

It's true.  
Good guys wear white hats.



# Texas Rangers

BY SHARON BRASS  
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE TEXAS RANGERS HALL OF FAME

It's the stuff legends are made of. For nearly 200 years, Texas Rangers have guarded and protected Texas citizens against Indians, raiders, and outlaws. Texas lore is filled with stories of their bravery and heroic adventures, and countless writings and movies have shown us glimpses of their exciting lives and accomplishments. The Texas Ranger organization is the oldest law enforcement group in North America with statewide jurisdiction. This elite group has often been compared to other world-famous law enforcement agencies such as the FBI, Scotland Yard, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

But the Texas Ranger legacy stands apart from all others. It's the epitome of Texas culture. It's a colorful part of the old Wild West. The Ranger tradition brings visions of tough, courageous cowboys defying all odds to defeat villainous enemies of the public.

With so much notoriety attached to the organization, it's surprising that present-day Rangers are not more visible to the public eye. "You don't get into Rangering for money or recognition," says Ranger Steve Jeter of Company A. "You do it to make a difference in the lives of your neighbors. I can't save the world, but I can make my region a safer place to live."

Jeter lives in Huntsville where he grew up, and is now a local celebrity. "I got lucky. It's rare that Rangers are stationed in their home towns." He was accepted into the Texas Rangers two years ago, after spending ten years as a State Trooper. His cases take him to all corners of the state. "I work on anything from hot checks to dead bodies. Have gun, will travel."



*ICI resequē nissime nienimillam, essin parciēn dītem. Ut eium ea proris ma volorepudit que.*

Even with Jeter's intense workload and travel, he makes time to teach a few classes at his alma mater, Sam Houston State University. There he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Kinesiology, while playing collegiate football. (He originally prepared for a teaching and coaching career.)

According to Otto Hanak, a retired Ranger and Brenham resident, "Few people understand the sacrifices Rangers make in their daily work. A Ranger has no perception of an eight-hour work day. I've seen many cases where Rangers work until they can't stand any longer. Sleep and family life are put on hold until the work is done."

Like Jeter, Hanak became a Ranger after serving as a State Trooper for 13 years. He knew in high school that he wanted to be a law officer. At age 18 he landed a job as a Huntsville prison guard on Death Row, which paid for his education at Sam Houston State University. After only a few years as a Trooper, Hanak aspired to become a Texas Ranger. "It was a great honor to finally be accepted, and to work with such talented, dedicated people." He was a Ranger for 15 years before his retirement in 2009.

Both Jeter and Hanak are totally committed to their fellow Rangers. It's a tight-knit group with camaraderie similar to a deployed military unit. Their great trust for one another is demonstrated every day. "There is not anything a Ranger wouldn't do for another Ranger, or to keep another Texan out of danger," says Hanak.

## A Picturesque Heritage

Stephen F. Austin first assembled a small band of 10 lawmen in 1823, to protect early Texas colonists against Indians. He called them "Rangers" because they ranged on horseback over the entire Texas frontier.

Early Rangers were something between an army and a police force. When they fought Indians or Mexican forces, they were soldiers organized into companies. When they hunted down outlaws, raiders, and train robbers, they were detectives and policemen. Because they were very good at their work, they quickly became feared by outlaws and respected by settlers far beyond Texas borders.

When war broke out with Mexico in 1846, most Rangers joined the fight or served as scouts. In 1859, Mexico tried to retake southern Texas. John "Rip" Ford led a company of Rangers to defeat the Mexican >>



"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf." ~ George Orwell, author

OPPOSITE: *ICI resequē nissime nienimillam, essin parciēn dītem.* ABOVE: *Ut eium ea proris ma volorepudit que.*



Army. Ford later wrote about the Rangers who served under him, a description that still applies to Rangers today:

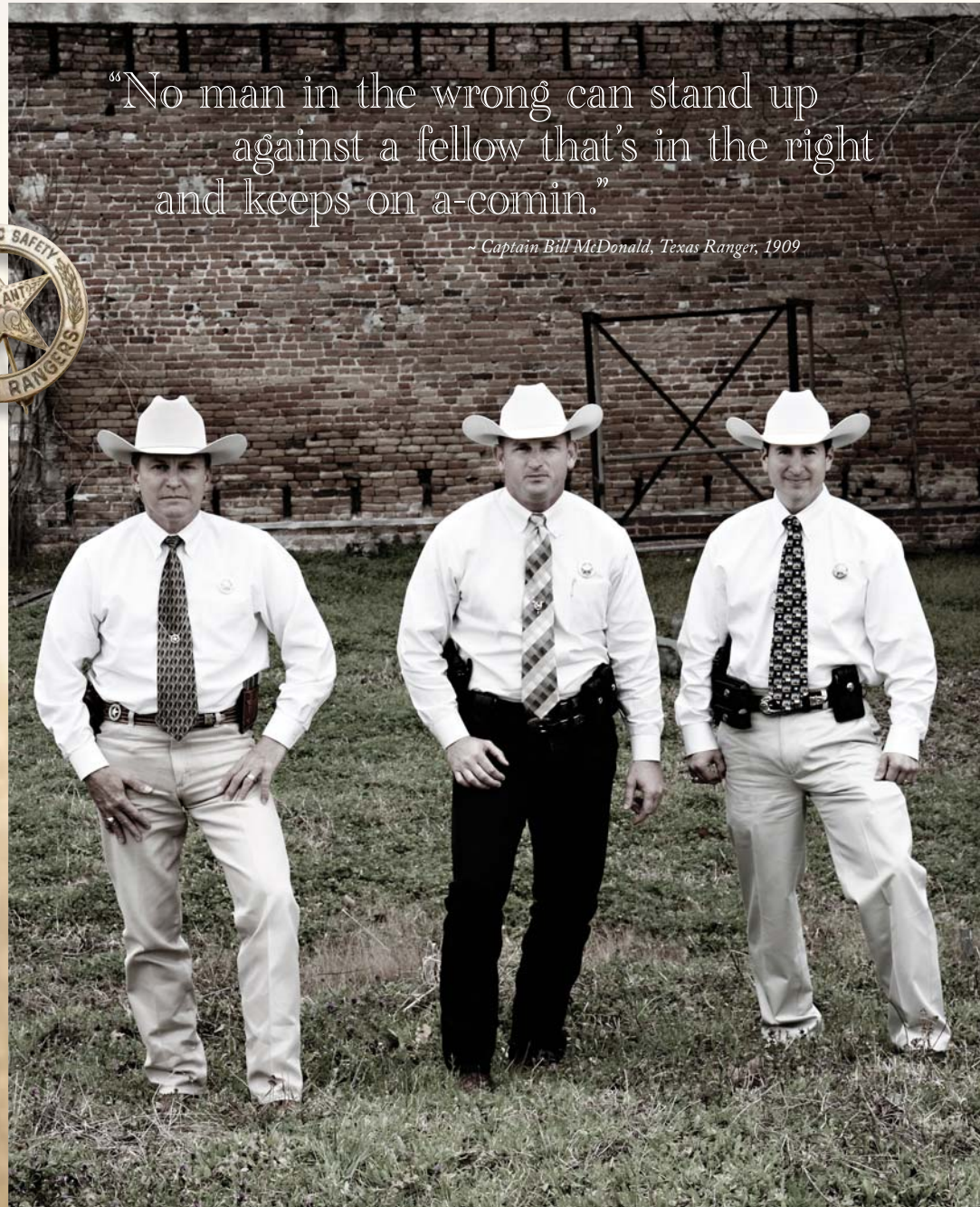
*"It was a company of sober and brave men. They knew their duty and they did it. While in a town they made no braggadocio demonstration. They did not gallop through the streets, shoot, and yell. They had a specie of moral discipline which developed moral courage. They did right because it was right."*

Just two years later, many Texas Rangers fought bravely in the Confederate Army. By the late 19th century, the organization had grown to 75 men, stationed across the State. Much of their detective work turned to fence cutters and horse and cattle thieves. In 1894-95, Rangers patrolled 173,381 miles on horseback, made 676 arrests, and returned 2,856 head of stolen livestock to their owners. They were widely acclaimed for bringing down notorious outlaws such as Sam Bass and John Wesley Hardin.

As the frontier disappeared in the early 1900s, Texas Rangers became peace officers. The new century brought many unexpected dangers to deal with: raiders from Mexico, gamblers and bootleggers during Prohibition, a multitude of bank robbers, lawless boom towns, and the infamous Bonnie and Clyde. In 1934, Senior Captain Frank H. Hamer



Captain Bill McDonald



*"No man in the wrong can stand up against a fellow that's in the right and keeps on a-comin."*

*~ Captain Bill McDonald, Texas Ranger, 1909*



trailed Bonnie and Clyde for 102 days. He finally caught up with them in Louisiana where he ended their career.

With so many successes in high-profile cases, the Texas Rangers were often in national newspaper headlines. They were further glamorized through newsreel footage shown at movie houses that were quickly popping up across the country.

In 1935, the Rangers became a special unit of the newly-formed Texas Department of Public Safety. Their jobs were the same as always — enforcing State laws with emphasis on felonies, gambling, and narcotics. Although they were a smaller unit, only 36 men, they now had access to state-of-the-art

technologies and crime laboratories. In their first year under the DPS, Rangers took part in about 255 cases. By 1955, they had grown to 51 Rangers who were involved in 16,701 cases across the State.

### The Legend Lives On

The Texas Rangers are still known as one of the best law enforcement agencies on the planet. Their worldwide fame is heightened by the color and character of their rich history. They number 134 men and women, and the Texas Legislature just approved 10 more positions for deployment along the Mexican border.

Today Rangers are organized into seven

companies headquartered in Houston, Garland, Lubbock, San Antonio, Midland, Waco, McAllen, and the administrative office in Austin. Each Ranger has responsibility for two or more counties, but they all have statewide law enforcement jurisdiction. They get involved in murders, robberies, assaults, burglaries, thefts, fraud cases, missing persons, abductions, unidentified bodies, riots, border patrol, and more.

"Most of my projects start with calls from local law officers, asking for help on large or difficult cases," explains Jeter. "We have good rapport with local agencies, and we work side-by-side with them. When needed, I can usually bring in more people and resources such as analysts, Troopers, helicopters, and other equipment."

It's not unusual for Rangers to gather and collaborate on significant cases. Jeter and many of his peers went to Killeen to investigate the recent murders at Ft. Hood — it was the first time Rangers had worked on a US military base. Several Rangers, including a new Brenham inductee, Andres Delagarza, worked on the recent murder case of five victims in Bellville.

"My favorite part of the job is putting the

bad guys in jail," shares Jeter. "The hardest part is arresting friends or law officers who have gone down the wrong path. But I've also had the pleasure of clearing the names of officers and others who were wrongly accused—a heartwarming experience. I've even received notes from people I helped to convict, thanking me for changing their lives. You just never know what part of a person's life you will touch."

Each Texas Rangers is hand-picked from hundreds of qualified candidates after rigorous written exams, an oral exam with a panel of peers, and thorough investigations of background and character. A former captain, Bob Crowder, once put it, "A Ranger is an officer who is able to handle any given situation without definite instruction from his commanding officer or higher authority. This ability must be proven before a man becomes a Ranger."

With such high standards and nearly two centuries of remarkable feats, it's no wonder that Texas Rangers are considered the rock stars of law enforcement. They have great pride in the rich traditions they inherited, and they strive to carry on these traditions. Integrity, bravery, perseverance, teamwork, and self-sacrifice define their operation. White cowboy hats, boots, and the gun belts of their predecessors complete the package.

Hanak summarizes, "It's an honor to follow in the footsteps of Texas Rangers who came before us, and who laid the perfect groundwork."

● ● Visit the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum adjacent to Interstate 35 in Waco: [www.texasranger.org](http://www.texasranger.org)



*lci reseque nissime nienimiliam, essin parciem diftem. Ut eium ea proris ma volorepudit que es am quia dolorum si dit volesequam net, nate omnia perum quam aribusa pitemoluptis.*



OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM LEFT: Ranger Andreas, Ranger Otto, Ranger Steve. ABOVE: *ottem it, esena vividit, no. liquidius Catque tum ne nos praest egeridete aucondam dees, quam avent, ut qua se et l. Cas cepeciere.*

### 2008 Texas Ranger Accomplishments

- 4,624 investigations
- 1,517 felony arrests
- 190 misdemeanor arrests
- 1,701 convictions
- 454 search warrants
- \$2,305,645 in stolen property recovered
- \$1,703,006 in seized contraband