we used to go in once a month for company meetings. Captain Mitchell would call a meeting and we would all go up there and Stan and, at time it was Guffey, before he got killed. And we would go up to Waco and of course get us a room and sit around and Captain would come over and we'd all have a little toddy, Dr. Pepper or two and visit, just have a big old time. And then, and then the next morning we'd go into our meeting and we'd put on our best suit and engraved pistols and our good hat and boots and go into our meeting. And Captain Mitchell got called out and came back in and said well, we got a little kidnapping case we gotta deal with. We're gonna run up to Cleburne. Ya'll load up and let's go. So we all jumped in our cars and headed up to Cleburne and, and uh we stopped at a little old bank there. And we kind of staged there on the parking lot. The captain went up and came back and said well, the banker's daughter has been kidnapped and the kidnapers said that they are

gonna call in, and uh ask for ransom. So, so we stayed in the bank while they got the money and got it all marked and everything. And so the next day well of course the kidnappers call and they say we're gonna take you on a journey and anywheres we find a policeman along the route, we're gonna kill the girl. So we started out. We slept on the floor uh in our nice suits and engraved pistols and we got up the next morning and we didn't have our toothbrushes or anything... got in the car and the guy started... The first phone call was uh in Fort Worth and they uh went to a pay phone. The guy called and the father was driving, he had a limousine and he was driving his limousine and we had it fixed where we could keep with him... had aircraft in the air and stuff. And so everybody was able to follow far enough back because you know we had a bug in the car and everything. But we got to Fort Worth. He said now I want you to have so many minutes to get to Big Town Shopping Center in Dallas and go to the pay phone. So they did and we got to there and then his next move was he said I want you to get on Interstate 20 and go to Tyler, there's a pay phone there. So along the route, they had a problem with the car, the limousine broke down... got it fixed, got it back and so when we get to Tyler, well the guy's telling them you know that I'm gonna send you to Mount Pleasant. So, so we cut across country, uh from the way the fellow, the father was coming and we got hold of the Ranger there and uh, Brantley Foster, we set up a perimeter around the uh... And it was, I always remember because it was my birthday, January 11th, and there was snow on the ground and it was about 20 degrees, it was *cold*. And we had cars lined up everywhere. Brantley and everybody was out in this field with big rifles and everything. And, and we were waiting and the father's car started having trouble and the oil light came on and the motor was just hammering and thrashing and banging and died just as he was pulling up to this old service station. And we didn't hear a call, we were too late. We were like ten minutes late. And we waited and we waited and we waited. And so

after a long period of time which seemed forever, Captain Mitchell called and said you know, let's go back to square one you know and see what happens, go back to the parents' home. We're in Mount Pleasant or, yeah, Mount Pleasant. So I drive up and Howard Alfred, Slick, was sitting in the car so I jumped in the car and was shooting the breeze with him when about that time I heard somebody holler there's a car coming. And uh the, the bad guys had pulled up as, and of course all the Rangers was walking out about this time, so he takes off. And the pursuit's on. And Joe Wilie's on the air and he's hollering on the radio and the helicopter is up and, and uh Howard and I pull out and we're in the car and... They lost him and then they found him again. Anyways, Joe hollers about that time he said, you know, *shots fired, shots fired*. They were holding the little girl up in the back of the window and was shooting at Joe and them and Joe couldn't shoot back because the little girl was in the back window. Well as luck would have it you know, the bad guys do get one every now and then. The bullet went through and hit a gas line and gas spewed out on that hot motor and manifold and the car caught on fire. That's when Joe hollered and said you know *shots fired*. And Captain Mitchell said are you sure shots fired? And that's when Joe made the famous statement you know, I'd appreciate it if you'd come up here and give me a second opinion. (laughter)

NANCY RAY: That went over well.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: But the car, Joe went down and he hollers *in flames* and so about that time, this guy pulls on the interstate right in front of Slick and me and John Dendy. So the race is on and uh this car got in the way and they kept getting in the way. The guy took off the interstate, pulled in a residence, and they pulled up... well, which turned out to be FBI guys. But they pulled in right behind the bad guys. Slick pulled sideways and John pulled this way. Well the bad guys jump out and the first thing they do is pull around to the FBI's windshield. Well,

the two agents got out of their car and ran back to behind John Dendy's car. And they were behind the back of the car and they were kind of like this. When I read the report later, they said that they received fire and they exited the vehicle and they assumed a defensive posture which I'm assuming is like this... But anyways, we shot back and forth at each other and at that time, uh I noticed that the car was sitting on a concrete slab. And I was shooting a mini-14 and all I could see was this guy's hands tucked around the wheel, he had a 12-gauge shotgun and he was pulling the trigger. So I started shooting under this van and bullets was hitting the concrete and was just turning shrapnel. And uh in a little while, you know, they're hollering *we quit, we quit*. So John got the girl out and Slick and I went up there. And these guys from their feet up to their knees were just hamburger, you know, from that shrapnel just blowing in on them you know. So Captain Mitchell got there and of course unfortunately he said well, you know, you shot them so you get to take them to the hospitals. But the part I like... and my wife says you know because I'm kind of weird, I like things like that. But it was just kind of poetic justice. The one guy there that his, from his big toe across was shot off and his last name was Foote. (laughter) and I just thought that was neat. So... (laughter)

NANCY RAY: Whatever. Well, you had to have run across just some really sorry people.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Oh yeah, they were. You know earlier on you know, of course when we were sitting in the hotel room, Old Guffey was sitting there telling me how he worked for Narcotics and he hated helicopters and hated airplanes and they made him sick. And when the Captain said you know I need somebody to do surveillance, I said Guffey's got experience Captain. So good old Guffey... He said... he was up sick cussing me. Stan was my best friend back in those days. We had a large time together.

NANCY RAY: And did you uh, did you work together a lot with Stan?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, Stan and I, we worked together a lot because you know we overlapped and if Stan had a problem I'd come over and help him and vice versa. And we worked a lot of cases together a lot. And we played together you know. He was... we'd go out on those ranches and we'd take our horses out there and we'd cowboy on the weekends and stuff. And work cattle, and just stuff to goof around together you know. We just had a lot of good times.

NANCY RAY: Well, how long were you in Llano?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I was in Llano, I was trying to remember. Uh I moved, actually Sheriff Ligon went out of office at that time, a few years later. And so I, I was... Burnet County was really uh, Marble Falls was kind of the center of my counties. And so I had talked to Captain Mitchell at that time about moving to Marble Falls which was really better for my family anyways. Because when we moved to Llano, the town was 1500 population, there were four houses for sale. And so you know, Marble Falls had more houses, better shopping and so forth so Captain Mitchell let me move the station back, over to Marble Falls. And that was probably around 1990 I guess it was. I worked there uh out of the office there. We uh, about that time, they formed a Narcotics task force that was run through uh the five counties. And uh Gregg Clark was the commander and, and he asked me to help him so Captain Mitchell said you know fine. So I was the assistant commander and we ran the Narcotics task force. And then of course you know the guys would go out doing undercover work making cases and or course they'd also trip across stolen property which kind of came back under my bailiwick so I made a lot of cases too working through that thing. So we had a lot of fun with it working together. And I left there in '93.

NANCY RAY: OK, so you weren't in Marble Falls very long?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No, we weren't there at all and Charlie Fleming was the Ranger here in Sherman. And Charlie and I both grew up in Bells by the way. Charlie graduated from Bells. We kind of got a little running history there. But uh Charlie had told me at that time he was thinking about retiring. And my mother was here, which my brothers were here, but my wife was the only one to take care of her mother and father. And they were very elderly and getting in bad health and so I decided that you know, everybody says you gotta be crazy that you would leave Marble Falls to come to Sherman which probably was. But I knew we had to get back because my wife was gonna have to take care of her folks and she couldn't make that 300-mile trip to do what we had to do. And as it turned out, her mother got Alzheimer's and I mean for her years it was just... Her father is 94 and we're still taking care of him. And so, so it turned out to be a good move. Charlie retired and then I moved back here at that time. And that's why I tell Charlie that I was the only real Ranger they ever had in Sherman.

NANCY RAY: A little camaraderie right there. (laughter) So in '93 you moved to Sherman. And you've been here ever since?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Been here ever since. I worked here until '97 and retired, or actually September '96. And I did a real short, I'd been retired two weeks and my wife was getting up every day and going to work and she stopped by while I was laying up in bed one morning and said *boy, you're fixing to go to work*. So I got hired at Texas Instruments in Richardson as their corporate investigator. And I was making a lot of money but I *hated* it. It was boring and they wasn't, right up front we found... Texas Instruments used a lot of gold in their product. And we, or me and another guy working together there was a detective from Dallas PD, worked together and we found this lady had stolen a little over a million dollars worth of gold. She was ordering the gold for these people and we caught her, got her fenced over in Lewisville. Got her caught,

got confessions and everything and brought it in and they said thank you very much. And they terminated her but they wouldn't prosecute her. First case, I walked in, I knew I was in trouble because I worked into the boss's office and I'd made my case and had my file. And laid it down and he called me in and he said this ain't gonna work. And I said what do you mean? And he said this is not gonna work. And I said well you know, I've made a lot of criminal cases in my career, you know, well what's wrong with it? And he said I don't want all that, I just want a synopsis. Give me just a paragraph. And you know they, I had one of the first cases that uh, of identity theft. They was a lady in HR that had gotten I think it was like ten of the employees and took their names and got credit cards in all of them's names. And she maxed them all out. I got her caught, got a confession from her, got all the credit cards back, drove down to Dallas PD, walked in to the property crimes guy and met him. And I said here's uh, you know, here's you a case if you want it. Which he loved it because his stacks just went up with multiple cases. And then when I got back the boss called me in and threatened to fire me. He said you know we don't file on people. I said well why am I here?

NANCY RAY: Yeah, why were you there?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: So anyways, I was making right at, at that time that was in '96. I was making right at seventy thousand a year at TI and uh the sheriff called me, or he was newly elected sheriff, Keith Gary, called me and said I'm gonna be taking over sheriff in January and I need a chief deputy. Well chief deputy was paying \$28,000 and I jumped all over it. (laughter) So... and I worked with Keith for about three and a half years. Then there was an opening for county commissioner, my home commissioner was retiring. And, and uh one of the problems that we had historically in law enforcement and everybody will say, sheriffs will say you know, commissioners don't understand sheriffs. And it was really strange because when I was going in

law enforcement and in the sheriff's office, every time we'd have, go to the sheriff's convention they would talk about you know them crummy commissioners and how you can get along with them or get around them. Well my first rookie commissioner school, they talked about the lousy sheriffs and how you're gonna have to deal with them. (laughter) But the sheriff is the biggest expense you have in the county and, but one of the problems you know is no one ever understands each other. One of the commissioners uh, I guess the first time I used a bad word in open court, one of the commissioners said that it's more dangerous to drive a motor grader than it is to be a deputy sheriff. And which got my blood pressure up. But anyway I told the sheriff at that time, I said I think I'm gonna run for county commissioner. I think I can get elected and I can help the sheriff's office. I can do more over there than I can over here. And so we, we did and I got elected. And like I said I'm fixing to start my third term and I've been able to, we've increased the manpower there. Uh I got the deputies a \$6,000 pay raise. We were able to pay for their college uh, give them extra pay for college, and extra pay for having a, a different... certifications. You know if they had intermediate or advanced or... And so we're able to move in some things. And give a little more understanding. Every time when the sheriff walks in and asks for something they'll all look down. And so there've been some times when I've explained to them why he didn't need it either. And so I mean it cuts both ways but it's...

NANCY RAY: What did you get from your career as a Ranger that helps you more now than anything you can think of?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, you know going back to Bob Mitchell. You know he taught me a lot of things about how to treat people. And you know I tried to treat my people and the public in the same manner you know with the respect and the understanding.

NANCY RAY: OK, that makes sense. Well let me ask you about the badge. Not, not the badge you put in the drawer but the Ranger badge. When you, when you were given that Ranger badge, can you put into words what you felt?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, you know, I, of course you know... it just, it was just such a different world because the Rangers I had been around in the Houston office or in the big cities were different from us country Rangers. You know we called them concrete Rangers by the way.

NANCY RAY: Let's talk about those differences then.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, the concrete Rangers you know they dress up in a pretty suit and come in and sit around and basically wait to get calls to go out and run leads and do things like that. And you know when you're out there as a country Ranger, you're on the firing line, you're up front, you're into everything you know. And it's just a difference in the whole world. You know the first... when I, when you go out there, the first thing I was told by you know the sheriff... I showed up with my nice little Ranger suit on and he said *you need to dress down, son*. Because out there you know they just wore jeans and so forth. So it's, it's a whole different world. And the people out there depend on the Ranger for everything. I mean everything and, you know, when the Ranger walks... it's just a different feeling. When the Ranger walks in, I mean everybody knows your name. And uh you know in Houston, in the concrete Rangers, nobody knows who you are. They're just some guys with a cowboy hat on, you know so big. You don't have the interaction with the public and stuff you know. You know the kids and you know I would go talk to the kids at school and talk about the Rangers you know during their government day at school and stuff. And, and my juries... a long long long long time ago as a baby Highway Patrolman, I learned one thing. And that's that if the Rotary Club and the Lions Club and all of that, if you can go in and talk in front of these people, these are the people that

are gonna be on your jury one of these days. And if you can impress them not, it'll help you down the road. So the time I spent in Llano and in Burnet and so forth, when we would have a criminal case, I knew 90 percent of the jury panel personally. One of my favorite cases was... we had a serial rapist. We had a young lady that was a little loose in her reputation. But anyways, this guy raped her and he runs off and then sets it up that he fell out of a boat and drowns later in the lake. Well, I keep working on it. I get him located in Florida. And I go out and get him in Florida and I find that he's committed about five rapes. Come back and we're trying him in Llano County. And the jury panel is back there and I'm sitting there and Clayton Evans was the district judge. And they, they brought the witnesses... does anybody know Johnny Waldrip? And everybody said yeah. And the guy that ran the feed store stood up and he said I know Johnny Waldrip. If Johnny Waldrip arrested the guy, he's guilty. (laughter) And the judge says well you know why don't you come on up here and go on out there. And in a little bit a lady stood up and she said I work in the Driver's License office and if Johnny Waldrip said he did it, he did it. And before long, they had to dismiss the entire panel. Because they couldn't get... and the lawyer this guy had was an Austin lawyer and he's sitting there with his mouth open and he said Judge, you know, what do we have to do to plead guilty, you know. I mean it was over with right there. So the guy got a life sentence. But it was good because the people knew you, I mean they knew you in church and they knew you at the schoolhouse and you know that's the good things about being a country Ranger. You know you're not just somebody walking in a room.

NANCY RAY: Well, what was the most enjoyable thing, a part of being a Ranger?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, you know again just you know the friendships that you made with the Rangers, lifelong friendships. You know Ray Coffman and I were... Ray and I worked a bunch of stuff together, and George Turner. You know we were kind of the guys that seemed

like we caught most of it. And when I was in Company F, you know I asked Earl one time why he didn't like us you know. And he said well I know you are the guys that'll get it done. And so every detail came along it seemed like I got. You know the TACATA (*spelling?*) investigation... I traveled all over Texas and Arizona, New Mexico and...

NANCY RAY: The what investigation?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: TACATA (*spelling?*)It was an acronym for, it was for Texas Association of Control... it was a thing that Ann Richards set up years ago that she was giving money to people to rehab drug offenders. And it originally started out, it was supposed to be like a \$4 million project and it turned into a \$40 million project. And the, what we found for example one in Dallas, they was a Reverend that had, there was an old closed hospital. And he sent the paperwork in that he had this hospital with all these X amount of beds and that he was going to rehab 200 people. So they just cut him a check for \$150,000. And he never had anybody. They gave me a group of six CPAs, young kids. And they went in and did the criminal audit and I did the criminal, the interrogations and wrote it all up and put the cases together. And we traveled all over Texas and like I said up in New Mexico and Arizona. And it was just plumb crazy how the state did that thing. You know probably the worst case I ever got involved in was the Branch Davidians.

NANCY RAY: Let's talk about that a little bit.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: That was really miserable, miserable, miserable, miserable. I was sitting there one Sunday. My boy called me and wanted to know what I was doing home. And I said you know I don't know what the problem is, boy. And he said well turn the TV on. And they were talking about it and I said well that's a federal deal. And I said you know it ain't my

problem. Well, we visited a little bit and in a little bit, Captain called me. Get your clothes together and be prepared to come to Waco, stay three or four days. That was February 28th.

NANCY RAY: Of what year was this?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: '93. And I was relieved, that was February 28th... I was relieved of duty on June 1st. I stayed in a motel room. I was allowed to go home one time during that entire time period. But uh Ray Coffman and George and I and... Jim Miller, Jim was my roommate and everybody claimed I ruined poor old Miller. Miller didn't drink, didn't cuss, didn't even have bad thoughts. You know about three weeks with me he's sitting on the side of the bed drunk, saying *come on buddy, have a drink*. (laughter) But Jim was a great guy and we had a large time. You know we had fun. It was awful. You were there, it was just the... working through the FBI's and all the dirty tricks that they pulled and all the stuff that came on about that time, I mean it was just, you know, just awful. And then when the thing burned, of course George and I were standing out there. They decided that day, the FBI wasn't talking a whole lot to us but that day, they decided... they brought us in and said you know we're gonna do... we're gonna knock the building down and flush them into one room and then arrest them. And we want to put ya'll on perimeter. OK, so when they flush like a covey of quails, ya'll get them. So George Turner and I, we weren't very far from them. And when you know they started knocking the building then and then you could hear pop, pop, pop, pop. Of course we knew it was gunshots you know on the inside. And...

NANCY RAY: Didn't need a second opinion?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Right. And this smoke was coming out of the top of the building and George said *that thing's on fire!* I said nah, dummy, I said they're putting some tear gas in there, can't you see? Well it was a fire and I mean it wasn't just ten minutes it was gone. So anyways,

after the thing cooled down, well they brought us in there and of course we were, I had my little section, George had his, Ray had his, and we had our little sections and we sifted and worked through all of that garbage and you know every day... The place burned and inside the compound they had a huge room that they brought in all these uh cans of beans and you know stuff like that. They'd got a lot of military surplus food and stuff in there and it was brought in. He would send these people out to work all of the grocery stores when they'd throw away the vegetables and things they would get them and bring them back.

NANCY RAY: This, this would be the leader?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Right, David Koresh. And so all that was in there and there, there was no running water facilities at all in the building. They used five-gallon buckets for bathrooms. And uh so all of that, the bodies were there, the bodies burned, the bodies rotted, the food exploded and all that rotted and then it rained.

NANCY RAY: Oh wow.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: And it all mixed together and then it soured. And we're out there in it. And they gave us *some rubber gloves*.

NANCY RAY: That was it?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: That was it. And every day you looked like a coal miner. That stink was just so awful. We'd go back to the hotel room, we'd sit around and nobody wanted to eat. You just sat and drank whiskey and tried to think of something stupid to aggravate the other guy with you know. George was twisting off... he was thinking Branch Davidians were growing out of his arm I think about that time. But, but uh I... at that time when I went in, I was weighing 220 pounds. And when they relieved me, I was down to 185. I mean it was just awful and... but we got, you know the dead bodies, the kids, the babies and stuff, you know one of the, one of the

areas and Fred was involved, Fred Cummings was involved in that where they had buried this, one of the first guys shot. And they... for days they would empty their five-gallon buckets on top of his grave and then it rained. And so we had to go in there and dig that out to get him out. But after all that length of time when we finished that job, well the Health Department came out and put a big old chain link fence around there and put up a sign: *Not fit for Humans to Walk on.*

NANCY RAY: And ya'll had been walking...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: And we'd been out there crawling in it, breathing it, had it all over us you know. It was not a good time. And we had some fun you know. During that time, I know they was... there was a little ATF agent that was a little cocky. And he and I had some words one afternoon and he got mad and he told me that he was going to complain to Colonel Sanders and get my job. And I said well you go right ahead buddy. (laughter)

NANCY RAY: That's what I figured you'd say. Well, let's go back. I mean... the conditions were horrible, you've run into some really sorry people in your career. How do you deal with that? And then you go home at night.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, years ago... you do and it's very easy to get into a pattern where you don't trust anybody and you hate the world. Or you can get in the pattern of sitting around and staying drunk all the time and some of my buddies did. But years and years ago, I went out rented a little old pasture and bought some cows. And I go out and fool around with them cows. And in the mornings I'll drive down to the coffee shop and sit around with the old men and talk about the feed prices, and *dadgum, I wish it'd rain*, and *boy, I had a heifer born the other day you ain't gonna believe*. And it brings you back into the real world. And it's always been my therapy more or less over the years. I've still cows and I just go out there and mess with them. I've never really made any money with them.

NANCY RAY: That's not the purpose of it though, was it?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: No, no, like I said, it gets you back into the world and you know, because it's easy to over there on the other side thinking... because that's all you deal with is the sorries.

NANCY RAY: That was your job, it really was.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, yeah.

NANCY RAY: Well you were gone long periods of time too, is that correct?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Uh huh.

NANCY RAY: So your wife really carried a big...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: My wife is unbelievable you know. She raised the kids. She could do anything and of course, early on, that was one of the things that uh, you know, in law enforcement, I had started working with her to be sure, you know, she could do it if I wasn't there. You know and I taught her about changing flats and how to handle stuff like that. You know she handled all the bills and knew where the money was and wrote the checks. I didn't even keep up with it. And you know took care of the kids and stuff. She could handle anything that came along and could today. She just keeps me around to just argue with and that's the only reason... (laughter)

NANCY RAY: Well, probably humor I would say might be one of the things that you used to deal with it too though.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Yeah, we did a lot of it. But you know, and it was strange, I was telling a story the other day that you know people don't understand cops. We had a little old suicide out here one day in Sherman, in Grayson County. There was a guy backed up to one of the oil wells and tied a rope around his neck and tied it to the, to this fence and took off. Well when he got to

the end of the rope it kind of popped his head off and it bounced like a basketball, the car went over and wrecked. Well you know the brand new JP was out there and it was his first case and he's big eyed. And we're all standing there and one of my guys looks at me and says *hey, chief, I know what this old boy did for a living*. And I said really, and he said *yeah, he was a header*. And the J...

NANCY RAY: Oh no, oh bad joke.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, the JP said... he was just appalled, *how could ya'll talk like this?* And you know I tried to explain to him that's the way we make it. And it's always jokes and stuff and...

NANCY RAY: Well, what about uh... were there any cases that you were not able to solve that really just stick with you?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: There was one case that bugs me, will bug me forever. It was a child abuse case... worked a lot of those back in those days. In the very beginning, there was a little guy named Henry Nolan who, dead now, was with Child Protective Services. And Henry came over to my office one... I was still a baby Ranger. And he started telling me these things about what people do to children. And I'm sitting here listening. I've never heard this kind of stuff. And I'm trying to decide whether I'm going throw him out the window or down the stairs. I've heard about all I'm gonna hear. But Henry convinced me to go and get some training in child abuse investigations. And I got some from Child Protective Services, wound up going to the FBI Academy doing some services, and wound up teaching the thing later on. But we worked uh multiple cases. We had, well I can think of, you know, 58 different cases that we made in child abuse there because we were the only ones working them. And Sam, our DA, was great... Sam Oatman was the DA, still the best friend I've got. Uh Sam would not plead anybody for child

abuse. He went to trial. The public would make that decision. And we convicted them all, except one. And he was the sheriff of Blanco County, a sheriff I'd worked with named Sherman Broadbeck. And I worked this case and uh you know this little girl was a stepdaughter and it was a, it was a good case. We indicted Sherman and went to trial and uh this little girl testified. The jury, they were... Sherman was, was a very popular sheriff. And the mistake, the first mistake was the judge wouldn't give us a change of venue... Tried the sheriff in his own county that he was popular in. And we had three jurors that sandbagged us. You know they went in, at the end of it, it was deadlocked. And there were three not guilty and the rest were guilty. And the, when we interviewed... I always interviewed my juries after a case because I wanted to find out what you liked and didn't like. And you know I had... one of the things I did, I liked to know what little bitty weird ideas... it was amazing what they would come up with you know. But anyways, they was three of these jurors told us *we've known Sherman since he was born and he wouldn't do nothing like that*. So they sandbagged us. But after this little girl was put through this extensive trial, she would not testify again. And so, he got off. Case wound up getting dismissed and he's working for a sheriff's office right now in South Texas and he is a child molester. Uh it was about uh, I can't remember, a few years later... I had, I got a call from Georgetown Police Department and they said, didn't you work a case on a sheriff? And I said yeah. And they said could you come over? So I drove over to Georgetown and they had a girl, a black girl who had been kidnapped by a man who said he was a police officer and she described him. He had a radio in his car and described his car. And said he told her he was taking her downtown. Well she realizes right quick that they were headed to the country. And when he pulled up at a stop sign, she jumps out and runs. She's handcuffed and gets away. And so, and she's giving them a composite drawing and it looks like the old sheriff. So I go in there and look at it and I say yeah.

She gives me the description of his car down to where, to what the radio looks like. And uh so, I went and got a photo line up of him and gave it to her and she goes, *looks just like him*. And I said well, that's... are you sure that's him? She said I don't know about that but that looks just like him. Well the DA won't take that, *it looks just like him*. And we were never able to get her to go beyond that and so he didn't make it. There's no telling how many kids he's molested over the years. And I still will see him occasionally at the sheriffs' deal in Austin.

NANCY RAY: How do you, how do you deal with that?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, it's pretty tough. But you know it's one of those things it's not worth getting yourself into... You know I would like to take him out and pull his head plumb off but it's not worth...

NANCY RAY: Can't do it.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: He'll get his in the end.

NANCY RAY: Someday. Well what, of all the things that you've accomplished...let me ask you, did you ever have any special honors that you probably don't want to talk about? Any commendations or anything that would be...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, you know it was, I had, they sent me my old personnel file which uh the captain did after I retired. And I'd forgotten about a lot of that old stuff. I had 27 letters of commendation. From grand juries, district attorneys, judges, juries, uh and of course you know when we did the uh kidnapping case I was telling you about, you know, the legislature you know gave a commendation to all of us and named us by name and the governor presented it to us.

NANCY RAY: Well of all those things, which one are you the most proud about?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, you know, I don't know.

NANCY RAY: Or maybe not those things but anything in your career?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well the main thing that I, you know, I always... of course I liked the, you know, the hunt, I loved the hunt... To get the bad guy, to play to work the case out. But you know, solving the case you know and protecting the family. And that's one of the things people don't understand either about policeman, especially in homicide and rapes and stuff... is you get real close to the family when you're working a case. And when they grieve, you do to. And there was a lot of that you know. I don't know how many dead bodies I've dealt with over the, over the years. But uh the main thing, like I said, people can write nice letters and that was good, I really appreciated it. But you know just the ones that you was able to take a little pressure off Mom and Dad, solving their kid's case or... You know this little old case that they made, they filmed up here in Gainesville. We got a call one day out on the interstate uh in Gainesville. And of course as happens many times in a Ranger's life, the sheriff's office made the call and uh they found a guy on the side of the road... with a pair of blue jeans on, no shirt, a sock in his mouth, a ligature around his neck, and 37 stab wounds. Well they worked the crime scene and worked the case and about four days later, they're saying *oh hell, let's call the Rangers*. So I get a call. So I got over there and uh the chief deputy and I started working together. Uh Mike Stevens, well he's a super guy, he's retired now. And we worked that case around the clock. The guy was, the victim was a drug addict, a throwaway, a worthless everything you know. And that was one of the questions asked later on the TV interview. And, and several people said why are ya'll working so hard? You know this guy's just a crum bum... well he was a person you know and we owed him the same thing that owed everybody else you know. He didn't deserve to be killed. And that was kind of the thing you know, we were here for the victim. You know, uh I've always ran as Republican and been Republican and I had a county judge that I didn't agree with every now and then. And one of the things he was talking about, he came from manufacturing. And

had been a CEO and everything and he said you know I don't like you because you're a liberal. And I said you know the problem is we're not communicating. You're a CEO who's used to cutting, getting, refining down and I said I'm a policeman used to going to the aid and help of the people. And you're used to cutting and making them do without. And I said that's why we ain't never gonna get on the same page you know. Call me a liberal if you want to but I'm here to help the people, you know, that's what I do.

NANCY RAY: And you did it well I'm sure.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: That's what I did.

NANCY RAY: Well, you talked about your most favorite case. Was that your... also your most satisfying or is there one that gives you a lot of satisfaction in solving?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, I don't know. You know one of the, I guess the things that I like to brag about, one is I never had a... I had one hung jury. And I never had a case found not guilty, ever, from trooper on. And the uh, when I left the Ranger service, I only had one unsolved murder and that was in, in Burnet. Uh we found a skeleton and didn't, we still don't know who he is. But we solved every... the rest of them all those years.

NANCY RAY: That's a good record.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: So I was kind of proud of that.

NANCY RAY: Now what year did you retire?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Retired September of '96.

NANCY RAY: '96 and that was here in Sherman. We really didn't talk much about Sherman. Did anything of big interest happen here, can you think of anything that stands in your mind?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, during that time period, there was a lot of cases that we worked. There was you know the case in Gainesville I was telling you about that we wound up solving.

Uh that turned out to, we started out with the one little throwaway guy and at the end of it, we had arrested a serial murderer. At one time we had seven bodies that we had on the ground that we could link back. This guy there's no telling... he was a traveling truck driver. And he would pick up prostitutes in New Jersey and drive to Galveston and throw the body out. And you know we had bodies in Mount Pleasant, you know we had multiple bodies. And uh even to the point he killed his own mama. And we were, we had identified him and was looking for him whenever the captain called and said that he heard that Richardson Police Department was looking for a guy named Terry Brown... wanted to know if it was the same one. And sure enough it was. Mike and I drove up to Richardson and met with the detectives up there and said we'd like to interview Terry Brown because he's murdered person and we have several other bodies. And he said uh, they said well you... we're gonna talk to him and when we get through doing our thing, you know, we'll let you country boys in on it you know. We'll talk to him. And I said well please don't talk about mine. They said well we'll get you a confession. I said please don't talk about mine. So they go in there and they come out with a confession on their murder. Well unfortunately in the very beginning, they guy says I want a lawyer, you know the basic stuff. And when they got to trial, the judge threw everything they had out in their case and we, with our little case with a throwaway little drug addict was the only thing that stood between a serial murderer walking back out on the streets. And that's how important that little throwaway guy got real quick. And uh of course I was lucky. We sent word and, and again, going back to that Ranger thing, you know... I left word with the jailer to tell Terry that there's a Ranger that would like to see him if he requested. Well of course he had asked for a lawyer so until he got a lawyer or he asked me to come, I couldn't legally go see him. But anyways, he did, he asked. And so I went down and sat down with him and uh told him, and he gave up his rights for a

lawyer and just wanted to visit. And we visited I got to talking about his conscience and we got into a bunch of stuff. And it wasn't long and he gave me a whole confession, told me everything and how he did it and the whole nine yards. And uh the big city boys had told me you know, don't worry about anything because everything is videotaped and you're in a room and everything's recorded. So when we step out, you know, they hand me the recorder and my mistake is I didn't check it. So I drive back to the DA and she plugs it in and there's no sound on it.

NANCY RAY: Oh no.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: So I turn around, drive all the way back, get Terry back out and we do a handwritten confession which I should have done to start with. But uh we went to trial in, on a change of venue, in Fort Worth. And we convicted the guy and he's doing life in prison, in the trial. So it worked out real well. And that was another thing you know, a throwaway little guy turned out to be solving a serial murderer and no telling how many more would have died.

NANCY RAY: Um mmm. OK, I'm gonna ask you to think about your legacy as a Ranger. You know people, hopefully someone will look at this history and they will say Johnny Waldrip, he was really... what would you want people to say about you?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, most people will say bad tempered. My nickname during that name was Mad dog.

NANCY RAY: Mad dog...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Uh other than Captain Mitchell, most of them said I was a supervisor's nightmare. Most, I learned as a young Highway Patrolman that you know to learn that manual inside and out and they wasn't gonna put nothing on you. So, but... you know I worked for Bobby Prince, Joe Wilie, Captain Mitchell, you know we never... other than John Harold Hanna,

I never had a problem. And going back to a story I forgot to tell you. You know I was trying to make Highway Patrol sergeant and I kept coming out number 20? Well when I went in and made Motor Vehicle Theft, Terry Green was the personnel guy there. And Terry came out, and of course we got to know each other pretty well going to all these interviews. He said I'm so glad you quit taking the Highway Patrol test. And I said well Terry, what happened? He said well every time you did, John Hanna would write a letter to the interview board talking about how bad you were. And that would, he said you was never gonna make it so. Good old John Hanna.
(laughter)

NANCY RAY: OK, so you had a bad temper. Is that really what you think your legacy is?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, no, you know. I, I think you know the thing that everybody will remember, once I started on a case, I didn't give up you know. And I think that was one of the things that you know the captain talked about on that throwaway guy. We worked around the clock. I slept on the couch in the Ranger office, you know, a couple of nights to be able to stay in Dallas and to interview people. And you know, I just, I don't give up. And I solved my cases and I made good cases and uh Fred Cummings gave me a good compliment one time. He said if anything ever happened to his family, he wanted me to handle the investigation. So...

NANCY RAY: That would be a high compliment, surely would.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: It was.

NANCY RAY: Well, if you were giving advice to someone who is just becoming a Ranger, what would you tell that person?

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, of course there are so many things to being a Ranger, it's you know... first of all they need to not forget where they came from. Uh I was so disappointed about a year ago uh... Charlie Fleming and I went to a qualification with the Rangers. And there

were three young Rangers standing there talking. And Charlie and I was walking up and one of them looked up and said, *uh oh, look out, there comes two of them old retired son of bitches.* And you know it hurt my feelings and Charlie's and of course you know... we didn't go back and the captain asked me one time why we didn't go and I told him basically the story. And he said well who said it? And I said I ain't no snitch. So but you know just... I don't think, and I think it's our fault. Not bad mouthing the young guy. When I came on board, we, the Rangers first of all were older. I was 32 years old and I was a kid and the average Ranger was about 50. But Captain Mitchell and all of them said you take care of your retired guys. You know when we have a meeting, you go get your retired Ranger and you bring him. You know you make sure your retired Ranger knows what's going on. We showed respect. You know the young Ranger comes into the company, he's the "hey boy." And he has to "hey boy" until somebody takes his place. You know the older guys you give respect. They don't do that anymore. Uh Captain Mitchell you know when Troy got killed and Captain Mitchell would assign a Ranger to take care of the widow you know. We took care of our family. You know Verceli... you know I mowed her yard and changed the oil in her car and helped her with her checkbook and everything. And that's the way we did it, we were family people. And the young Rangers don't. And we don't have, we've had such a turnover too but we don't teach our young Rangers to take care of the old Rangers. You know they have moved so fast. After I retired, they made a ruling uh that a retired Ranger couldn't come to a company meeting anymore. They told us that you can sit out in the hallway. If you want to devastate a bunch of old guys, you know, tell you you're not trusted to sit in this room anymore. And that's when it started. And you know things have kind of come around, evolved, and we don't have the camaraderie... we used to... there was never anybody made Ranger unless all the Rangers had heard of you. And we used to go down to in-service school

and when the Rangers would have in service and they'd bring in all the old Rangers and we would, and I was one of them when I... stand up, introduce yourself to the retired guys. Explain to these guys why you're a Ranger you know. And now, I mean we didn't even get invited to the last in-service school. So you know it, it's changed. You know I had been retired... well I hadn't been retired long because I retired in '96 and went to work for the sheriff in January '97 when I was chief deputy. And I had a young Ranger came in my office, in the chief deputy's office, and of course looks on the wall and there's my Ranger stuff. He stands there and looks around and he says, was you a Ranger? And I said yeah, I retired. Said I took over Charlie Fleming's spot and he said who was Charlie Fleming? And I said let me tell you something, son. You better know who you're talking to or you could get... and this young man's daddy was a Ranger and that I had worked with and Charlie had worked with for 20 years. But it's amazing how quick they forget. They don't care or it's changed so much. And you know I was talking to Ray. We went to Captain Sweaney's retirement and Ray and I were standing there talking and I kept seeing these little pimply-faced kids walking around. I said Ray, what is that? And he said well that's some new Rangers. And I said well, who is he? And he said I can't tell you. And I said Coffman, nobody ever made Ranger unless we'd heard of them before. And he said we have had 32 vacancies in the last twelve months. We never had more than two and you know that's another problem which scares me. Because it's so easy for that one or two to slip in that will you know really hurt the history of the Rangers.

NANCY RAY: Well, the history of the Rangers is important and that's why we wanted to speak with you today...

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well I'm glad you did.

NANCY RAY: To learn a little about your life and so I say thank you for the time. And also, thank you for the service you gave to our state.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Well, it was, I tell everybody it was so much fun.

NANCY RAY: That's what we've heard.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: It was *so* much fun. You just never knew.

NANCY RAY: That's great. Well, we thank you.

JOHNNY WALDRIP: Thank you.