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21st Century Shining Star:

Jesse Mack

by Robert Nieman

Jesse Mack, one of three children, was born on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico in Bay City, Matagorda County, Texas, on June 3, 1950. The guiding light of Jesse's early life was his mother Ola; his father York died when he was only six months old. Jesse did have an older brother and sister, Perry and Phoebe. Sadly, Perry died in 1980 and Phoebe followed her brother and father in death in 1993.



After graduating from Sweeny High School in May of 1968, Jesse attended St. Edward University in Austin on a basketball scholarship. After graduation in 1972, he joined the United States Air Force. Completing his service to his country, Jesse tried out with the San Antonio Spurs of the National Basketball Association but was unsuccessful.

In the summer of 1980, Jesse got one of the luckiest breaks of his life when he stopped at a friend's service station in Houston and met Patricia, the lady of his future. Two years later, on June 26, 1982, they were married. Today Patricia and Jesse are the proud parents of four children: Joi, Jonathan, Christopher, and Jessica.

In October 1975, Jesse joined the Texas Department of Public Safety as a highway patrolman and was stationed Houston. In November of 1989, he was promoted to investigator in the Department of Public Safety's Criminal Intelligence Division and was transferred to Corpus Christi.

In July 1994, Jesse applied for and was accepted as a Texas Ranger. His first duty station was in Brenham, and then he later transferred to Houston where he served until his retirement in 2000.

When asked why he wanted to be a Ranger, Jesse's answer was, "They always got the best of everything. But the better decision was the cohesiveness the Ranges had with each other."

He worked many cases during his years as a Ranger, but three stand out.

Republic of Texas

Since its founding in 1823, the Texas Rangers have been involved many bizarre cases—none more so than the 1997 so-called "Republic of Texas

Standoff.” A group of fanatics barracked themselves in an old worn-out mobile home in the Davis Mountains in West Texas near Alpine. They claimed that Texas had illegally joined the United States and that they were the true Republic of Texas.

The last thing in the world anyone wanted was another standoff like the Branch Davidian one that had just happened near Waco. But this time the FBI and ATF were not running the show—the Rangers were.

Two men did attempt a breakout. One was shot to death in a shootout with the Rangers. The other, Richard Keyes, managed to disappear into the rough Davis Mountains. Speculation ran high that he had not survived the barren terrain, but the Rangers were not so sure. Keyes was a survivalist and they thought he just might make it out. And if he did, the Rangers assumed he would do what most criminals do—hunt for friendly faces. One of those friendly faces was in Houston—and the Rangers waited. Several weeks passed and no Richard Keyes, but finally patience paid off and Keyes showed up. Rangers arrested Keyes on outstanding warrants of aggravated kidnapping and unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. Keyes was transported to West Texas, tried, and convicted.

Grimes County Corruption

While stationed in Brenham, Jesse was involved in a case of a sheriff accused of theft in Grimes County [Navasota is its largest town]. Before its completion, the case received a lot of media attention. Though not the lead investigator, Jesse was deeply involved.

During the course of the investigation, a large amount of information was gathered on the sheriff. To make a bad situation worse, the whole county was politically split. This caused a huge uproar from both sides. So much was going on that special prosecutors from outside the area were assigned to the case. After the investigation was completed and it was time to go to trial, the difficulty really started. A jury had to be picked from the citizens of Grimes County, which was no easy feat. The trial lasted about two weeks and justice prevailed: the sheriff was convicted and removed from office.

2.5 Million-Dollar Theft from the State Comptroller Office

No state is immune from scandal, including Texas. An employee of the Texas State Comptroller’s Office in Austin, along with an associate, were stealing money through state vouchers issued from the office. Their system was simple and very, very profitable. The employee was responsible for processing fuel tax rebates from tax-exempt businesses such as churches, municipal governments, etc. It is common for these businesses to overpay their fuel taxes and send a request for reimbursement from the state comptroller when they calculate their fuel taxes. Here is where the two criminals’ plan went into action. An illegal voucher would be set up by the employee and mailed to his associate in Houston. This brought Jesse into the case.

The associate had assumed the identity of several different names and opened bank accounts in Houston using these names. As is common with most crimes, a simple routine review of one of these accounts by a bank official threw up a red flag. The bank official contacted legal authorities and search warrants were obtained for both suspects’ home and work areas.



These two people had stolen a bonanza of loot to the tune of 2.5 million dollars. A search of the state employee's home resulted in the seizure \$275,000.00 in cash, numerous Rolex watches, necklaces, diamond rings, a 1995 Lexus, and a pickup truck.

Items obtained in the associate's home were numerous credit cards in different names; more cash; newly purchased items such as large television set, and stereo systems; boxes of checks in different people's names; a 1999 Mercedes valued at \$50,000; and a 2000 Mercedes valued at \$80,000. The associate was never apprehended. It is assumed that he somehow got word of what was going on and fled the county. The state employee, however, will be a guest for the next twenty-seven years in the prison of the Texas Department of Corrections.

When asked what being a Ranger meant to him, Jesse Mack answered, "You are always looked upon to have the answer, no matter what—even though you may not know it. The public expected it, because you are a Texas Ranger."

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