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Managing Editors

Robert Nieman 2000-2009; (b.1947-d.2009)

Byron A. Johnson 2009-2011

Publisher & Website Administrator

Byron A. Johnson 2000-2011

Director, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame

Technical Editor, Layout, and Design

Pam S. Baird



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Now You Know:

The Cinco Peso Badge

**"C'Tgeqngvklp"
by Glenn Elliott,
Texas Ranger, Ret.**



Many stories have been written and many rumors told as to the origin of the current Texas Ranger *cinco peso* badge. As yet, I have not seen the whole story told. I was there and this is how it came about.

In the early 1960s, the Great East Texas Oil Field located in and around Kilgore was rocked by what became famous as the slant-hole business. The East Texas field, discovered in 1930, is and was the largest oil field ever developed in the continental United States.

By the early 60s, some of the wells were no longer the great gushers they had once been. Some had become marginal at best for most of the major oil companies. Often these wells were sold to small, independent operators who required much less money to operate and could therefore rework the wells and turn a small profit. *Small* is the key word here.

With millions of dollars on the line, it didn't take the crooks long to figure out a way to turn more than their fair share of profit. They developed a really simple method to steal someone else's property. They would send down a whip-stock (a directional drilling device) into the hole and dig the hole slanted toward a neighboring well that was a good producer. Suddenly, a marginal well turned into a gusher.

Like all good schemes, the secret couldn't be kept and word leaked out. Naturally, the legal owners of the wells being tapped were outraged that their oil was being stolen. They went to the Railroad Commission, which regulated the oil field, and demanded action to stop the theft.

There weren't just a few slant-hole wells; there were hundreds. Each suspected well would have to be physically inspected by an agent of the Railroad Commission to determine if the hole went straight down or slanted.

Many of the old boys working these slant-holes were pretty rough characters, and it was expected that some would resist physically. This is where the Rangers came in. "One Ranger, One Riot" aside, this was so big that over the next two years, just about every Ranger in the state worked at Kilgore at one time or another.

G. W. Burks, future captain of Company "B", was a private stationed in Fort Worth at the time. G. W. was a great reader of history, especially Texas Ranger history. He had read about earlier Ranger badges, many of which had been made from Mexican five (cinco) peso coins.

Burks went to our future Hall of Fame Captain Bob Crowder, described the badge to him, and requested permission to have one made. Captain Crowder liked the badge and gave the go-ahead. G. W. went to Halton's Jewelry in Fort Worth, explained how the badge was to be made, and had them make one. At a company meeting, we were shown the badge. We all loved it and naturally wanted one.



We had to furnish our own coin, which if memory serves me right, cost about six or seven dollars. The badge looks pretty much the same today as the one G W designed. The top of the badge had our name on it, and in the center was the letter "B," representing our company.

During the slant-hole business, when Rangers from the other five companies came to Kilgore and saw the badge, they also wanted one. Even more important, Colonel Homer Garrison, the director of the Department of Public Safety, saw it and fell in love with it. He wanted one, too. Colonel Garrison was the director for about thirty years, and the whole time after this, he wore this Texas Ranger badge-he loved the Rangers.

Shortly thereafter, every Ranger in the state was wearing the now world-famous Cinco Peso badge.

To borrow from my good friend Paul Harvey, "And now you know the rest of the story."

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In Their Own Words:

Just Where was I Supposed to Go?

by Gary Henderson

In 1989, the Texas Panhandle town of Pampa had one of Texas' newest Rangers, Gary Henderson. Rangers are notorious for the good-natured hazing that all rookies have to endure. The Rangers have fertile imaginations, but never could any of them have dreamed up the reception that awaited Gary. His description of the event is given below (yes, he survived):

For years, the Texas Rangers Company C has held its meetings at the 6666 Ranch near Guthrie. The actual site of the meeting is at a place on the ranch that is appropriately named the "Snake Den." One night, this building gave me some very good training for being a Ranger.

I was sitting with my back to the wall. On my immediate left was Senior Texas Captain Lefty Block, and to my right sat Ranger Larry Gilbreath. Both are good-sized men. I had a Coke and had set it down near my left boot. Just as I reached down to pick it up for a drink, Captain Block said, "Don't move a muscle. There's a rattlesnake under your chair."

I thought he was joking and continued to reach for the drink. Again Captain Block spoke, but this time there was no doubt he was serious. "Boy, there's a rattlesnake right by your boot. Don't move a muscle."

I wasn't looking at anyone, but I remember that not a single Ranger was moving a muscle. Very slowly, I moved my head to look down. There was what had to be the biggest rattlesnake ever known. This thing wasn't big-it was huge! Of course, any snake is especially huge when it is under YOUR chair!

Either one Ranger or a whole company of Rangers has made some of the deadliest of criminals quake with fear. I have known Rangers to stand up against incredible odds without blinking an eye. Well, none blinked an eye that day either, but I promise you it was for an entirely different reason. No one wanted to take on that rattler, with the possible exception of Ranger Warren Yeager.

As for that old rattler, he was a picture of total unconcern. He

just crawled right on through my legs and across the floor as if there wasn't a soul in the room. Ranger Yeager jumped up as if he was going to catch the snake, and the snake suddenly stopped. A resounding message was sent to Yeager by all of the other Rangers: "Warren, sit down!"

Warren sat down, and the snake continued on its journey through our group. Reaching one of the numerous holes in the wall, he crawled right in and we never saw that snake again-or at least I didn't. But I have to admit I didn't go looking for it either.

When the last of the snake's rattles disappeared through the wall, there was a collective sigh exhaled by more than one Ranger.

Later, I was asked how I could just sit there. My response was very simple. Captain Block was to my left, and he surely wasn't going to move. Larry Gilbreath was to my right, and I knew that he wasn't going to move. There was a wall to my back, so I couldn't go that way, and I darn sure wasn't going to go the same way that the rattlesnake was going! So I just sat there and waited him out.

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