

BULLET POINTS

Winter 2023

Former Texas Rangers Association



Welcome

This vintage Ranger photo belonged to Kerrville native Capt. Gully Cowsert (1896–1958) and is now in the FTRA archives. The image shows legendary Co. D Capt. John R. Hughes and his men taking a break in Ysleta, downriver from El Paso, in the mid-1890s. The captain rests on his saddle fourth from left.



1870 Ranger Christmas

By Mike Cox

Andrew Jackson Sowell and the other rangers left their camp near San Antonio on Nov. 19, 1870, and headed north toward the Llano Estacado—Comanche country. They rode more than 500 miles along the state's western frontier, enduring rugged terrain, harsh northers and tangling with hostile Indians. As Sowell later recalled, he and his fellow rangers "suffered...many mishaps by the way and...lost our trailer [scout] to death."

103 Industrial Loop
Suite 700
P.O. Box 3195
Fredericksburg, Texas
78624
830-990-1192
www.trhc.org

"Give me a few Texas Rangers and I will get it done." – Sam Houston

Twenty-three years later, sitting in the toasty comfort of his home in Sabinal County, Sowell described the ranger expedition in a letter the *Galveston News* published on Dec. 21, 1893. In the letter, the former ranger expanded on an incident he had only mentioned briefly in his 1884 book *Rangers and Pioneers of Texas*.

One day in the winter of 1870, the then 22-year-old Sowell and the other rangers in his company sat their camp in a spur of the Wichita Mountains, just across the Texas line from Fort Sill. Snow covered the ground.

"The outlook for us was gloomy," he wrote. "Everything snowed under; we had to scratch in snowbanks to get wood for our fires."

Not only were the rangers shivering in a cold north wind out in the middle of nowhere, they had run out of grub.

"Our supplies for man and beast were exhausted," Sowell remembered, "our poor horses could only nip at the top of the coarse dead grass which protruded above the snow."

On top of all that, it was Christmas day. That it was a white Christmas didn't much impress a bunch of young men scouting dangerous country far from hearth and home.

"Our men were mostly from the counties of Gonzales, Guadalupe and Caldwell and had been used to good dinners on Christmas day," Sowell continued. "My mind ran back to the old home in Seguin—father, mother, brothers and sisters around the well-filled table—all enjoying themselves and wondering where Jack was and how he was spending the time, and what his fare would be." Sowell and the other rangers wondered the same thing as they shivered under their blankets, their campfires more ornamental than warming.

That's when one of the rangers cheerfully announced he would be providing Christmas dinner for all. (Back then, "dinner" meant lunch.)

"A large fire was raised and burned down to coals to cook by," Sowell continued. "All the frying pans were brought out in which to prepare the meal, but as yet we could not guess what it would be as our comrade had a mysterious way of going about it that entirely left us in the dark."

Then, Santa-like, the smiling ranger produced a "small lot" of shelled corn he had found in their baggage wagon.

"Poor horses, we have robbed them," one of the rangers cracked when he saw what his colleague had scrounged from the wagon bed. (Sowell left unclear in his letter whether the ranger had gathered spilled corn or if he had found an overlooked feed bag.)

Once the Christmas corn had been equally divided into each squad's skillet, the rangers added salt and parched the kernels over the coals until they turned a golden brown. Some pieces even popped into fluffy white tidbits.

"We enjoyed it beyond our expectations," Sowell said of their simple holiday repast.

A jovial attitude made the modest meal go down even better as the rangers added more dishes to the menu—in their minds.

"Everything which could be thought of was called for and was promptly handed over in the shape of a tin platter of corn, well salted," Sowell related. "Some called for pie, sponge cake, jelly cake, custard, mince pie, fruit cake, iced tea, pound cake, dressed turkey, etc. They would receive the corn with 'thank you' and comment on its good qualities and the master hand that prepared it."

Despite their dismal surroundings and the lack of any of the delicious food items they had conjured from memories of Christmas' past, Sowell concluded, "we laughed, hurrahed and, in fact, had a good time."

Every December for the rest of his life, remembering that snowy Christmas dinner of nothing but parched horse feed, Sowell felt thankful for what he had.



Message from FTRA President Matthew Lindermann

Hello friends: This has been a great year for the association. As your president, I'd like to update you on some of the events of 2023.

- We have celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Texas Rangers throughout the year. Our annual meeting was held in Fredericksburg in May and was well attended. Membership numbers continue to grow.
- The association's 125th-year anniversary book continues to progress. We hope to have the page proofs of your submissions to review by spring. (And as you'll see below, you still have time for you or your family to be memorialized.)
- Although it was hot, participants enjoyed the annual Ranger Day in August with special guest Western reenactor Wyatt Earp.
- Twelve Ranger memorial cross ceremonies were held during the year and at least a dozen or more have already been scheduled for 2024.

- The Ranger Christmas was enjoyed by all. With over 70 new Junior Rangers being sworn in, this brings our total of new Junior Rangers to well over a hundred and fifty for the year. Hopefully, we are doing our part in recruiting future Texas Rangers with this program.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



Message from FTRF President Joe Davis

This year has really been an exciting time for the Former Texas Ranger Foundation and Association. We celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Texas Rangers (1823-2023) by holding several events throughout the state to remember the Rangers who served in the very beginning and on into the present. No other law enforcement agency has built such a legacy. The Texas Rangers are a legendary symbol of what Texas is all about.

We held our annual meeting of the Major John B. Jones Masonic Ranging Company, (MJBJMRC) in late October. This is usually an outdoor event on the historic grounds of Fort Martin Scott located next to the Texas Ranger Heritage Center (TRHC). But due to inclement weather, this year the event took place in the Fredericksburg Lodge. Even so, it was well attended by Masons from throughout the state. Our current Grand Master of Masons was sworn in as Commander of the MJBJMRC and he then swore in the new members. While the meeting was being held the ladies enjoyed playing bingo at the TRHC. At the conclusion of the meeting the men joined the ladies at the TRHC for barbeque. Grand Master G. Clay Smith presented the new members with their Foundation Memberships. The meeting adjourned following the Ranger prayer.

The following month, on November 3-4, the FTRF staged it's annual "Silver Stars & Six Guns" Gala at the Inn of the Hills Hotel and Conference Center in Kerrville. On Friday night we honored our many volunteers, members, and office staff with a dinner and entertainment. A Mexican buffet was served and our volunteers were presented with a gift for their support. We then adjourned to the Inn bar where everyone was entertained by the "Outlaw Years " band. They put on a great show, with a tribute to Willie Nelson.

Saturday night was a tribute to the Texas Rangers, past and present. The gala was well attended with over 200 guests who enjoyed a delicious steak dinner with all the trimmings. Following the meal, the live and silent auctions began. After bidding closed on the last item, the crowd was entertained by members of the "Ace in the Hole" band, featuring special guest "Bubba Strait." It was a night to remember and concluded a great weekend. A special thanks to Bill and Lisa Dante, our sponsor, Harper Cattle Company, board members, members, volunteers, and staff that helped make this year's Gala a huge success.

We held our annual "Christmas for the Kids" at TRHC on December 2. The Center had been decorated with trees, ornaments, wreaths, and lights. The event began with the arrival of Santa Claus and was well attended by children and their parents. All the kids were sworn in as Junior Texas Rangers and got their photos taken with Santa. Hot dogs, Christmas cookies, hot chocolate and hot apple cider were served to all who attended. There were lots of crafts and games for the children. Thanks to our many volunteers who made this a special time and got everyone into the Christmas spirit.

We recently activated our Facebook Page, "Former Texas Rangers Foundation, Association & Heritage Center." I encourage everyone to check it out. It will mainly be used to keep everyone better informed of future events and updates. (Each quarterly issue of our *Bullet Points* newsletter also will be posted on the page.) Our goal is to educate the general public as to who we are and our mission. Be sure to check out our website, www.trhc.org, for our year-end merchandise sale.

I'll close with a quote by the late Texas Ranger Jerome Preiss and past FTRA president, who said it best, "The past is our heritage, the present is our duty, the future is our responsibility."

Merry Christmas to all, and all the best in 2024.

125th anniversary book update

Our 125th anniversary book had a good response from FTRA members sending in their free 150-word biographies, but there are still many more of you yet to submit your bio. Good news—our publisher, Acclaim Press, has agreed to extend the submission deadline to March 15. New four-page brochures will go out in January, but more info can be found at www.acclaimpress.com where you can submit your free biography and order your copy for only \$59.95. You may also email your bio and two photos to FTRABook@AcclaimPress.com.

The book will feature a well-researched FTRA history by our historian, Mike Cox, along with historic photos, stories, and a section featuring all FTRA members who send in their free biography and two photos. Call Acclaim Press at 573-472-9800 with any questions."

Ranger memorial crosses

Sept. 28, 2023: Grave of Matthew Caldwell, Gonzales Memorial Cemetery, Gonzales, TX.

Oct. 16, 2023: Grave of Thomas C. Capell (1834-1914), Barbee Cemetery, Dublin, TX

Nov. 18, 2023: Grave of Luke Mayfield (1784-1870), Aldine Cemetery, Reagan Wells, TX.

Dec. 9, 2023: Graves of James Lawrence Dial (1876-1955), Fairview Cemetery,

Floresville, TX; grave of TR David Franklin Webb (1810-1893); grave of Don Gilliland (1899-1986); and Grenade Drake Gilliland (1826-1918).

Upcoming

Jan. 19-20, 2024: Graves of eight Rangers, El Paso, TX.

In memoriam

George L. Turner

Retired Texas Ranger Lt. George L. Turner, 72, died in Cleburne on Dec.1, 2023. Born July 31, 1951, in Waxahachie, Texas, George went on to marry Dana F. Payne on June 8, 1974, in Arlington, Texas. He was a long-time member of St. Mark United Methodist Church. He was a 32nd-degree Mason and member of the Scottish Rite Bluff Dale Masonic Lodge. After over 36 years in law enforcement, beginning as a Department of Public Safety Highway Patrol trooper in 1973 and ending with his retirement as a Ranger lieutenant in 2009, he served variously in Companies A, B, and F.

Survivors include his wife of 49 years, Dana Turner; children, Joshua Thomas Turner and wife Mandy, Eden Susana Turner and fiancé Blake Howell, and Trace Payne Turner and wife Amy; grandchildren, Max Henry Turner, and Lily Emma Turner; brother, Fred Turner, Sr. and wife, Keri; numerous nieces, nephews; and a host of other relatives and friends.

Thomas Edward "Eddie" Almond

Thomas "Eddie" Almond, 81, retired Co. B Texas Ranger, died Nov. 10, 2023, at his home in Paris, Texas. "Big Eddie" was born July 8, 1942, to Julius "Duke" and Elwanda Almond in Oklahoma. He was a 1960 graduate of Antlers High School, where he excelled in FFA, baseball, basketball and earned Honorable Mention "All-State" honors in football. Following graduation he went on to serve six years the military, both in the U.S. Army and Air Force. He married Linda Arnold in 1966.

After completing his military service, Almond embarked on a distinguished 42-year law enforcement career. He served with the Lubbock Police Department, Texas Highway Patrol, Lamar County Sheriff's Office, and as the Commander of the Northeast Texas Regional Drug Task Force. His list of law enforcement awards and accolades were extensive, but most notably was his promotion to the Rangers in 1976.

Survivors include wife Linda Almond of Paris, Texas; daughter Lisa and husband Ricky of Abilene; son Marc of Waco, and son Edwin and wife Valeria of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; his sister Pattie and grandchildren Ashlee, Zach, Bethany, Chelsea, Aaron, Andrew, Camila, Alexa and Elena, along with numerous great-grandchildren, nephews and nieces.

Sue Frisch

Marian Sue Frisch (nee Gerlach), 72, of Santa Clarita, CA died Nov. 30, 2023. She was the wife of Al Frisch, a longtime FTRF supporter. He was named to the Board of Directors in 2008 and remains an advisory director.

Bob Bullock

Retired Ranger Capt. Bob Bullock died Oct. 19, 2023, in Denton, TX. Born in Portland, OR Sept. 19, 1959, after high school he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. Following his military service, he graduated from the DPS Training Academy in 1983 and served in the Highway Patrol before gaining promotion to the Ranger service in 1995. After retirement from the Rangers in 2011 he worked as security director for Pioneer Natural Resources for 11 years.

Survivors include wife Diane Bullock; daughters Candace Slack and husband Rus and Kristen Clark and husband Jordan of Roanoke, TX; son Brandon Peek of San Angelo, TX; his mother Janice Bullock and brothers Ronnie Bullock of Idaho and Tommy Bullock of Tennessee and eight grandchildren, Kainon, Andrea, McKenna, Justin, Grant, Desmond, Jocelyn, and Madilyn.

Texas Ranger scrapbook

The rather novel spectacle is presented at Austin of a detachment of state troops [Rangers] camped around the treasury building, to guard the funds there deposited. It is a big sum of money in the treasury vaults—so big that a great many people are worried lest thieves should break in and hence [illegible] over a million dollars, nearly half of which is in silver, the cart-wheel dollars that the mints turn out as regularly as clockwork. Highway men would find this a treasure trove worth dying for, but the rangers are ever alert. The money is safe enough and the only question that will arise is how to spend it. All hands are agreed that it has got to be spent.

—*Marshall Messenger*, Dec. 31, 1880.

How to donate

You can donate to the Texas Ranger Heritage Center capital campaign by visiting thrc.org/donate or mailing a check to FTRF, P.O. Box 3195, Fredericksburg, TX, 78624. To contribute by credit or debit card contact the FTRF office. The Former Texas Rangers Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. All donations are tax-deductible according to IRS regulations to the extent allowed by law.

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FTRF Staff

Jeanne Wallace

(Office Manager)

jeanne@formertexasrangers.org

Pam Arnell

(Front Office)

PamA@FormerTexasRangers.org

Bob Bailey

(TRHC Manager)

Bob@FormerTexasRangers.org

Mike Cox

(Bullet Points Editor)

texasmikecox@gmail.com

Beverly Waak Cox

(Archival Assistant)

Lt. Col. Allen West

Director – Capital Campaign

Awest@formertexasrangers.org