

# Straight Talk

*The Newsmagazine of the Former Texas Rangers Association*



## Texas Ranger Day & History Symposium

August 5, 2017 was the inaugural date for the Texas Ranger Day & History Symposium on the grounds of the Texas Rangers Heritage Center. The event kicked off at 9:45 am with an address from Foundation President, Retired Ranger Joe Davis. Chairman Chad Stary read the proclamation from the mayor of Fredericksburg, Mrs. Linda Langerhans. This proclamation went on to declare August 5, 2017 as Texas Ranger Day. The day saw a large list of activities for everyone, including Ranger camps from our living history group, canon demonstrations, period weapon and equipment displays, and much more.

After the opening ceremony, we began the history symposium with a

talk from Donaly Brice, Texas State Library & Archives (Ret.), on the great Comanche raid of 1840. Dr. Bill O'Neal, state historian of Texas, spoke on the evolution of the revolving pistol. Dr. Richard B. McCaslin, Lone Star professor of history at UNT spoke in regards to John S. "RIP" Ford as a Texas Ranger. Attendees listened to Chuck Parsons, western history author, talk about Capt. John R. Hughes. Dr. Harold Weiss, professor of history (Ret.), lectured on Capt. Bill McDonald & the Rise of the Rangers as Detectives and Dr. James Kearney, professor of German studies, UT-Austin addressed Capt. Bill McDonald & the Stanford-Townsend feud. We couldn't have been more pleased with the quality of

the lectures and caliber of authors and historians to speak on these topics.

We are thrilled with the outpouring of excitement and support we received from the attendees of the day's events. A very special thanks to our sponsors, the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, the Hampton Inn & Suites and the Sunday House Inn from the FTRF, the Headquarters Co. Rangers and all of our loyal and dedicated members. We will be able to build off of the success we had with this Texas Ranger Day and develop it into an annual event that grows in size and scope every year. We hope you will be able to attend next year's Texas Ranger Day on August 4, 2018, and celebrate with us the history and the legacy of the Texas Rangers.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Former Texas Rangers Association

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### Historian Emeritus

**Connie Rodriguez**



I would like to start off by saying what an honor it is to serve as your president, and I will work as hard as possible to be a benefit to the Former Texas Rangers Association and to the Foundation. As president of the Former Texas Rangers Association, I must say we have started out being very busy. There have been several issues that needed to be addressed, so everyone just jumped right in and went to work. I am encouraged by the hard work of our Foundation Board and I know each member has only the highest regard for the Texas Rangers. I am excited about the future of both the Association and Foundation and I look forward to being your president as we move forward on Phase II of the Texas Rangers Heritage Center. What a fantastic opportunity we all have to be a part of this adventure and see it come to fruition.

As we approach the 200th Anniversary of the Texas Rangers, we must look back on history and those who came before us and helped build the reputation we have all enjoyed. As I look back, I am so honored to have been a part of the most prestigious law enforcement group in the United States, if not the world. Everywhere you may travel, everyone has heard of the Texas Rangers and their reputation for getting the job done. As I look to the future, I am encouraged by the young men and women who now form the Texas Rangers and I realize we have left the

Rangers in very capable hands. The work a Texas Ranger does today has changed so much over just my lifetime that I wish I could be here 200 more years to watch the Texas Rangers of the future continuing to build on the reputation of the Texas Rangers of old.

On Saturday, August 5, 2017, we celebrated Texas Ranger Day at the Texas Rangers Heritage Center, as designated by the mayor of Fredericksburg. We enjoyed a large crowd who came to hear about the history of the Texas Rangers and to see the progress that has been made to date on the Texas Rangers Heritage Center. There were several outstanding speakers who kept the crowd interested with Texas Ranger history all day. I saw many old friends and enjoyed meeting several new friends. I would like to thank all of the men and women who worked so hard to make this event a success. I would like to extend a special thanks to all of the volunteers who so willingly gave of their time. I would also like to thank Erin and Brandi for all of their behind-the-scenes work that we often times don't see, without these two ladies I am not sure we could pull these events off.

In closing I would again like to say what an honor it is to be your president and I will work as hard as I can for each of you to carry on the reputation and traditions of the Texas Rangers.

**Best Regards,**

**Gary S. Henderson, President  
 Texas Ranger, Retired**

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Former Texas Rangers Foundation



I hope this message finds each of you doing well and staying cool as the Texas summer has arrived. I also hope that each of you have had a chance to come to Fredericksburg and see Phase I of the Texas Rangers Heritage Center (TRHC). If you have not already done so, please put it on your agenda. I promise you will be impressed and proud to know that you were a part of making it possible. Visitors have come from all across the United States and several foreign countries. It's amazing how much they know about the Texas Rangers. They love what they see and are anxious to come back when Phase II is complete.

Speaking of Phase II, our Director of Development, Glen Cosper, has created what is called "The 1823 Special Campaign." It will become the nuts and bolts for the fundraising of Phase II. The bicentennial (200th anniversary) of the Texas Rangers will be in 2023. The projection date is to have Phase II of the TRHC opened by then. It will take a lot of hard work, determination and dedication by all of us to make that happen. But it is possible and we can make it happen if we set our sights to do so. It's the Ranger way; they always fought against the odds, being out numbered but because of their courage and determination, they succeeded. We can do the same by joining together to make it happen. There are various ways that each of you can help. Give us a call, I am always available to talk to you about how you can help.

2017 has been a very busy year, but a great year for the Foundation. We have had several successful fundraising events and I know many of you were in attendance for a few of them. "Celebrate Texas" was held on March 31 - April 1 on the grounds of the THRC. We had a great turn out with over 700 attending. The event included an early living history Ranger Camp circa 1880, an early Indian Camp including teepees and performances by various Indian tribes. You would have thought you were back in the 1800's. There was even cannon firing and shootouts. Also on the grounds were songs and tales of the "Old Chisholm Trail." Many thanks to K.R. Wood and all his performers who put on this fantastic show that was definitely a crowd pleaser. This will be an annual event, so put it on your calendar for next year.

That Saturday night we held our other fundraising

event, "Boots & Badges", for a large crowd that included a chuckwagon steak dinner, auction and a great entertainer - Gary P. Nunn. This will also be an annual event at the TRHC.

On May 20, we held the "Shoot the Movie Guns." Al Frisch of Hollywood Guns & Props in Santa Clarita, California furnished the guns, ammo, targets and you name it for a great event. Participants could shoot the guns of their choice that had been used in movies and TV. They include guns of John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Chuck Connors and James Stewart just to name a few. The shoot was held at the historic Steiler Ranch near Comfort. I want to take this opportunity to thank the owners, Becky Patterson and her son Kit, for letting us use the ranch. A special thanks to the Texican Rangers SASS club for the use of their range. We gained a lot of exposure from this shoot thanks to Al Frisch from the advertising in many magazines such as Guns & Ammo and others. A special thanks to Steve Adkisson, owner of VooDoo Tactical, Inc. out of Gardena, California. VooDooTactical, Inc. furnished a lot of the supplies for the shoot such as the shooting glasses, gun cases, tactical gun bags and goodie bags. Al is currently working on another shoot for next year, which will be even bigger and better, including the Wounded Warriors as participants.

August 5th is and will always be designated "Texas Ranger Day." History records that on August 5, 1823 Stephen F. Austin hired 10 men to act as the common defense and were called Rangers. This year we held a History Symposium at the Texas Rangers Heritage Center. A special thanks to our locally owned sponsors, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn and Sunday House Inn.

I hope all of you are planning to attend our Silver Stars & Six Guns event this year. If you haven't heard, our Board of Directors approved to move it to historic San Antonio this year. You should have already gotten a save-the-date card with all the details. It will be held at the Hyatt Regency Riverwalk, just a stone's throw from the Alamo. Our Gala Committee headed by Advisory Director, Buck Murray has been meeting regularly to make this one of the best and biggest events we have had. You won't want to miss it, so make your reservations now if you haven't done so, as space is always limited at this event. A well-known celebrity in San Antonio and former TV weatherman, Bill Dante, will be the master of ceremonies.

Thanks again to all of you who support the FTRF and have made it one of the greatest organizations of its kind. The FTRF also supports one of the greatest law enforcement agencies of its kind, the Texas Rangers.

Joe B. Davis, President  
Texas Ranger, Retired

### PRESIDENT

Joe B. Davis, Texas Rangers, Retired,  
Fredericksburg

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# FTRF CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS



The words "Texas Ranger" said it all..

The great thing about being a member of the FTRF is getting to know the Texas Rangers who served our great state. To get to know them personally and their families. To see that all live by the character traits of courage, determination, integrity, dedication and respect. There are a lot of books written about those traits and all are well documented. But again, to know these Rangers and see it first-hand is a true gift.

A couple of months back we lost Captain Sessums. I attended his memorial service, but I was not able to attend the funeral as my daughter Melyn was graduating from Texas A&M that same morning. Captain Sessums was a good man and I was so thankful to get to know him and his very sweetheated wife, Sandy. Captain Sessums joined the DPS in 1960 and served as a Texas Ranger from 1969 to 1982. He will be missed at the FTRF/FTRA.

A few weeks later, Kim and I drove out to Center Point to visit his gravesite and pay our respects. As a point of historical fact, Center Point has more Texas Rangers buried there than any other cemetery in the State of Texas. To date, there are 36 Rangers buried there. As we visited the grave, I saw Captain Wood's grave site and there were the words, "Texas Ranger". A very simple but powerful gravestone. I was fortunate to meet the Captain near the end of his life and he would call me by name when he saw me. Captain Wood lived to be 99 and was last qualified to carry around age 97-98. The real deal.

*"As a supervisor, he didn't lean on you heavily", Sr. Capt. Bruce Casteel said. "You knew what was expected, you did what was expected of you. There was so much respect for him from his company."*

So I took a picture of the gravestone and shared it with a few friends with words "those two words say it all". Nothing else is needed; he was a Texas Ranger. It sums up his whole life - there is nothing more to be said. He accepted the challenge, he lived the life, he was and he died a Texas Ranger. I thought how powerful that stone will be to all who see it from now on, especially to those who understand what those words mean.

Which gets us to our main purpose of the FTRF. The Foundation does and shall exist to support the historical preservation, charitable and educational efforts and programs of the Former Texas Rangers Association. Specifically, the Foundation's goals are to bring Texans to the understanding that these character traits of the Texas Rangers, *courage, determination, integrity, dedication, and respect* - have been, and continue to be, fundamental and critical to the greatness of Texas. To encourage the next generation of Texans to practice these traits with a goal of perpetuating our heritage as a truly unique region and citizenry...

I would ask each of you to help further our reach and ensure our Foundation is living up to all it can be and that each of us as members lives out the above mission, so that no one can ever say they don't know what a Texas Ranger is, what they did for our State, what they do today and what their purpose is for the future.

## A few ways you can help:

1. Make a monthly contribution to the Foundation - I can assure you all that the Foundation office is a busy place and there is a ton of work that goes on each day. My position has allowed me to see first-hand the amount of work it takes to oversee a foundation and to assist where I can. If each member could make a monthly contribution in some respect it would cover our monthly expenses and allow all other fundraising efforts to be focused 100% on Phase II. The finance committee has been working hard and meeting often to assist on the financial operations and make sure we are operating efficiently.
2. 1823 Campaign - this is for Phase II fundraising efforts. We are working on dividing up the state into regions and preparing for a calling program. If you have any one person, foundations or a company that would be favorable to our mission statement, please call the office and forward those contacts. Gathering funds for Phase II will take gifts at all levels and all of us doing our part.
3. Volunteer - We can always use extra help. We are always in need of volunteers to give tours and assist at the TRHC. We can also use folks to help on the education program and other events that we host during the year, as well as helping our staff in the office.

Respects,

*Chad Stary*  
Chad D. Stary  
Foundation Chairman



# Former Texas Ranger Foundation Scholarship Fund

As a member of the Former Texas Ranger Foundation/ Association, one of our duties is to administer a scholarship program and support charitable and educational efforts of the Former Texas Ranger Association. This is stated in our mission statement. We sincerely encourage you to support our efforts. This year we received 26 well-deserved scholarship applications from Texas Rangers' sons and daughters getting ready for college. This is the largest amount ever received.

All of the applicants are deserving of receiving our help. Unfortunately, we are limited in how many scholarships we can financially grant. As we all know, college costs have increased and will continue to do so in the future.



Our hope is that you continue to support and donate to this worthy cause for the future of our children. Any amount will be appreciated-just mark your checks "FTRF Scholarship Fund." I am very proud to say that thus far, we have given out more than \$125,000 in scholarships. Please help us continue supporting and encouraging our future leaders of America.

Thanks again for all of your past, present and future support.

*Tom Rearick*  
FTRF Scholarship Chairman

Former Texas Rangers Foundation  
103 Industrial Loop Suite 700  
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

## SAVE *The* DATE

FORMER TEXAS RANGERS FOUNDATION

SILVER STARS AND SIX GUNS

17TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

SEPTEMBER-29<sup>TH</sup> *thru* OCTOBER-1<sup>ST</sup> 2017

HYATT REGENCY SAN ANTONIO RIVER WALK

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS  
[AWS.PASSKEY.COM/GO/2017TEXASRANGERGALA](http://AWS.PASSKEY.COM/GO/2017TEXASRANGERGALA)  
ENTERTAINMENT  
GRAMMY AWARD WINNER  
BOBBY FLORES AND THE YELLOW ROSE BAND  
SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCE BY  
TEXAS MUSIC HALL OF FAME JOHNNY RODRIGUEZ  
TICKETS  
830-990-1192 OR TRHC.ORG  
MEMBER PRICE \$150 PER PERSON  
NON-MEMBER PRICE \$175 PER PERSON  
TABLES AND SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

## Happy Trails



Al Cuellar  
1945 - 2017  
Co. D, 1978-1996



Billy Joe Gunn  
1930 - 2017  
Co. F, 1966-1986



Hatty Lucinda Sagebiel  
1921 - 2017  
A longtime friend &  
supporter of the FTRA



Capt. Grady Sessums  
1937 - 2017  
Co. E / A, 1969-1982

# *Texas Rangers Heritage Center Pavilion*



## *Leasing options now available*



(Above): The back of the pavilion opens onto a lush, grassy courtyard with a stone walkway leading down to the amphitheater and gas fire pit. (Below): Our industrial HVAC catering kitchen is equipped to handle your caterer's needs and ensure your event goes off without a hitch.



Our 9,000 sq. ft. pavilion is quickly becoming a top event destination in the Texas Hill Country. With tabled seating for up to 350 people, HVAC rest rooms, catering kitchen with full amenities, state of the art audio/video and a prime location off Hwy. 290 in Fredericksburg, this site makes an excellent choice for your next family event or business function.



For information regarding leasing options, please contact Erin Hall at: 830-990-1192  
[erinh@formertexasrangers.org](mailto:erinh@formertexasrangers.org)  
[trhc.org/events-we-host](http://trhc.org/events-we-host)

Texas Rangers Heritage Center  
1618 E. Main St., Fredericksburg, TX 78624

# FTRA Annual Meeting 2017

On May 6, 2017, the Association gathered together to hold its annual meeting of Rangers and their descendants in Fredericksburg at the Texas Rangers Heritage Center. This is always the highlight of the year for many FTRA members and has been a tradition since the Association's inception in 1897. Retired Ranger Lee Young kicked off the meeting with a warm welcome and recognition of those Rangers and their wives in attendance as well as descendants of Rangers and Foundation members.

President Young presided over the business meeting, a presentation to the local Boy Scout Troop #511 was made and members enjoyed another great meal from Bill Miller B-B-Q of San Antonio. Association Chaplain Rusty Frasier presided over the memorial service for Retired Ranger Joaquin Jackson. Almost every Ranger present that day had a story or memory to share with those in attendance. Ms. Jewely Van Valin-Jackson, Ranger Jackson's widow, was present and gave a heartfelt talk about her time with him. It was a wonderful service and will be remembered by everyone in attendance.

As the meeting drew to a close, the presidential gavel was passed to Retired Ranger Gary Henderson of Lubbock Co. In his address, he expressed his honor and gratitude to serve in this capacity and to continue the great legacy of the Association, its Rangers and their descendants.





The Foundation's Headquarters Company Rangers re-enactment group



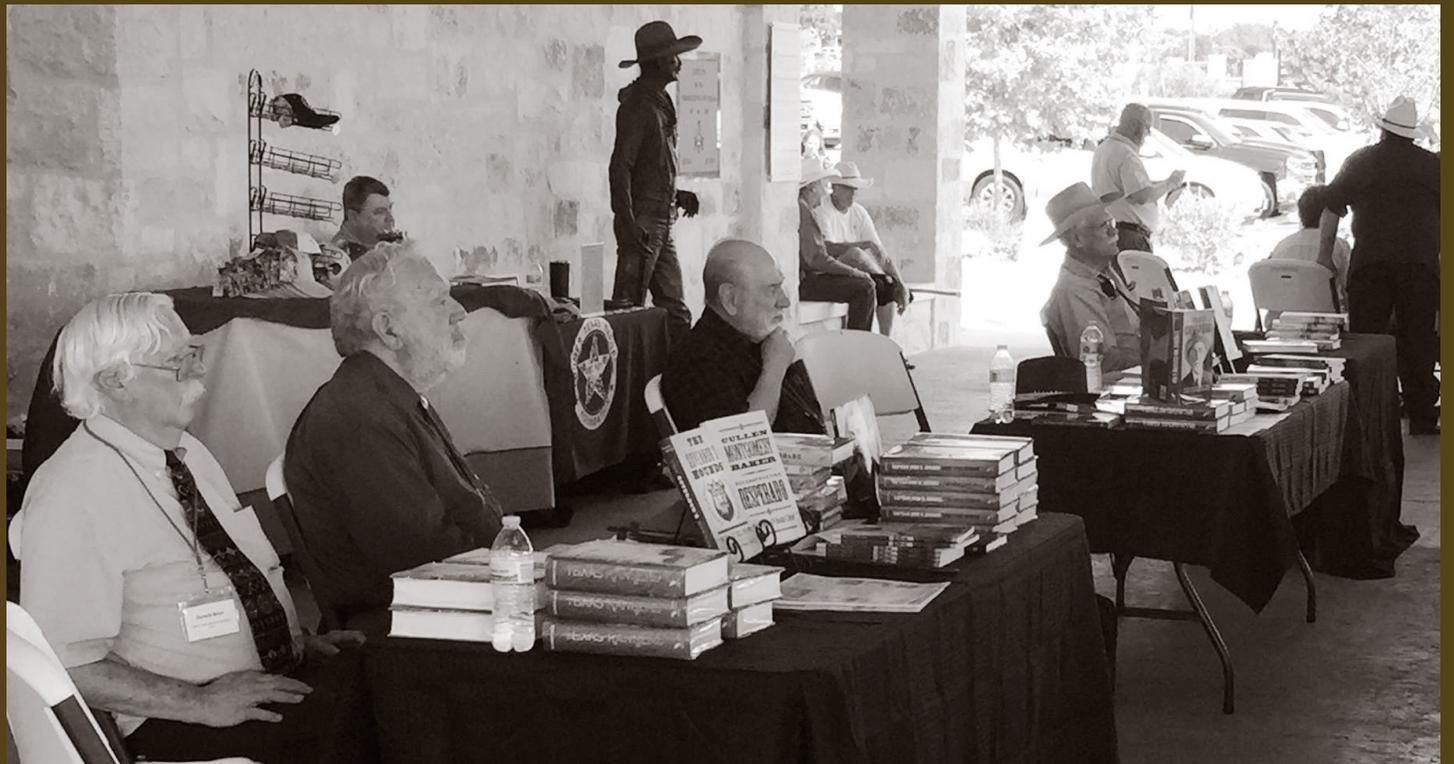
A portion of Cletus Klein's collection of firearms



One of the cannons used for firing demonstrations



Attendees of the Texas Ranger Day History Symposium, listening to one of the day's engaging lectures



Some of the authors and historians who were slated to speak for the Texas Ranger Day History Symposium

## Major John B. Jones Masonic Rangering Co.

I had the privilege of attending Corsicana Masonic Lodge in June in order to assist in the presentation of a Ranger camp certificate to the lodge, and to see Grand Master Jerry Kirby invested with the rank of Major and installed as the commander of the John B. Jones Masonic Ranger Company. This was an especially momentous occasion, as John B. Jones was a member of Corsicana Lodge for many years, including the time that he was the grand master of Masons in Texas, and the commander of the famous Frontier Battalion of the Texas Rangers.

Respectfully,

*Dick Brown*

Chairman of the Major John B. Jones Masonic Rangering Co.

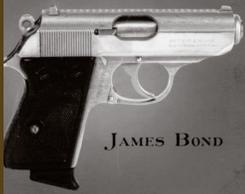
*Bottom left:* Masons Ervin Richards, Joe Davis, Kenneth A. Dunnigan, Master of Corsicana Lodge and Grand Master of Masons in Texas, Jerry Kirby, hold Major John B. Jones's commandery sword at Corsicana Lodge #174.

*Bottom right:* John B. Jones' sword, showing his name in relief on the blade.

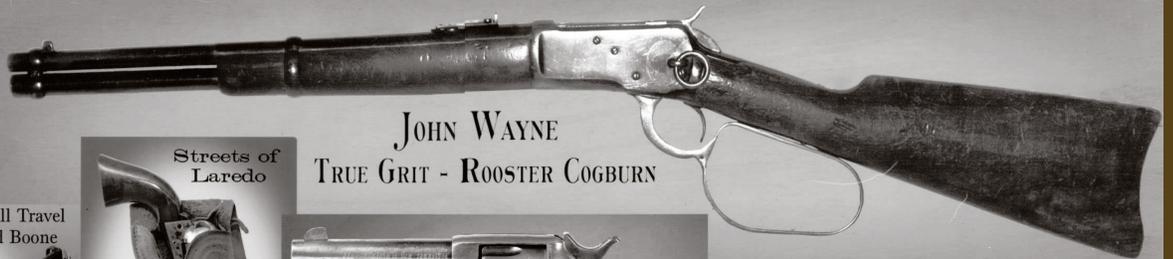
The Major John B. Jones Masonic Ranger Company will hold its annual meeting in Fredericksburg at Ft. Martin Scott on October 28th at 4:00 pm. See our Facebook page (Maj John B. Jones Masonic Rangering Company) to keep up with our activities! If you are not on our email list and would like to be, send an email to [dickb@crosskranch.org](mailto:dickb@crosskranch.org) and be sure to reference "JBJMRC email list."



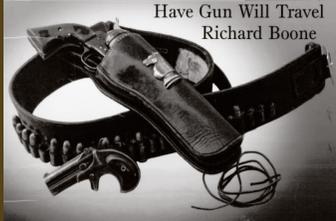
# SHOOT THE MOVIE GUNS!



JAMES BOND



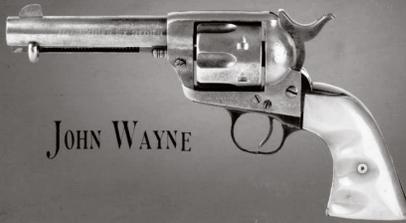
JOHN WAYNE  
TRUE GRIT - ROOSTER COGBURN



Have Gun Will Travel  
Richard Boone



Streets of  
Laredo



JOHN WAYNE



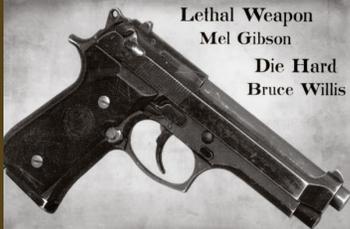
Outlaw Josie Wales  
Clint Eastwood



Wild Bunch  
William Holden



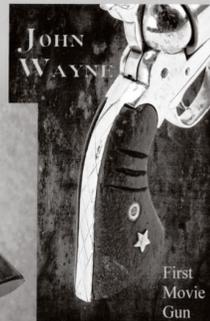
She Wore a Yellow Ribbon  
Fort Apache  
Rio Grande



Lethal Weapon  
Mel Gibson  
Die Hard  
Bruce Willis



Dirty Harry  
Clint Eastwood



JOHN  
WAYNE

First  
Movie  
Gun



Hidalgo





On May 20-21, 2017, the Former Texas Rangers Foundation joined with Hollywood Guns & Props for "Shoot the Movie Guns," a premier shooting event that offered the public the opportunity to shoot the actual guns used by the biggest film and television stars spanning decades. The event was hosted by the historic Stieler Hill Ranch and the Texican Rangers Shooting Club. Participants were able to shoot weapons such as John Wayne's Colt revolvers and Winchester carbines, Clint Eastwood's "Dirty Harry" .44 magnums, "Outlaw Josie Wales" Walkers, Bruce Willis' "Die Hard" and Mel Gibson's "Lethal Weapon" Beretta 92F pistols. The aforementioned iconic guns were just a few of more than 70 big-star guns brought to Texas for this event. The day's activities were also open to non-shooters who wished to view the extensive displays of Hollywood guns and gadgets, on-set photos of the stars using the displayed items and a Q&A for a behind-the-scenes look into firearms in cinema with Al Frisch, owner of Hollywood Guns & Props.

Ranch owner Becky Patterson has agreed to allow a return of the expanded four-day shoot in the beautiful Texas Hill Country in 2018. Texican Ranger President Gary Powell is already working on all the details that will encompass a larger event and ensure another great success. Next year's event will be aimed at the inclusion of disabled veterans and raising funds to financially assist these American heroes. We are working right now to include one of these organizations that can help us reach this goal and increase awareness of the difficulties they face since their time in service. We hope you will be in attendance next year and participate in this event which we are sure you will never forget.





# TEXAS IRON

## GUNS OF THE TEXAS RANGERS

By Bob Moser, Capt. USA (retired)  
FTRA Weapons Historian

This is a story of an old Smith & Wesson revolver. Recently at a Belton, Texas gun show, I purchased a well-used Smith & Wesson double-action 38 Special revolver with nickel finish and mother of pearl grips. I didn't pay much as it had seen better days. There was, however, something about that caught my eye. Formerly known as a .38 Military and Police (Model of 1905) 4th change, side ejector model, 6 shot .38 S&W special caliber revolver. It was manufactured in 1916. It has a five-inch pinned barrel. A pinned barrel refers to the drilling and fitting of a small pin where the barrel mates with the frame for the purpose of added security in securing the barrel. It was one of Smith & Wesson's biggest sellers and became the standard sidearm for turn of the century city and county police.

After cleaning it up and removing the grips, which were rusted to the grip frame, it became evident that they had been untouched for many years. On the inside right grip I could see a lightly etched name, "Bert Veale." It was time to do some research. First I determined that the old Smith was most likely sold by the company of Wolf & Klar in Ft. Worth, Texas. Wolf & Klar were

two Jewish businessmen who started as jewelers and pawn brokers in turn-of-the-century Ft. Worth. In the 1920s and 1930s, they expanded into retail sporting goods and were the prominent firearms providers to Texas lawmen. They were to this time period what McBride's in Austin is to the modern Rangers. This started me looking for a lawman, hopefully a Texas Ranger, who could have owned it in 1916. Looking on page 388 in the book "Texas Ranger Biographies 1910 -1921," I found Bert Veale.

Bertram Clinton Veale was a regular Texas Ranger assigned to Company D serving on and off from 31 July 1915 to 7 February 1919. It seems that on 7 February 1919, Bert Veale was shot and killed in a drunken scrape with Texas Ranger Captain K. F. Cunningham. Captain Kinlock Faulkner Cunningham was at the time commanding Company M. While riding in a automobile three miles south of Austin, an argument ensued. They both exited the car and started shooting. Veale used a .45 revolver and shot Cunningham in the neck and would have shot him in the stomach but for his wallet deflecting the bullet. Captain Cunningham used a .45 automatic to kill Ranger Veale.

He was fired from the Rangers and charged with the murder of Ranger Veale. Ranger Veale was from Coldwell County and was buried in Houston. He was listed as single at the time of his death. Charges were eventually dismissed and K.F. Cunningham returned to Comanche, Texas where he worked in the real estate business until his death in October 1937.

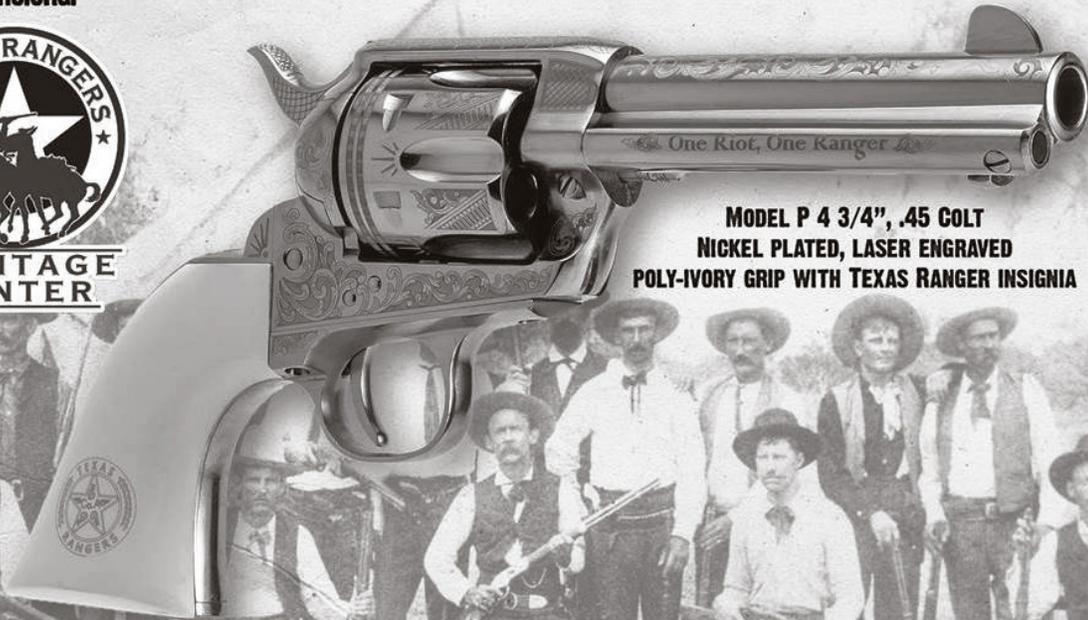
The time period this all took place, 1915-1919, was a turbulent time for south Texas and its border. Mexican bandits threatened Anglo Texas security. This was compounded with the threat from foreign invasion from countries such as Germany during World War I. This was a stressful and disruptive time for the Ranger force which was greatly increased in numbers to cope with these threats. Many were unqualified to be Rangers, such as Captains Cunningham and also Captain Fox, with his entire company who were relieved for the El Pourvenir incident. It was a troubled time and not the best for the Ranger service.

But that's another story...

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# TEXAS RANGERS TALES

*By Mike Cox, FTRA Associate Historian*

People tell stories, but so do inanimate objects. When my granddad died in 1984, I inherited everything from his library to his hunting and fishing gear. For years, I kept his old gun cabinet but finally let go of it when I came to understand it wouldn't take a burglar much more than a can opener to get inside. The cabinet was made of sheet metal, nothing like the modern gun safes that would do for a small bank.

Among the items Granddad had stored in that cabinet were four old custom-made leather handgun holsters. Two were made by the famous Texas leather man S.D. Myers, who started out in Sweetwater when it was a fairly wild and woolly West Texas town and later moved to El Paso, which was wilder and woollier. Back in the 1930s, Granddad joined the El Paso County Sheriff's Posse and on occasion, toted a revolver. Carrying a pistol either concealed or openly was not legal in those days, but members of that posse could do so for parades and the occasional manhunt. After all, they were sheriff's deputies, though serving on a volunteer-honorary basis.

Two other holsters Granddad owned were less familiar to me. I don't know what kind of pistols he had kept in them, but he had long since sold or traded off whatever they were. What is obvious is that the holsters were custom-made by someone who knew what he was doing, a fine leather craftsman. For a man who had carried a handgun as a reporter and city editor in Fort Worth back during Prohibition, and whose father had once been a gun-packing deputy sheriff in West Texas, Granddad had a cautionary attitude about pistols. "All a pistol's going to do is get you in trouble," he told me when I was a teenager.

The two empty holsters each were stamped "A.W. Brill/Maker/Austin, Tex." Unfortunately, I never got the chance to ask Granddad when he got them, what kind of "get you in trouble" piece he kept in them, and of most interest at all, who was A.W. Brill? Well, thanks largely to research done by Vintage Gun Leather, a retailer of old holsters, gun belts and scabbards, finally I know something about this man who made holsters in the Capital City long before it began proudly proclaiming its weirdness. August William Brill was welcomed into the world by his parents in Welcome, Texas on May 1, 1872. Welcome is a small town in Austin County, which had a large population of German Texans. In fact, Brill's father Henry was a farmer who had come to Texas in 1844 from Germany.

A.W. Brill (as he was later better known) apparently stayed in Austin County through his teenage years. Seventy-two hours after Independence Day in 1889, young Brill joined the Texas Militia (forerunner of the Texas National Guard) and served in a unit based in Sealy. Around the turn of the century, he moved to Austin, where he was listed in the city directory as a saddle maker and salesman at W.T. Wroe and Sons Saddlery. Somewhere along the way, Brill expanded his leather-crafting skills and began making holsters. Brill holsters, sometimes called Austin holsters, became particularly popular with Texas Rangers as well as county and city lawmen. Of course, anyone was welcome to buy one of his hand-tooled holsters.

Brill had married in 1895 and a year later his wife gave birth to a son they named Arno William. By 1912, Brill had either established his own business or bought out Wroe & Sons. Not hide-bound to saddles, holsters and other handmade leather goods, Brill survived the transition from oat-eating four-footers to gas-burning four-wheelers and by the 1920s was making everything from harnesses to holsters to leather for automobile interiors. As a youngster, Arno began working with his father, having learned the leatherworking trade from him. Though the A.W. Brill Company continued to sell holsters and other leather goods into the 1950s, they did not live by tanned cowhide alone.

In the 1940s, father and son got into the dirt-selling business as well. They either already owned or purchased for a song a fair amount of acreage around newly created Lake Travis and subdivided the acreage for sale by the lot. The senior Brill and his wife Kathleen had five grandkids, two girls and three boys. The oldest was a girl, Idanell, born on Feb. 24, 1919 in Austin. Idanell lost her grandfather August Brill on Sept. 12, 1954, when the longtime craftsman and land developer died in Bandera. Her father lived on until Aug. 2, 1968. When she and her husband John attended the funeral, only a few people knew her as Idanell. For years, she had been far better known by her nickname -- Nellie.

The granddaughter of a well-respected saddle and holster maker, Nellie's married name was Connally. She had met her future husband in 1937 while they were students at the University of Texas and married him three years later. Now, as Nellie mourned the loss of her father, her husband was well into his third and final term as governor of Texas and she was first lady. Four years, eight months and 11 days earlier, on Nov. 22, 1963, Nellie and her husband had been in the open limousine when Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy in downtown Dallas and gravely wounded the governor.

I guess the story behind those two old holsters is why Granddad held on to them until he died.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sep 29 - Oct 1, 2017      Silver Stars & Six Guns 2017  
Hyatt Regency Riverwalk - San Antonio, Bexar Co., Texas
- October 7, 2017      Memorial Cross Dedication - Casper Danz  
11:00 am      Danz Family Cemetery - Stonewall, Gillespie Co., Texas
- October 28, 2017      Maj. John B. Jones Masonic Rangering Co. Meeting  
4:00 pm      Ft. Martin Scott, Fredericksburg, Gillespie Co., Texas
- November 18, 2017      Memorial Cross Dedication - James Lee Bomar  
10:00 am      Talpa Cemetery - Talpa, Coleman Co., Texas
- December 2, 2017      A Ranger Christmas  
6:00 pm      Texas Rangers Heritage Center - Fredericksburg, Gillespie Co., Texas
- March 17, 2018      Celebrate Texas!  
10:00 am - 6:00 pm      Texas Rangers Heritage Center - Fredericksburg, Gillespie Co., Texas
- April, 2018      Boots & Badges  
TBD      Texas Rangers Heritage Center - Fredericksburg, Gillespie Co., Texas
- May 2018      FTRA Annual Meeting  
TBD      Texas Rangers Heritage Center - Fredericksburg, Gillespie Co., Texas



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# Straight Talk

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103 Industrial Loop, Ste 700  
Fredericksburg, TX 78624

## STAFF

### Publisher

Will Barkley

### Copy Editor

Erin Hall

### Graphic

Will Barkley

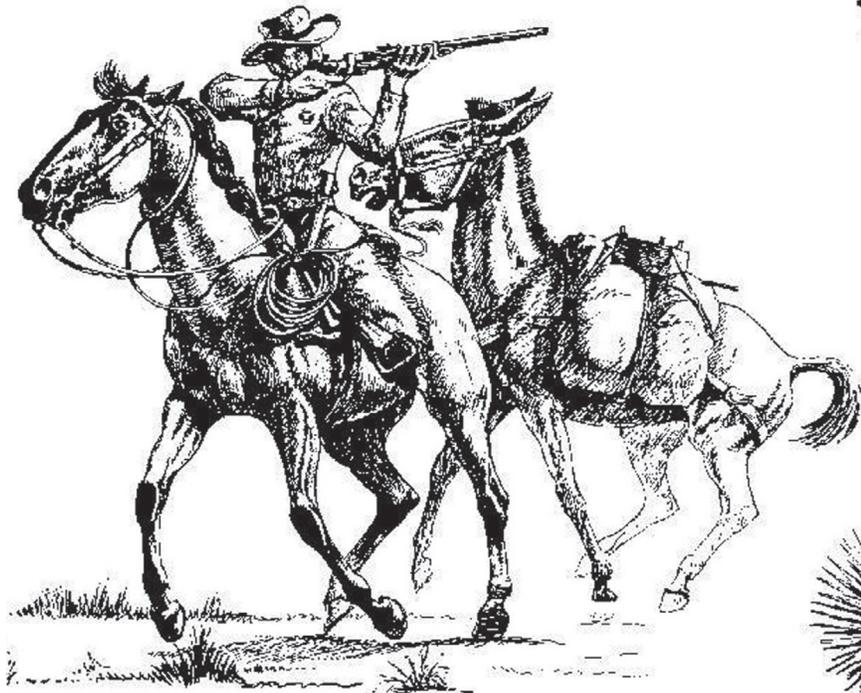
### Advertising

Former Texas Rangers Association  
Phone: 830-990-1192 - Fax: 830-990-1121  
willb@formertexasrangers.org  
www.formertexasrangers.org

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