



Official State Historical Center of the Texas  
Rangers law enforcement agency.

**The Following Article was Originally Published in the  
*Texas Ranger Dispatch Magazine***

The *Texas Ranger Dispatch* was published by the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum from 2000 to 2011. It has been superseded by this online archive of Texas Ranger history.

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**



Funded in part by grants from  
the Texas Ranger Association Foundation

Copyright 2017, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, Waco, TX. All rights reserved. Non-profit personal and educational use only; commercial reprinting, redistribution, reposting or charge-for-access is prohibited. For further information contact: Director, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, PO Box 2570, Waco TX 76702-2570.


[Rangers Today](#)
[Visitor Info](#)
[History](#)
[Research Center](#)
[Hall of Fame](#)
[Student Help](#)
[Family History](#)
[News](#)

★ [Click Here for  
A Complete Index  
to All Back Issues](#)

★ [Dispatch Home](#)

★ [Visit our nonprofit  
Museum Store!](#)

★ [Contact the Editor](#)



©2005, Texas DPS. All Rights Reserved

## 21st Century Shining Star:

Lt. Jerry Byrne

By Robert Nieman

**L**ieutenant Jerry Byrne of Company B never wanted to be anything but a Texas Highway Patrolman. And why not? He has never known anything else. His father, Jerry Sr., is a retired Highway Patrolman, and his mother, Mary, is currently the jail administrator at the Tom Green County (San Angelo) Jail. Jerry is the

oldest of their four children and the only boy. His three sisters are Suzette, Jennifer, and Robin.

Jerry was born in Upshur County in 1960, but this native Gilmerite soon found himself in Reeves County, which is as deep in West Texas as Upshur County is in East Texas. He attended his freshman year of high school at Balmorhea and the last three years at Pecos High School, from which he graduated in 1979. Sul Ross State University in Alpine was his choice of college, and he received his bachelor of science degree in agri-business in 1983. After graduation, he applied for and was accepted into the Texas Department of Public Safety. He had known for some time that this was his chosen path:

*During high school, I spent the majority of my spare time on the VH Ranch near Balmorhea. I helped my good friends build fences, repair windmills, work cattle, and perform other ranch jobs. I also found time to do a lot of hunting, trapping, and riding. During my college years, I worked on several ranches in the Big Bend area and briefly considered ranch work as a career. It didn't take me long, however, to realize there was only a remote chance that I could land a ranch job with any benefits other than the one of being satisfied earning a day's pay for a day's work. I fell back on my first desire: to become a Highway Patrolman.*

During an earlier summer break from college, Jerry had gotten his first official job in law enforcement as a Smith County (Tyler) jailer. In January 1984, he became a member of the Basic Recruit Training class A-84. In eighteen weeks, Texas's newest Highway Patrolman began his duties in the Panhandle city of Dimmit.

After three years in the Panhandle, the last two in Matador, Jerry transferred back home to Balmorhea in 1987. The Highway Patrol

then lost a good man because, in January 1992, Jerry promoted to sergeant in the Motor Vehicle Theft Division of the Texas Department of (Public Safety) Transportation. He was transferred to Texarkana, which is as far as you can go in East Texas and still be in Texas. His career in the Highway Patrol, however, remains a proud part of his life:

*If I had to choose a career other than the Texas Rangers, I have no doubt it would be the Texas Highway Patrol. I can honestly say that, while on patrol, there was never a dull moment: one minute you would be wrestling a drunk, the next you would be traveling in high-speed pursuit after a fleeing felon. As a Highway Patrolman, I generally went to work early and stayed past my shift just to find someone who needed to be taken off the road.*

*In 1987, after transferring from the Panhandle to Balmorhea, I worked for the best THP sergeant I believe DPS ever produced, Melton "Ras" Raspberry of Pecos. The only negative thing I can recall Ras ever saying to me was during an evaluation. He told me I needed to go home a little more often.*

*I believe I had an above-average career as a Highway Patrolman, and Ras deserves a lot of the credit for that. He encouraged me to pursue my interest in criminal investigation and supported my criminal work, which consisted of numerous weapon, drug, and cash seizures; stolen vehicle recoveries; and hundreds of arrests for wanted felons.*

Jerry was with the Motor Vehicle Theft Service in Texarkana for only a short time. There was a higher calling awaiting him, one that had been at the back of his mind:

*I honestly can't say that I always wanted to be a Ranger, but as far back as I can remember, I knew I wanted to be a peace officer. In 1969, I was present when my dad graduated Basic Recruit Training as a Texas Highway Patrolman and, from that point, my desire was to follow in his footsteps. Growing up in a law enforcement family, I had casually known several Rangers as a kid, but being a Highway Patrolman was my main desire.*

*The best I can recall, the first time I ever gave any thought to being a Ranger was while in the Basic Recruit Training school. There were a couple of Rangers that visited our class, and they really impressed me with their command presence, professionalism, traditionalism, and reputation. However, I also recall that the thought of becoming one of them was quickly diminished when the Ranger speaking to our class told us that you needed at least eight years of law enforcement experience to be a Ranger. He also said, "We are kind of like the US Marines: we are looking for a few good men, but don't call us, we'll call you." When he made this statement, it meant to me that, if you're eligible and doing a good enough job as a Highway Patrolman or criminal investigator, then the Rangers might be interested in you.*

*As a Highway Patrolman, I had a half a dozen or so cases that I worked with my good friend and mentor, Ranger Joe Coleman, also of Pecos. Joe had encouraged me to go into the Rangers*

*and gave me one the best compliments I have ever received. When I had about five years as a Highway Patrolman, he told me that he was disappointed that I had not taken the latest Ranger exam. When I explained that I wouldn't be eligible for another three years, he said that he wanted me to take his place in Pecos when he retired. I had not made my desire to become a Ranger known to Joe, and I couldn't believe that he would think I could possibly take his place. I was really encouraged, and from that moment on, making Ranger was always in the back of my mind.*

*I am sad to say that both Joe and Ras passed away before I had the opportunity to test for Ranger.*

In June 1994, Jerry Byrne was accepted into the Texas Rangers as a member of Dallas's Company B. He was stationed in Mount Pleasant, about midway between Texarkana and Dallas.

The opportunity to transfer back to West Texas arose in August 1995, and Jerry transferred to Ozona as a member of Midland's Company E. He stayed there until January 1999, when he took over the duty station in San Angelo. This position had come open with the retirement of Ranger Joe Hunt. In September 2003, Jerry promoted again and became Company B's lieutenant.

Jerry feels that his success is due in great part to the encouragement of his family. He met his wife Robin in 1986, and they married a year later. Today, they have two daughters. Speaking of his wife and daughters, he says:

*[They] have loyally supported me throughout my career and have tolerated several relocations through transfers and promotions. I have to give them credit for the successful years of service I've had with DPS and the Rangers. They have painfully left many good friends over the years while moving into unknown areas of the state, but they continued to seek new friends. I am proud at the way they have handled these situations and the way they have bloomed at each of the new stations.*

There can be no question that Lieutenant Jerry Byrne is a captain in the making. The Texas Rangers and the citizens of Texas could do no better.



Texas Ranger

**DISPATCH**



Dispatch

Jr. Rangers

Corporate Club

Museum Store

Exhibits/Artifacts

Benefactors

All rights reserved. © 2003, Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. [Contact Us](#)

The Hall of Fame and Museum complex is located adjacent to Interstate 35 in Waco, Texas (midway between Dallas/Fort Worth and Austin).

