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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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Sgt. Danny Rhea

By Robert Nieman



You will find few, if any, Rangers who would dispute that no star shines more than that of Danny Rhea.

The son of a military family, Danny was born on October 25, 1947, at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Being a military child, he went to school all over the world but calls San Angelo, Texas, his hometown.

In 1967, Danny followed in his father's footsteps and joined the military—the Navy. For almost four years (three-month early out for a force cutback), he served in the Navy Security Group Activity as a cryptographer. Nineteen sixty-seven was an eventful year for Danny in more ways than one. After finishing boot camp, he married Sue Baker on June 17, 1967, in San Angelo, also Sue's hometown.

Unlike his father, Danny did not want to make the military his career. He left the Navy in 1970 and enrolled at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. He graduated in 1974 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

With degree in hand, Danny tried to gain entrance into the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife as a game warden. Fortunately for the Rangers, no hiring was being done for a couple of years. With a family to support, Danny could not wait around for a few months, let alone a few years.

Danny is an easy person to like and he had become a good friend with Jimmy Wood, the game warden in Nacogdoches. Jimmy obviously saw a good employee in Danny. Even though the Department of Parks and Wildlife had no opening, he did not want to see a person with Danny's ability be unused. He convinced Danny to apply to the Department of Public Safety.

Danny thought about it and decided that a man could do a lot worse in life than have a career in the DPS. He agreed to apply. While working to get Danny into the DPS, Wood found a willing accomplice in a former Nacogdoches County sheriff named Joe Evans, who was currently a state trooper. Through no small efforts of these two men, in 1976 Danny found himself attending the Department of Public Safety's academy in Austin.

In September 1976, Danny became Texas' newest member of the Highway Patrol. Later he transferred to the License and Weight Division. For the next ten years, Danny served much of Texas in the cities of Denton, Cross Plains,

Odessa, and Snyder. In 1986, he was promoted into the DPS' Criminal Intelligence Division and was stationed back in San Angelo.

Things seemed perfect. Not only was Danny doing a job he loved, he was doing it in his hometown. He could have served out the remainder of his career in San Angelo and he and Sue would have been completely happy. But the possibility of being a Texas Ranger is a pull that few have been able to resist, and Danny was no exception. After meeting and talking with Senior Texas Ranger Captain Bill Wilson, he knew that whenever the opportunity presented itself to apply for the greatest law enforcement organization in the world, he had to try. The people who sat on the review board that decides who will and will not be a Ranger realized what an outstanding asset Danny would be to the organization, and they were not about to let him get away.

On January 1, 1988, Danny pinned on the most famous badge in the world—the *cinco peso* badge of a Texas Ranger.

Danny's first duty station was in the West Texas town of Ozona. While working on a lengthy investigation with the Texas attorney general's office, he was with an AG investigator as they passed through Sulphur Springs. He fell in love with the area. Two of his passions were hunting and fishing, and the Sulphur Springs area offered plenty of opportunities for both. He decided right then and there that if Lloyd Johnson (the Ranger in Sulphur Springs) retired, he would apply for that duty station.

But that was a hope for the future. In the meantime, he remained in Ozona, making himself into as good a Ranger as he possibly could. In 1993, Lloyd decided to call it a career and retired. Danny had not forgotten Sulphur Springs and on February 1, he transferred to the East Texas town.

Geographically, Ozona and Sulphur Springs could not have been more opposite. Ozona sits in the middle of the vast West Texas desert. The face of West Texas is sprawling, open spaces; huge cattle ranches; minute rain; and an endless, treeless landscape. Sulphur Springs, on the other hand, consists of farms, trees, plentiful rain, and lots of lakes with great fishing.

In 1998, a deranged man entered the Department of Public Safety's offices in Sulphur Springs with what he claimed was a bomb. For more than an hour, Danny and DPS officers tried to reason with the would-be bomber. Things came to a head when the assailant pulled a gun and pointed at one of the officers. Danny reacted heroically. For his outstanding gallantry above and beyond the call of duty, Danny was awarded the Texas Medal of Valor. Since the formation of the Department of Public Safety in 1935, only five Texas Rangers have earned this distinction.

Today, thirty-four years after exchanging their vows, Danny and Sue are still happily married. They have two children. Devin followed his father to sea ten years ago when he decided to make the Coast Guard his career. Daughter Carissa and her husband, Eric Mouton, live in Oklahoma with their two-year old son Dawson, Danny and Sue's pride and joy.

Danny is a man of deep convictions who refuses to compromise his beliefs. He considers his faith, his family, and his friends the most important things in his life. Pretty good standards for anyone to follow.

Of being a Ranger, Danny says, "Serving as a Texas Ranger is a great privilege and honor. And serving the great people of Texas is a truly



rewarding experience.”

Whether a Highway Patrolman, intelligence agent, or a Texas Ranger, Danny’s work habits and professionalism are known and respected by his peers.

Texas is fortunate to have her Rangers, and none is a better representative than Danny Rhea, a true Texas Ranger Shining Star.

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