



GETS BETTER VIEW—John F. Kennedy Jr., White House. Young John watched the festivities from the south balcony of the Executive Mansion. (UPI)

Fame of Texas Ranger Based On Fact 99 Per Cent of Time

By KYLE THOMPSON
AUSTIN, Tex. (UPI) — "We had a little shooting match, and they lost."

Times have changed since this to-the-point report was turned in many years ago by a Texas Ranger assigned to clean out a gang of cattle rustlers.

But the Texas Ranger of today, as a member of one of the world's most famous law enforcement bodies, is very much akin to his predecessor.

He's still over six feet tall, wears the traditional white Stetson hat and cowboy boots, says very little and acts a lot when the chips are down.

The 62-man ranger squad is headed by Col. Homer Garrison, who is celebrating his 25th anniversary as chief ranger. Garrison also is director of the state highway patrol and its entire public safety division.

Texas Ranger history is rich with lore and tradition, and 99 per cent of it is based on fact.

Garrison's favorite ranger story is about the 1955 riot at the Rusk State hospital for the criminally insane. Sixteen inmates were holed up and were threatening to kill anyone who came near them.

Garrison dispatched a single ranger, Capt. Bob Crowder of Dallas, to the scene. Five minutes after his arrival the riot was over. Asked what he said to them, Crowder answered, "I just told them to cut out this stuff."

Garrison also relates — and believes — the story of a single ranger who was sent to an east Texas town to prevent a lynching about the turn of the century.

When he stepped off the train, leading citizens of the town demanded to know where his men were.

"There's only one mob, isn't there," replied the ranger.

"There's an unwritten code in the rangers," Garrison said. "You don't back out of situations. If you do, you're through."

About 18 months ago Garrison fired one ranger who let himself get kidnaped by a bank robber.

Today's Texas Ranger is an expert on modern scientific crime detection but he still must

be able to travel the cactus-studded borderlands on horseback for days. He's still a tough hombre whose very physical presence is a potent force for law and order.

Ranger history dates back to 1823 when Stephen F. Austin, considered the father of Texas, got together a group he called "Rangers" to protect the frontier settlers from hostile Indians.

The group was organized formally during Texas' War of Independence against Mexico in 1836, while Sam Houston's tattered army was waging war with the Mexicans, a relative handful of rangers fought the Indians to a near standstill.

After Texas won her independence, and later, when she joined the Union in 1842, the rangers found themselves wedged warring on two fronts — against Mexican bandits and rampaging Indian hands.

During the Mexican war, the

rangers were called on by the U.S. Army to lead the invading forces and scout for them. A member of the staff of Gen. Zachary Taylor said the rangers "are not only the eyes and ears of Gen. Taylor's army, but its right and left arms as well."

The Mexicans called the rangers "Los Diablos Tejanos" — The Texas Devils.

Texas Rangers have never known military discipline; maintaining instead a sort of derring-do independence. During the early years they never accepted a man as a leader unless he was the best of the group.

Their battles with the Indians ended on Jan. 29, 1881, when renegade Indians in the Diablo mountains of the Big Bend country and wiped them out.

In 1878, rangers ended the short but violent train robbing career of Sam Bass when they set up a trap into which he walked while "casing" a bank job at Round Rock, Tex.

Moved to Mexico

In 1896 a group was trying to promote a championship fight at El Paso. But fighting was illegal in Texas at that time, and Capt. Bill McDonald was sent to prevent the bout from taking place.

The fight was moved to Mexico across the border from Langtry, Tex., where Judge Roy Bean held forth.

But Masterson, the famed gunman from New Mexico, became impatient for the fight to start and began to abuse a Chinese waiter in the town's only saloon.

"Don't do that," snapped Ranger McDonald.

"Maybe you'd like to take it up," Masterson threatened.

"I done took it up," McDonald replied crisply. Masterson shut up and another ranger legend began.

Texas Rangers played prominent roles in the bawdy and rowdy oil boom days, during prohibition and in border smuggling for many years.

The rangers did battle with Chicago-type thugs during the 1920s and 1930s. Their exploits included the pursuit and death of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker.

Today's ranger still with police authority anywhere in the states believes in the creed — "Hold your fire until you're certain that your aim is true and then let go."

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