

Bill Callicott Reminiscences

**Courtesy of the
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University of Texas – Austin**

Transcribed and annotated by Chuck Parsons
Technical editing by Pam S. Baird

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Introduction

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Introduction

Texas Ranger William Crump Callicott would have been forgotten had it not been for Walter Prescott Webb and his classic study, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense*, first published in 1935. While researching the Rangers for the book, Webb located Callicott in Houston and began corresponding with him. Some of these letters he incorporated in *The Texas Rangers*. In his brief explanation of Callicott's

contribution, Webb noted:

Though he was old and practically blind, he wrote in his own hand the account of his experiences in the Ranger force, first with Major Jones on the northern Indian frontier and then with Captain McNelly on the Mexican border. For him his task was one of great difficulty. [*The Texas Rangers*, p. 241]

The difficulty arose not with Callicott's memory, but with his eyesight. He was practically blind in the early 1920s when he recorded his adventurous Ranger experiences. Only when the sun was high and bright was he able to see well enough to write, a fact that he occasionally alludes to in his correspondence. As Dr. Webb pointed out, Callicott was not an

educated man and his narrative was composed phonetically. Thus, at times it is very difficult to read. He ignored all pretense of knowing of the use of periods, commas, and other punctuation; his paragraphs began when he started to write and ended when he finished writing for the day. The following excerpt from one letter is typical:

...had Just got back to the River when Jinerl whonflores and 25 of his bandits Charged us at the River we met the charge and they Brook Back to words the los cuevos Ranch we open fir on then killen Jinerl whon florns in 75 yards of the River . . .

William Crump Callicott was born on November 8, 1852, at Pattison, in then Austin County, now Waller County. He was the son of James Callicott. Possibly, his middle name was chosen in honor of William E. Crump, speaker of the House of Representatives, First Legislature, February 16 – May 13, 1846. Crump was an Austin County resident, as were the Callicotts. William's mother and her first husband, Jacob Pevehouse, had come to Texas with Stephen F. Austin's first colony in 1824, settling near San Felipe de Austin. Mr. Pevehouse died as a result of an accident that occurred while he was working on the roof of their home. His widow then married James Callicott, but she died about 1854, leaving four children to be raised. The 1860 census shows the family with James Callicott as head of household and children Mary, thirteen years old; James, twelve; Sarah, ten; and William, six. James Callicott died circa 1864 when William was about twelve.

A decade later, the family had broken up: James was head of household with real and personal estate valued at \$350 and \$600, respectively; brother William, attending school, had \$50 and \$600 as estate.

Callicott's service record fails to describe any action in which he was involved, providing only the dates of his service and details of enlistment. It is not surprising that his name fails to appear in the scouting reports, as he never arose above the rank of private; rarely is the name of any private mentioned in the reports.

According to existing service records, Callicott enlisted in Captain John R. Waller's Company A Frontier Battalion on June 14, 1874. He served with Waller until August 31, 1874. During this period he was on detached service with Major John B. Jones as part of his escort.

One cannot help but realize that the events of his service as a Texas Ranger were unforgettable for him. Although he had worked as a cowboy prior to joining the Rangers, his memoirs unfortunately hold little of his experiences going up the trail to Abilene, Kansas.

Following his service in Company A, he enlisted under L. H. McNelly, captain of the Washington County Volunteer Militia (Company A). Although technically not a part of the Frontier Battalion, the men who rode with McNelly were considered Rangers, not only by themselves but by the average Texan as well. Callicott served with McNelly from April 1, 1875, mustering out with an honorable discharge on November 30, 1875.

On September 7, 1880, he was married to Texas-born Mary Stone [Sloan?] at Buckhorn, Austin County. The couple had six children, five of whom survived infancy: James T., born in June 1881; Price, born in June 1884; Annie (Anna), born in April 1888; Sallie, born in April 1890; and Kinch, born in January 1892.

By 1900, Callicott was farming in Austin County. Sons James and Price were farming with him, identified as “farm laborers” on the census record. Ten years later the family was living in Waller County. All the children were still together, along with Price’s wife Minnie and their three-year-old daughter Pearl. Callicott’s occupation is shown to be “wagon driver,” working on county roads. By 1920, Callicott, now sixty-seven years old, was living in Harris County. He and Mary were without occupation, while son James was a carpenter and son Kinch an auto mechanic.

William Callicott died in Houston on June 10, 1926, and is buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Houston. His death—at least publicly—was scarcely noticed, warranting a seven-line obituary in the Houston *Post-Dispatch*. His funeral services were held in his home at 204 Carson Street in Houston. Sons James and Kinch and daughters, now Mrs. Charles Monrick and Mrs. H. I. Jackson, survived him. As to the Ranger’s contribution to history, the concluding sentence of the *Post-Dispatch* merely stated, “He served with the Texas Rangers on the frontier in 1874.”

The following letters/narratives have been transcribed for ease of reading. I have corrected spelling and added punctuation without omitting any of Callicott’s writing. Callicott wrote his letters in 1921, but Webb’s *The Texas Rangers* did not appear in print until 1935, nine years after Callicott died. Dr. Webb quotes from one letter that is no longer in the W. P. Webb Collection; thus, at least one and probably other letters have not been preserved. Likewise, the letters from Dr. Webb to Callicott have not been saved. It is believed that the bulk of Callicott’s letters are preserved. They are now in the W. P. Webb Collection at the Center for American History on the University of Texas campus in Austin.

We are proud to now present “Bill Callicott Reminiscences,” published in total for the first time.

Technical Editor's note: Every care has been taken to leave the manuscript as it was written. Grammatical marks and paragraph breaks have been added to make the sentences clearer. These marks often do not conform to standard usage because the text itself is not grammatically correct. Capitalization and spelling are often left as is unless there is a very dramatic cause for revision.

Houston

April the 28th, 1921

Mr. Webb

Kind Sir.

As the sun is shining this morning I will try and wind up a little part of my early life. My mother came to Texas with Stephen F. Austin's first colony of whites from Arkansas in 1824 with her first husband, Jacob Peaveyhouse [Pevehouse], and settled on the east side of the Brazos River near old San Felipe [de Austin]. That was at that time the first capital of Texas under the Mexican government. Peaveyhouse, my mother's first husband, built the first white settler's house built on the Brazos River in 1824. This little house was known for many years afterwards as being "the big house on the Brazos River." All travelers going to old San Felipe would [inquire?] for the big house to stay all night. This little house was built out of red elm [ellom?] poles gotten out of the Brazos River bottom used as studden [?] on ellom sills and pin oak boards used as weather boards and elm logs lined [?] to the thickness of 6 or 8 inches thick and laid down for floors. That is what they call puncheon floors in them good old days in Texas on the Brazos River.

The main big room was 14 by 14 feet. The shed room was 9 by 14 feet. The stick and mud chimney took in one gable end of the big room. It had a small gallery in front, one little wooden window, one end of it made out of pin oak boards.

Peaveyhouse, my mother's first husband, while on top of [the house] putting on the last case [?] of boards [was killed when] a board slipped from under him and he fell off the top and

hit on his head and broke his neck. The house was only nine feet in the highest places. He left my mother in a wild Indian and Mexican country with two children, one boy and one girl by Peaveyhouse. She still lived at the place all during the Mexican War undergoing all the hardships of life, tormented by Indians and Mexicans.

Several years after the Mexican War, my father James Callicott came to Texas from Kentucky and married my mother who was still living in the little house on the Brazos River. They had four children: two girls and two boys and I am the youngest of them all and in 1852 I was born in the same little house on the Brazos River. My mother died when I was a year-and-a-half old, leaving me and two sisters and a brother older than I was. My father still lived at the little place.

My mother, when she came from Arkansas, had an old black woman that belonged to her and her first husband Peaveyhouse. She cared and attended to us four children and when I was twelve years old my father died, leaving us four children though he had plenty of land, Negroes, cattle and horses and money. We never suffered for anything except the care of a mother.

The first sermon I ever heard preached [was when] I had a half sister that had married and was living on the head of Buffalo Bayou about fifteen miles from the little home where I first saw the light. They [the half sister and her husband] came up to spend a week with us and while they were up they took us four children and their two children to preaching seven miles in the end of a buggy. The buggy was the four wheels [and] at the end of the wagon [there was] a kind of a frame on the wheels with elm poles bent over the top of it for [bars?] and a beef hide stretched over them for a sheet. We went seven miles to a little log church house about 14 by 14 feet. This is where I heard my first sermon and at this little church was where I got my first

schooling. When I got large enough to go to school, us four children rode on horseback seven miles to school.

Seven years later they built a fine church at the same place and called it Parker's Chapel and I still went there to school. Then later on they built a schoolhouse near our old home and my father built a fine house before his death close to our old home in a big post oak motte that went by the name of Indian Motte. I have found many old flint rock spikes that the Indians used on their arrows, and several old flint and steel locks that belonged to the old flint and steel muskets that were used in Texas in the early days. All kinds of game were plentiful: bear, deer and turkeys.

I can remember back when the bears would come up to our gate after pigs. My father had an old Negro by the name of Louis. When he [Father] would hear the hogs bawling, he would call old Louis and give him the gun and tell him to shoot the bear. The old Negro would get in between the bear and the hogs and drive the bear back to the bottom and then he would bring the gun back to my father and tell him the bear ran, that he couldn't get a chance to shoot him. The old darkey said he was a heap scarer of the gun than he was of the bear. The old darkey never shot a gun in his life.

Well, after my father's death I never went back to school but a little more. Most of my life was spent in the saddle [chasing] after cattle as he left us plenty of them, and in 1871 my guardian Mr. Kinch Collins went through to Abilene, Kansas, with a herd of cattle consisting of eighteen hundred and eighty-five head. He took me with him. I was only a boy then.

There were no railroads in Texas then except the Texas Central and it hadn't gotten as far north as Corsicana, Navarro County. On this trip I was gone seven months that I was never in a

house. We had to drive and herd them [cattle] day and night let come what would. We had to stay with them. If they stampeded, your life depended on the speed and activity of your horse. If he couldn't outrun them, they would run over you or if your horse fell in front of them, you were trampled into mincemeat as they turned for nothing. You can sometimes have a slicker coat, keep ahead of them and wave the coat and sing and holler and stop them or have a pistol and keep shooting in front of them and stop them like I did [with] Old Ball at Buffalo Springs the time our horses stampeded.

Well I guess you can see from the chance I had in my early life of getting an education it has been but little, but still I am satisfied with the days I have spent without it. I have lived to see old Texas from the old buggy to automobiles and flying ships in the air and log churches turned into skyscrapers and railroads almost to the end of the world.

P.S. Mr. Webb, I am not writing this to go into print. I am only writing to show you the chance I have had in the way of having my head properly vaccinated with book learning.

William Callicott

Ranger in 1874. age 68 past



I still own the old family graveyard where my angel mother was laid to rest near the spot where the little house stood sixty-eight years ago. The only monument that stands over it is the

wild trees of the forest that marks the place and will be a monument as long as the world stands, as I have a deed to it and don't let it be bothered with.

Mr. Webb, don't let anyone else copy my writing as it is so badly spelled and written, and don't have any of it put in newspapers, and when you are through with it don't scatter it over your office for people to see. Let it all go up in smoke.

William Callicott.



Houston

August the 6th [1921]

Mr. Webb, Kind friend.

Yours to hand and glad to hear from you and would be glad to attend the Rangers' Reunion with you, but as my wife is a little sick, I can't at present but hope you will have a good time and see all of the old boys of 1874 and 1875. It has been forty-seven years ago since I have seen any of them. If you see any of them get their names and address and write it to me—the McNelly Rangers or the Major Jones Rangers—and give them my best wishes. Tell them I have been married forty-two years, have six children and three grandchildren.

Mr. Webb, you wanted to know if I cared if you showed my details of Ranger life to the boys. Now I will be glad for you to do it if you will copy them off in your own writing and not expose my bad spelling and writing. I give you the privilege to use anything I have written from

1824 up to the present. Writing it is all truth and the truth don't hurt. I am sending this by parcel post. Let me know if you get it.

As ever,

William Callicott



In the Spring of 1874 I joined Major [John B.] Jones' escort of Rangers at Kerrville, Texas, Kerr County. He had a battalion of rangers camped every fifty miles from the Guadalupe River to the Red River. [John B. Jones had been appointed as major to the five companies of Texas Rangers in January 1874 known as the Frontier Battalion. The two major primary purposes of the unit were to end Indian raiding on the Texas frontier and to enforce the law in the interior counties. Jones eventually was appointed adjutant general and became one of the most important Rangers in history before he died in 1882.]

We started up the line to every company and scouted as we went along the line to each company. When we had got a way out on the frontier part of the state, we camped at night at a big spring called Buffalo Springs [in modern Clay County, northwest of Fort Worth], a big spring walled in with rock about ten by ten that had been built by the U.S. government.

We camped there for the night. We ate supper, then put out our night guards. We all went to bed for a good night's rest except [Martin M.] Kenney and I. [We] were laying close together; he had his horse tied to a tree close by.

About twelve o'clock all of a sudden our horses all stampeded, all breaking ropes or pulling up their stakes and away they went across the prairie. As Capt. Kenney's horse was near me, him and I saddled him as fast as possible and I being young and captain older by many years, I told him I would do the riding. His horse was so badly frightened that he had to hold him till I could get on him. I didn't take time to dress with nothing but my underclothes and barefooted without a hat. [I] buckled my pistol around me and mounted. The horse was so badly scared that it didn't need any whip to make him run; [it was] all I could do to hold him. The two boys, as soon as they could saddle, followed me.

I run them [stampeding horses] several miles before I overhauled them, thinking it were Indians that caused the stampede. After I overhauled them, I ran a head of them and tried to stop them, but it was no good. They would pass by me and keep on. My horse Old Ball, which I thought the gentlest horse in the company, proved to be the worst after seeing I could not stop him—he being several yards ahead of the rest of the horses and thinking the Indians were after them.

I drew my pistol and ran in ahead of him [Old Ball] shooting to blind him as much as possible. After doing this several times, he got a little slower till I could run up close enough to get ahold of the rope. After getting hold of the rope, I gave it a twist around the pommel of the saddle and stopped him. After [I] got him stopped the other horses all stopped.

By that time the other two boys had caught up with me, and I led my horses back and the two boys drove the rest after me. By this time, the Major and Captain Kenney had got badly frightened, thinking that the Indians had killed us and got all of the horses, they all being afoot and could not come to us or we had gotten lost in the darkness of night.

So he made the boys shoot off their guns in the air so as we could see the flash so we could find the way back to camp. We saw the flash and I led the way and the boys drove the rest of the horses after me. We got to camp all right with all of the horses.

The major said, "Boys, you did well. Was it Indians after them?"

We told him if it were we didn't see any. He said, "Well if it had been Indians and only three of you, you would have had a tight time with them and we could not come to you being all afoot."

"Well," he said, "this learns me a lesson."

After the boys get hold of their horses and found none missing, he told the boys to tie them to a tree or get up and hold them till day. After all the horses were fixed and the guards on post of duty, we all went back to rest for the night.

The next morning we all got up and went up and down the creek to see if we could find any Indian sign, but we didn't find any. We then went to the spring and found a big bear track—water being scarce in that part of the country, he was in search of water.

The major said, "Well, I am glad it was a bear instead of Indians or we might have had three boys out of camp and all of our horses."

He said, "I will fix for this as soon as I get to where I can."

So he did. He had sidelines and hobbles made for pack mules and all of our horses and gave each one a set and told the boys that when they turned their horses over to the guards without being sidelined and hobbled, it spelled not less than twenty-four horses and maybe forty-eight on double duty.

Sidelines are a chain three feet long with a ring in each end and a leather strap to buckle it around one forefoot and around one hind foot, and the hobble, or a chain about one foot long with a ring in each end, buckled it around each fore foot. Then they can't get out of a slow walk.

Well, this ends the stampede at Buffalo Springs.

Callicott,

Ranger 1874.



Major John B. Jones

The Lost Valley Fight by Major Jones and His Escort
and a Few of Captain [Cicero Rufus] Perry's Rangers

We camped that night on a small creek eighteen miles west of the Lost Valley. By some way the guards let two horses get away during the night, that being July the 11th [1874]. Next morning, July the 12th, two of our boys were out looking for the horses [and] came across a fresh Indian trail leading in [the] direction of Lost Valley. [The news was brought] to the major at camp. The major ordered all to saddle up as fast as possible and get ready to hit the trail. When all [was] ready, thirty rangers under the command of Major Jones lit out to hit the trail.

It was found all right—going towards the Lost Valley. Not knowing whether it was an Indian trail or not, they followed it for some distance, [it leading] to a small ravine of water. Here

he [Major Jones] stopped and looked for Indian signs. He found what he wanted to find: a fresh trail of Indian moccasin tracks, pony tracks without shoes, for no other horse can travel in that part of [the] country without being shod.

He was glad it proved to be the right trail [as] he wanted to give his men a test to see how they coped with the Red Indian men. He said, "All right, boys, it is Indians and plenty of them." So he started out in good faith on that trail, using caution to not over-speed his horses so as they would be able to cope with the speed of the Indian ponies. The further they went the plainer the trail got following the trail into the Lost Valley. The trail gave out. The major told his men to scatter out and look for the trail.

As soon as our men got scattered out over the valley, the Indians from the mountain charged down on them. Our men and Indians were all mixed together, shooting at each other. As soon as Major Jones could rally his men and get them together, he ordered a charge that worked like a charm. The Indians ran to the mountains for protection and opened up, firing on the Rangers with Spencer rifles, them [the Rangers] being out on open ground, not having any way to get to them from behind the rocks. The Indians [were] shooting at them all the time from behind the rocks.

Major Jones saw he had no chance to get to them [so he] ordered his men to fall back to a little ravine or creek about one hundred fifty yards off the mountain. The Indians [were] shooting all the time, killing one Ranger just as they got near the bank of the creek. Major Jones ordered his [men] to dismount and get down under the bank of the creek to protect themselves against the Indians in the mountain.

This being Groundhog day [February 2, 1921] and being able to see my shadow in [the] sun, [I] will try and finish the details of the Lost Valley fight by Major Jones and his Rangers numbering thirty against Chief Lone Wolf and one hundred fifty of his red warriors. Getting to the creek he [Jones] ordered his men to dismount and get in [the] creek to protect themselves against the Indians.

Rapidly firing at them [Indians] in the mountain, they dismounted [and] got down in the bed of the creek, leaving their horses on top of [the] bank. Zack Wattles in [the] creek looked up over the bank [and] seen [William A. "Billy"] Glass, one of the Rangers, lying on the ground. [He] shouted, "Boys, that is my friend!"

Leaping on top of the bank [Wattles] went to him [Glass], taking him on his shoulders and started to the creek. The Indians, seeing [this], fired a volley at him as he went to the creek. One bullet from the Indians' volley hit him in the boot heel, tearing it off. After getting poor Glass in the bed of the creek, evidence showed that poor Glass had already checked up, had breathed his last in the Lost Valley fight. The battle still went on, the Indians using the advantage, shooting from behind the rocks in the mountain and the Rangers still using the bank of the creek shooting at them whenever one would emerge from behind a rock or poke his head from behind a rock. This kind of battle lasted till late in the evening.

This being Sunday the 12th day of July and a hot one at that, the boys, not having any water all day, would dig down in the wet mud to get moist dirt to quench [their] thirst as there was no water near. Our little Major Jones spent most of his time walking up and down the bank of the creek watching the Indians. Whenever he would see an Indian or his head from behind [a] rock, he would point him out and tell the boys to aim steady and to shoot to hit. They would beg

him to come down in the bed of the creek, that [if he did not], he would be killed. He replied he was a small target; that they would have to shoot close to hit him. At one time he was standing near a big oak tree when the Indians fired a volley at him, knocking splinters in his face. [He] still held his post of duty late in the evening. He saw he had no chance to rout them from the mountain and if he did, it spelled [meant] nothing as he had fourteen or fifteen head of horses being dead on the bank of the creek and his men all suffering for water, not having any all day.

After [being] in the bed of the creek where the boys [were], they all [raging?] for water, little Ed Bailey, one of the Rangers, told Major Jones if he would let him go, he would take all of the canteens and go up the creek about a mile to where he thought [there] was a hole of water. The major told him it would not do, that most of their horses were killed and they could not get to him in case the Indians got after him. He told the major he was suffering for water and so was the boys. The major finally agreed to his pleading, telling him to take with him his spyglass and to keep a look out for the Indians in the mountains.

So getting all the canteens, he and another Ranger by the name of Wheeler went with Ed Bailey. After they drank what they wanted, then filling up their canteens with water [and] securing them to their saddle pommels, started back to the boys in the creek. After getting a short distance from the water hole on their way back to the major and boys in the creek, the Indians spied [them] from their mountains, got on their ponies [and] charged in between Bailey and our boys in the creek. Bailey's horse became frightened. He could not make him but Wheeler's horse, not being so scared, took a different direction from where the boys and Major [Jones] was in the creek.

With many Indians after him close behind, [Wheeler] came to a hole of water in the creek. He plunged his horse in.

Lee Corn [was] a Ranger who was in the first mix-up that morning while looking for the Indian trail in the Lost Valley where his horse was killed and he was wounded in the arm. After the major and the other boys had rallied and drove the Indians to the mountains, Lee made his way to the hole of water [just] when Wheeler plunged in. Lee, thinking he was an Indian, fired at him. Lee Corn and Wheeler, they together opened fire at the Indians that were after Wheeler. They then fled back to where the rest of the Indians were carving poor Ed Bailey up.

After they killed Bailey, they scalped [him and] then carved him up like beefsteak. Then taking the butt end of their guns [they] stomped his skull and brains in the ground in sight of the major and the boys in the creek. After they had satisfied themselves with Bailey's dead body, they then took Bailey's horse, a fine one, gun and pistol, all of the canteens of water [and] also the major's spy glass.

The battle [was] still going on with the boys in the creek and the Indians in [the] mountains. Late in [the] evening, major said he did not know what to do unless he could get aid, as the Indians numbered so many—he only having twenty-five men with him in the creek. [Because] Lee Corn and Wheeler [were] missing, Jones thought they were killed by the Indians. [Jones did not know what to do] unless he had some way of getting aid from Fort Jacksboro, a U.S. fort eighteen miles away. Little Johnny Holmes being present said, “Major Jones, if you will let me go I will take the news to Fort Jacksboro for you.”

The major said, “No, Johnny, you will share the same fate that Bailey did. You will be cut off and killed by the Indians as Bailey was and killed.”

Johnny said, “Major, my horse won’t scare like poor Bailey’s did.”

So the major consented to let him go, although Johnny’s horse had a slight wound but not enough to keep him from running. After the major gave Johnny the message to take to the fort, his horse well rested from the morning rest on the bank when the fight was going on, he mounted. The horse was a big dun and a fast speeder. [Johnny] bade major and the boys goodbye and started across the Lost Valley toward Fort Jacksboro.

The Indians saw him start [and] closed in behind him. Johnny seen them [and] let his horse slide with the best speed he had, leaving them far behind, reaching the fort all okay. He delivered the message that night. A company of U.S. regulars were sent out under the command of a white captain. They camped all night in the Lost Valley.

After night came, the Indians ceased firing and so did major. They took what horses [were] kept alive tying Glass, a dead Ranger, on one horse, and doubling up two on the other horses, leaving one horse to pack dead Ranger Bailey on. Going by where he lay, only a pile of flesh, tying him up in a saddle blanket. Going up the creek to the hole where Bailey had filled the canteens, all horses and men—all getting plenty of good water, that being the first water they had that day. After all had plenty of water, they started up the creek going to the Lone or Lost Valley Ranch as it is called, taking Bailey and Glass to rest forever in the Lost Valley—Bailey tied up in a saddle blanket on one lead horse and Glass across the saddle of another. They rode behind one another. With what horses [were] left, the other boys went on foot.

The next morning the funeral was ended; it’s needless to say what kind of material was used in the burials, as there were no coffins nor shrouds in Jack County, at least the Lost Valley part. After getting the boys laid to rest, they that had horses or could get horses—major and all of

his men—joined in with the U.S. troops scouting out the Lost Valley and the mountains for Lone Wolf and his band of Indians. Not finding any trace of them that night, returned back to our camp where he had left us the morning he hit the Indian trail after the Indians, being only one guard left in camp consisting of twelve guards, two teamsters, two wagons, seven pack mules.

We had been in that camp twenty-four hours. At night while the major and the boys were gone, we knew something had happened to them as they didn't get back. We had our two wagons placed side by side, would graze our horses and mules close by in daytime and at night bring them up and tie them to our wagons or to a tree so that if the Indians attacked us we would have a chance to save our horses from being stampeded and taken from us. The only officer being in command of our camp was a corporal acting as commander-in-chief in Major Jones' place.

Putting on four men at a time as guards around the camp with orders if we saw any Indians around camp to report to him at once, to fire into them and come to our wagons as fast as possible. But the night passed off without any trouble of any cause. The major then being in command the next morning, ordered us to pack up our pack mules and to get ready to march. Everything ready, we started to Fort Jacksboro over the same Indian trail leading through the Lost Valley [and] passing near the monument erected over the spot where seven men were killed and burned by the Indians in wagon and all the year I went up the cattle trail in 1871 to Abilene, Kansas. We heard of it the next day or two after it happened. This monument stands as near as I remember two or three miles west of the Lost Valley in the mountain.

The boys had gathered up their saddles from their dead horses killed in the Lost Valley fight. Everything being ready, went through there or where the fight took place. The trees

standing along the bank of the creek where the horses were killed [were] loaded with buzzards and clouds of them [were] sailing above feasting on them.

Reaching Fort Jack, we camped nearby till the boys could get remounted. Then the major took up his regular line of march up and down the companies camped from Red River to the Guadalupe River, every sixty miles apart with seventy-five rangers to each company.

P.S. In the first mix-up with the Indians in the morning July the 12th, Billy Louis [William Winslow Lewis], as Lone Wolf the Indian chief was running by to get into the mountains, shot at him and killed his horse from under him. As [Lone Wolf] leaped from his fallen horse, his mocassins dropped from his feet and Billy picked them up, and I guess if Billy is still living he still keeps them as a relic of the Lost Valley fight, Sunday July the 12th, 1874. [Lewis outlived Callicott, living until 1934.]

P.S. I have given you the full details as near as memory will permit, not adding or taking anything from it as it originally occurred, the end of the Lost Valley fight.

Ranger William Callicott



[In response to Dr. Webb's question as to what tools were used to bury the two dead Rangers], but as I was not at the funeral of Bailey and Glass I can't tell you the kind of tools were used in preparing the graves for Bailey and Glass, but I think the major must of had trouble in getting any at all for when we got ready to start on the march again from Jacksboro, he

purchased two spades, two shovels, two picks. The boys all said they would of liked it better if the major would have not gotten them. They said it looked like the major was getting ready for the funerals too fast, but we never did have to use them while I was with them, no one being killed or dying from sickness, that is with the escort. What Indians we killed after that were left on the barren trail where they fell.

The boys never knew how many they killed of Chief [Lone] Wolf's gang in the Lost Valley fight as they were behind the rocks and couldn't tell when they hit one. But Chief Lone Wolf stated when he got back to Fort Sill in the reservation, he lost fifteen killed and wounded. So this is the end of the Lost Valley Indian fight [of] 1874, as I wish to state nothing but facts in the case. You will please ask friend Grooms Lee, as he was in it from start to finish. I was on camp duty that day and had to guard our wagons and pack mules. Twelve of us were on duty for twenty-eight hours till the major got back to our camp eighteen miles west of the Lost Valley. I am told that the Lost Valley derived its name from a man settling in it many years ago by the name of Loss and was killed by the Indians. Well, I give you a verse or two of a little song friend Grooms Lee composed of the Lost Valley fight sung by the tune of [illegible]:

Our boys all fought with a very good will
While the Indians were shooting from the top of the hill
But when we looked to our horses were found
About fourteen in number lay stretched out on the ground
Now here stand our Indian hunters all in a row
Its back to our homes in the mountains we will go

For we have killed several Indians our Texas brand show [?]

And the Rangers have heard of some four or five more.

It is a hard matter for me to see at all and I wish if you can use or make it out, you will do it yourself and after you get through with it, let it all go up in smoke as I don't care for others to laugh at my bad writing and spelling.

William Callicott

Escort Ranger age 68 past.

This ends the Lost Valley fight. There has been nothing added nor nothing taken away except what was real to the best of my ability.

William Callicott

Major John B. Jones escort Ranger in 1874, age 68 past.



Mr. W.P. Webb,

Kind Sir

In writing this copy of the Lost Valley fight the last number got mixed up. You will please sort them out and link them together as they belong, commencing at page 32, as I am in a

hurry to send the papers to you and you copy all of my writing yourself before you go to print with it. As my eyes are so bad it will be a hard matter for any one to make it out at all.

And after you copy it, let my friend Grooms Lee see it and see if I made any mistake in the details of it as him and Walter Robinson were in the fight from start to finish. It was my day on guard duty eighteen miles west of the Lost Valley where the fight took place. A corporal and twelve of us were left with our wagons and seven pack mules till the Major and a remnant of his men returned. Walter Robinson's horse was killed in the fight. I don't know if Grooms Lee's horse was or not. Walter's horse was a big dun, about the best horse in the escort and valued at 150 dollars.

P.S. Glass and Bailey were laid to rest at the Lost Valley Ranch Monday, July the 13th, 1874, eighteen miles west of Fort Jacksboro, a U.S. fort.

William Callicott

Escort Ranger



The Lost Valley fight was a draw fight, neither side claimed the victory. The rangers had two men killed dead, [and] two wounded: Lee Corn shot in the arm, Moore shot in the calf of the leg below the knee. [The Rangers actually had three wounded: Corn, Moore, and Mel Porter.] Fourteen head of horses [were] killed dead and several wounded.

As Lone Wolf and his band were in the mountains behind the rocks, it was a hard matter to tell how many were killed. But he reported when he got back to Fort Sill that he lost killed and wounded, fifteen of his red men.

William Callicott

Ranger



I will write you the true details of the trip up on Red River, Pease River, [the] Staked Plains and [the] Panhandle in the summer of 1874 after the Lost Valley fight with the Indians—in the country so rough and [which had] no roads. The major left his wagons and took only pack mules to every nine men to pack our grub and bedding. [He] took with him part of two companies of his rangers, making his escort one hundred ten strong, able to cope with any band of Indians we should fall in contact with.

Not thinking he would be gone over seven or eight days [but] we were gone twelve or fifteen. In about seven or eight days our grub gave out and from then on we had to live on wild buffalo without bread, salt or coffee and many times without wood to cook it with.

We would travel all day with plenty of fine buffalo in sight and maybe at night. When we camped we would have to detail three or four men to take three or four pack mules and go out and kill three or four [buffalo] for supper. Sometimes we wouldn't be able to find anything but a few old males that had strayed off from the bunch. We would have to kill them and take them in

for supper and if we didn't have wood to cook it with we would have to gather up some buffalo chips to cook it with as we had no salt. We would cut off a chunk and wallow it around in the ashes to give it a little salt taste. We lived on that kind of eating for several days.

The old major's bread lasted a little longer than [the bread of] the rest of us. When [anyone's bread] was all gone he told us all to come up to his mess and he would divide with us. We all told him and Captain Kenney and the escort doctor [Dr. E.G. Nicholson] to keep it. We could make out all right on buffalo steak.

We were marching one day when we saw about fifteen or twenty men on the plains, several miles off. We thought they were Indians and they thought we were Indians. So we started after them. We ran them as fast as we could. In order to keep our pack mules with us we ran them for about six or seven miles. They ran to where they had their wagons located on a little creek and got ready for battle. But as soon as we got in a half mile of their camp we saw what they were: they were buffalo hunters. They had their wagons all lined up side by side and got in between them to make fight with the Indians as best they could in case we were Indians.

But they saw we were not Indians as soon as we got in a half a mile of their camp and didn't open fire on us. They had buffalo hides scattered all over the ground for [a] half mile so thick that you couldn't step without stepping on one. They were drying them to take back home with them. They took nothing from the buffalo except the hide and tongue. The tongues they kept salted down to take back with them home.

When we saw the hides and wagons we knew what they were. We rode up to the wagons and they all came out from the wagons and gave us a welcome handshake and said they were glad we were Rangers instead of Indians, that a hundred and ten Indians would soon check them

up. The major asked them if they had any bread stuff with them they could spare us a little, that we hadn't had any for several days. They said yes they had plenty of soda crackers and dried buffalo tongues. They gave us all the dried buffalo salted tongues we could eat.

After we all got plenty the major ordered us to fall in ranks on our forward march, telling them good-bye as we started on, leaving them a happy set and the major disappointed on the account of them not being Indians. His seven mile run spelled nothing but a good dinner on buffalo tongues and crackers. So that was the last of our buffalo hunters.

We still kept on scouting the plains on our buffalo diet without salt, bread or coffee, using our same kind of fire fuel for cooking, being wood when we could get it and buffalo chips when we couldn't get wood. That was a hard thing to get on the Staked Plains.

A little incident happened to me one day on that trip. The major one morning told me and another fellow by the name of Bitter Creek—at least we didn't know him by any other name—to get in front of the company and be an advance guard, and to stay about a half mile or a mile ahead of the company, and to keep a good look out for Indians and trails that looked like Indian trails, and if we did [see any] to report back to him at once as fast as we could. When the company started out, we got ahead and stayed in sight of the company till about twelve o'clock in the day, not seeing anything of Indians or trails. We passed over a high hill going on. We couldn't see the company on account of the high hill. We come to a small creek or ravine that had a few trees scattered on the bank of it. We saw about fifteen or twenty big wild turkeys coming down the creek in a trot. I said to Bitter Creek, "Let's get one."

He said "All right," and as fast as they would run by, I would shoot at them, telling Bitter Creek to shoot. He told me no, for me to shoot.

I emptied my pistol, then drew my needle gun and opened fire on the turkeys without killing any of them. I said to Bitter Creek, “Why didn’t you shoot?” He said that is not the kind of game I shoot at.

About that time I heard a terrible roaring. I said to Bitter Creek, “What is that roaring about?” I said to him, “I know there is not a train in three hundred miles of this place.”

Bitter Creek said to me, “You will find out what it is doing back to the hill.”

We saw the major coming with his company—pack mules and all—as fast as he could ride, thinking we were shooting at Indians. He came standing straight in his stirrups and laying the whip to his horse as if he were riding a thousand dollar race.

When he got to [us] he said, “What is the matter?”

I told him nothing, that I was shooting at some wild turkeys.

“All right,” he said, “fall back in ranks and consider yourself on double duty for seven days and nights and I will post another man in your place.”

I said, “All right, Major.”

So I went back in the ranks and another man was sent with Bitter Creek to fill my place as advance guard. So I stood double duty for seven long days and nights for them few wild shots without killing a turkey. So I stood duty, four hours on duty and eight hours off, day and night. That was the major’s verdict in the turkey case that happened forty-six years ago and I can look back and see the old major coming over the hill. He only weighed about one hundred and fifteen pounds, wore a big hat and beard, [rode] a big black horse that was able to pack a man weighing three hundred pounds.

Well, [I] stood the duty all right, not losing a minute of the time. The trip on the plains was ended without seeing an Indian. When we got back near the camps of the other Rangers, the major sent them back to their companies. That ends the Staked Plains trip.

William Callicott

A Ranger in 1874.

William Callicott

age 68 past.



Kind Reader [Dr. Webb],

As I have bathed my eyes in warm water and salt and the sun is shining, I will try and write the details of the San Saba fight with the Indians in November 1874. We were on the march from Red River to the Guadalupe River, going to all the different companies stationed along the line, every fifty miles apart. We camped that night on the San Saba River.

It being a dark cloudy night, the guards let two of our horses get out of the herd and stray from camp. The next morning two of our boys were out looking for them. They rode up a small creek. They saw smoke coming up ahead of them out of the creek bed, but the boys knew there was no settlement houses in that part of the country, so they rode up to the bank to see. They found a band of Indians in the bed of the creek that had killed a beef and were preparing a good

meal on Texas beef. But as soon as the Indians discovered our two boys, they mounted their ponies and started after our two boys—being nineteen of them and only two of our boys and two miles from camp. They made for camp and the Indians after them.

The Indians ran them till they got in sight of our camp. The Indians, fearing to come any nearer, went back to finish their lost breakfast on Texas beef. They kept one Indian on the bank of the creek to look out while they ate. When the two boys came with the news of seeing the Indians, the major called for twenty-one volunteers. Having only forty men in his escort, he only wanted twenty-one to cope with that many Indians, leaving the balance to guard our wagons and pack mules. When ready, the major and all of us started at full [gallop] and the two boys leading the way back to where they had seen the Indians in the creek.

As soon [as] the Indian on guard saw us coming after them, he jumped up and down in the bed of the creek. [They] stopped eating and mounted their ponies and made for the top of the hill. They ran for about a half of a mile and stopped and got ready for battle. As soon as the major could get us all across the creek and out in the opening, he threw us in line of battle and ordered us to charge them. We went at them in full speed. They fired a few wild shots at us when we were making the charge, not hitting any of us. They then stampeded and every Indian for himself, but all stayed in a straight line, going west. They didn't scatter, they all went the same direction well strung out, the fastest pony always ahead, the next best till they were scattered till there was hardly ever more than two together.

As soon as we overhauled them, we opened up on them using nothing but our pistols, as we could use the pistols better on horseback running. As fast as we overhauled them, we killed them and kept on after the best in the running fight. Me and a little ranger were together. We

killed an Indian's horse from under him and the Indian seen a little hole of water ahead of him. He made for it afoot, and jumped down in it to sell out as best he could. When he jumped in the water, me and Buddy—as we always called him, not knowing his other name—dismounted and started up to the hole. We had our guns presented to shoot.

Just before we got to the hole, the Indian raised his head above the bank to shoot. Not being over ten steps from him, I got the first shot, shooting him in the head, killing him dead. He fell back in the water. Me and Buddy walked up to the hole that was only a little round hole of water and the banks only about two feet high and hardly water enough to cover him. We pulled him out on the bank.

Buddy said to me, “You know how the Indians cut and scalped little Ed Bailey and cut him up in the Lost Valley fight? Let's scalp him.”

I said, “All right, go for him.”

He took the knife, gathered him by the scalp lock, took the knife and started to cut under the skin. He said to me, “I can't stand it.” I asked why. “Well,” he said, “I can't.”

I said, “Did you ever skin a squirrel?”

“Yes,” he said, “but skinning a squirrel and scalping an Indian is altogether different.”

“Well,” I said, “cut a little hand hold under the back of his head under the skin and cut around his head above his ears, then cut a little space between the meat and hide of his head and take hold of his scalp lock and put your foot on his shoulder and pull back.”

“Well,” he said, “I can't stand to do it.”

“You do it,” I said. “Well, you proposed it, do it.”

“Well,” he said, “I will let it alone.” Seeing his stomach had failed him, I took the knife and soon had the scalp off without any trouble.

The Indian has such a bad smell when they are alive and a worse one when they are dead that I can't stand the smell of them. After scalping the Indian and tying it to my saddle we started on. The fight didn't last much longer. The Indian I killed proved to be the chief by his long scalp lock and the feathers in his headdress. That was the only Indian that I killed in that fight that I know of. I kept the scalp for a day or two tied to my saddle and it got to smelling so bad and I threw it away and never did want to scalp any more Indians.

In the fight two of the Indians had their horses killed and were standing on the ground and two of our boys ran up to shoot them. One of the Indians gave his bow a hard pull and broke it half in two. He then threwed up both hands with the broken bow in his hands. One of the boys started to shoot him and the other boy wouldn't let him. They killed the other Indian that was still shooting and took the one that had the broken bow a prisoner, him being only a boy of about nineteen or twenty years old.

The fight lasted nearly all day. Two of the Indians were riding a fine horse that they had stolen on this side of Red River. With the start they got on us in the morning, [they] outrun us all day. Two of our boys run them till sundown when the Indians ran into a big cave. The two boys stopped at the mouth of the cave all night thinking they would ride out that way and they could kill them. But when it got light the next morning, they looked all around the cave and found that during the night, that the Indians had found another hole on the opposite side plenty big to get out with their horses and [had] gone. So that ended the San Saba Indian fight with sixteen killed dead, one a prisoner and two got away out of the nineteen Indians. We didn't lose a man killed or

wounded. Captain Kinney's horse was slightly wounded in the knee with an arrow. After the fight, we all started back over the trail of dead Indians, gathering up their bows and arrows, shields and quivers and what guns they had, leather britches and the moccasins, the kind of shoes they wore on their feet.

[We] took our Indian prisoner and went back to camp, all except the two boys that camped at the cave. The next morning the major had the Indian prisoner, with all the Indians' equipment put on a pack mule, and sent five of the boys with him to the city of Austin with orders to turn him over to the sheriff. The Indian equipment was turned over to the old capitol that burned up several years ago and it all got burned up in the museum. The Indian prisoner was kept in the Austin jail for a long time. He was sent to the city of Washington and there he died, so Captain Kenney told me several years afterward. So that ends the San Saba Indian fight from the San Saba River to the city of Washington.

So kind reader [Dr. Webb], if you can make out to read my badly written words and wish to use it in your history, it is up to you. It is all real, nothing added nor nothing taken except as it really occurred in 1874.

William Callicott

Texas Ranger, age 68 past.



On our first trip up the line on our way to Red River, we stopped for two days at Fort Griffin, a U.S. fort near the head of the Brazos River, to get some supplies and corn for our horses. At that time, the Tonkawa Indians were camped there under the protection of the U.S. government, having been at one time the largest tribe that roamed the plains. But being on the war path with so many different hostile Indians, they had almost been killed out, now being only about eighteen warriors left and a few old ones left while we were there. The major made a trade with the two old chiefs to go with him as guides, as we didn't know anything about the country and they claimed to know the country from Red River to the Coast. They proved to be of great service to the major's escort as we knew nothing about the country. There were no roads, no boats to cross the river. They knew every ford on all of the rivers and creeks and all of the places to get water.

Sometimes water was hard to find in some parts of that country—at least that will do to drink. There is some of it that nothing can drink it. In this case they did great service to the major. They knew the country so well that you could tell them what place you wanted to go and if at night, they would select a star in the direction and take you there as well as if it were day and they had a road to travel. You could tell them any mountain you wished to go to and they would take a sister star and take you there without any trouble. Sometimes in marching along, we would find arrows that the hostile Indians had lost out of their quivers or had shot at something and missed. They could tell you whether it was Comanches, Karankawas or Apaches. They said they had had trouble with all of the hostile Indians in the early days in Texas. It seemed that all of the other tribes of Indians had a spite at the Tonkawa tribe. It seems that the Tonkawas were all the more friendly with the whites—at least I never did hear of them doing any harm to the

whites—and all of the other different tribes did all the devilment they would in the way of killing and stealing from the whites.

Whenever they could slip over across the Red River into Texas, they would kill every white man, woman, and child they could and burn whatever the whites had. They have been known to take white prisoners and cut the bottom of their feet off and then make them walk on stumps of grass barefooted. One day while we were out there, an old man came to the major and told the major he wanted to join his Ranger company and spend the balance of his days in killing Indians, that one day while he was away from home, that the Indians made a raid on his family and killed the last of his race—not leaving one of them—and then burned his house and all he had. The old fellow was about seventy-five years old and didn't have but a few days left to revenge the loss of his family in, but the old major told him he was too old to do much hard duty, but if he wanted a chance to get even with them, he would give him a chance. He would make a corporal out of him and if he ever had any Indian fighting to do, he could have a chance at them. He would pay him the same as the other Rangers, \$40 per month, and not have him stand any guard duty. The old fellow made a good Ranger for his age but whether he ever got revenge or not, I don't know.

P.S. My old friend, Grooms Lee of Austin, an old Ranger of the escort in 1874, tells me he has been out there where we were in 1874. At that time in some parts of the country there was not a house in two hundred or three hundred miles. {He tells me that at present [they] have fine two- or three-story houses on it and the Lost Valley where we had a fight with Chief Lone Wolf. It is all in a fine state of civilization, and on the spot where little Ranger Ed Bailey was cut up stands a fine school house.

[Not legible] would stay there till the next morning after we had all eaten dinner and were resting from our hard ride. That morning the major came around to where me and three or four of us were lying down and told me to saddle up Old Ball, that he wanted to get the [weight?] off of me [by going] after a buffalo. We could see a small bunch on a hill about a mile off. The major took me and five of the other boys and went out to where they were grazing. In the bunch there was a big male standing off to himself. The major pointed him out to me and said, "Bill, let's see how far you will have to run him before you kill him."

I said, "All right, major." I gave a yell, slapped the spurs to Old Ball and away we went. I ran him for about four hundred yards, leading Old Ball up close beside him, drew my needle gun, landing a bullet behind his shoulder. He stopped and quivered with the blood streaming from his mouth and nose. He fell dead. The major didn't take any hand in the chase but stood and watched us do the work, the same as he stood on the bank of the creek at the Loss Valley fight, telling the boys how to shoot the Indians.

After we all had killed our buffalo we went back to the major and he said, "Well, Bill, you and Old Ball got him all right."

He said, "Old Ball is all right after buffalo," he said. I said I had seen plenty of them when I went up the cow trail to Kansas in 1871, but that was the first one I had ever killed. We all went back to camp, satisfied with our buffalo hunt.

A few days after this, we were marching along when a big bunch of stampeded buffalo came running along at full speed. I said to the major, "Can I get one?"

He said, "Yes, go ahead."

[There was] a big four-year-old male, being nearest to me and on the outside of the bunch, so I started after him, running him for about six hundred yards, running along side of him, shooting him with my pistol. All at once the buffalo stopped and Old Ball, being a trained cow pony, stopped. When he did, the buffalo, being mad from being shot, made a lunge at Old Ball, making a gash in his thigh about six inches long. If you saw a fellow spur and whip a horse, I did to get Old Ball away before he made another lunge at me. He stood shaking his head and bellowing, but as soon as I got Old Ball out of his reach, I drew my needle gun and shot him behind the fore shoulder, a fatal shot. He stood still for a moment, then he tumbled and fell dead, with the blood streaming from his mouth and nose. I got down off of my horse, cutting both knee scalps off to make me a pair of toe fenders for my stirrups, tied them to my saddle and overtook the company that was a mile away. If the buffalo had killed Old Ball, it would have left me in a bad fix, not a tree in sight and the company a mile away.

Well, kind reader, I will relate a sad story that happened to one of our boys. He failed to answer our roll call on account of the corporal that was on duty with the night guards. At roll call he didn't answer to his name when called. The guard reported him to the major and after we had breakfast and [we were] ordered to mount and fell into ranks to march.

The major rode up in front and asked which one it was that failed to answer at roll call. The fellow spoke up and said it was him. The major asked him why he didn't. The fellow said the corporal didn't wake him up. The major asked him if he had any proof to that effect. The fellow said he didn't, that he was sleeping by himself and that he didn't hear him call—if he did call at all.

The major said, "If you can get any proof that he failed to wake you up, I will make him stand the double duty in your place." The fellow said he had no proof to that effect.

The major said, "Then you will have to stand double duty, twenty-four hours one day and night for that offense. That is my rule."

The fellow said, "Major, the corporal did not wake me for roll call and I will not stand [double guard]."

The major ordered us to form twos and forward march. We marched all that day. The major didn't say anything till the next morning, till we fell into ranks for another day's march. The major rode up in front again and asked the fellow if he still refused to stand double duty. He said he did.

"Well," the major said, "I hate to have to discharge a man for that little offense, but my rules must be obeyed. I don't show no partiality with my men. I will give you till tomorrow morning to decide whether you will stand or not. I hate to discharge a man in this wild Indian country."

The major was a good man and hated to have to do it, but the fellow was stubborn and wouldn't stand. Any of us boys would have gladly taken his place and stood for him if the major would have let us, but the major wouldn't let us. So the next morning when we fell into ranks, that being the third time the major had appealed to him. The major rode in front and said to the fellow, "Have you made up your mind to stand double duty or not?"

The fellow said, "Major, so far as the double duty, I don't mind standing it if the corporal had woke me up. But he didn't."

"Well," the major said, "will you stand or not?"

The fellow said, “No sir, I will die before I will stand it, when I know I am right.”

So the major said, “I will have to give you a dishonorable discharge. I hate to do it,” the major said to the fellow.

He said, “Write it out.”

The major wrote it out and handed it to the fellow, ordered us to form twos, forward march. We all waved him good-bye as we started off. We left him standing on his horse as far back as we could see. He was still standing in there. He didn't know in what direction to start. I don't think there was a house in a hundred miles of that place or a U.S. fort either, nor no roads in a wild Indian part of the frontier. Whatever became of that poor fellow we never did learn. Sometime after that morning, we were on the march and stopped on a small creek for dinner. After dinner we were ordered to saddle up to march on. I went down the creek after my horse that had grazed off from the others. A little ways down the creek, going down the creek, I passed a little thicket near the bank of the creek. There lay a skeleton of a white man, near the eye of the thicket and near the bank of the water hole, with both arms laying out straight from his body and an old-fashion cap-and-ball pistol laying near each hand. There was not a speck of flesh on his skeleton, neither did he look like the wolves or buzzards had ever bothered his bones as they were all laying in the shape like he died. However it was, he must have been killed by the Indians. The Indians must have got after him and he ran in that thicket to protect himself, and they surrounded it and wounded him, and he might—after they left—[have] crawled to the water hole after water and was not able to get back in the thicket. The skeleton looked like it had been there for a year as there was no sign of clothes of any kind about him, and his pistols were badly rusted. It might have been a frontier cowboy who had got lost and was killed by the Indians ,as

cattle ranches had begun to settle up in some parts of that country where the Indians were not too bad. We all supposed that was the way he was killed, as that kind of killing happened often in Texas by the Indians, at least the frontier part of it. So we all left him as he lay with his pistols not touched as they were no good.

William Callicott

Ranger 1874.



While on the march on the line, [one night?] we came in a little glad prairie that had live oak bushes over it from knee-high to waist-high scattered over it. It being my time for duty, I was on the first relief, [there were] four of us. We had our horses about two hundred yards from camp, sidelined and hobbled to keep the Indians from stampeding them. Our horses were all grazing fine after a hard day's ride. I thought I would get off of my horse and rest him a little. I was standing on the ground by my horse, watching the horses graze. The side lines on the horses rattling had roused up a big black bear from his night slumber. He came just where I was standing with my gun resting in the saddle. He was so near me that I could have touched him with the muzzle of my gun. I leveled my gun at him across my saddle and started to shoot him, and I happened to think it might cost me another spell of seven days and nights double duty like the turkeys did while we were on the plains for shooting without orders while I was [on duty].

So I got off my horse and went to camp as fast as I could and told the major that there was a big bear down there with our horses, and that I started to shoot him, but I didn't care about having to stand double duty seven days and nights for killing a bear.

"Well," he said, "I am glad you came and told me before you shot it. If you had of before letting me know we would of all been up and in arms thinking it was Indians you were shooting at. Well, if he comes around again, kill him. I won't make you stand double duty for it, but be careful and don't shoot one of them little pack mules for a bear."

I told him I certainly knew a bear from a pack mule, for I had been raised on the Brazos River in early days in Texas when bear were plentiful in that part of the country. So I went back to the herd hoping the bear would show up again, but he didn't while I was on guard. I guess he had other business to attend to.

We were on our last trip down the line, as it was beginning to get cold weather in that part of the state. We had had already two or three big freezes on us without any tents to stand the winter in. The major came by every company down the line telling the captains to fix up for the winter. We then came down the line to Kerrville, a little country village one hundred miles west of Austin [in Kerr County], to get tents and fix up for the winter. We struck camp on Silver Creek, seven miles from Kerrville, to get ready for the winter. This was the place we started from in the early spring of 1874. Captain Kenney and I lived near together in Austin County and he didn't expect to do any more riding till spring. He got me to bring his horse home for him, so I applied for a discharge and received an honorable discharge on the 25th day of December 1874.

The next morning being December 26 I started for home—a distance of two hundred miles—with Captain Kenney’s horse and saddle to head home and a letter to his mother with permission to bear my sidearms to my home.

Back home—Austin County, Texas. So this is the end of my career with Major John B. Jones’ escort of Texas Rangers in 1874. I bade the boys farewell at Silver Creek Camp forty-six years ago and never have seen one of them since.

William Callicott

Ranger, 68 [years] passed.



April the 27th, 1921

Houston

Mr. Webb, Kind sir

I send you all the pictures I have in regards to Ranger life in 1874 with Major John B. Jones’ escort and with Captain McNelly in 1875 on the Rio Grande River in 1875 against Mexican bandits. This group picture was taken when I first joined Major Jones’ escort in Austin in the early spring of 1874, when he first started out.

Three of these pictures are my mess mates. This one sitting to my left are DeJanett; then to my left standing is Ben Pattison; the one standing behind me [is] Zack Wattles, the one that

packed Glass in the creek at the Lost Valley fight. He has a pistol in his hand. The one in the middle with a needle gun in his hand is William Callicott. To the best of my knowledge they have all answered their last roll call but me. Grooms Lee and Walter Robinson and myself are all that's left of the first old escort that left Austin with Major Jones' first escort in the early Spring of 1874. This picture you see telling an old Confederate soldier friend goodbye is me, the day I loaded my horse on the train at Burton, Texas, to ship to Austin to join Major Jones' escort. The old soldier friend was John Smith. He served four years in the Confederate Army with General Tom Green's brigade. I was then a little over twenty-one.

This picture of Old Ball and Bill [Callicott] was painted by one of the boys on the extreme Staked Plains. This little huisache tree standing in the rear of Old Ball was the only tree in sight. I rode him all the time I was with Major Jones and also with Captain McNelly on the Rio Grande River in 1875. It is a perfect picture of the horse and also of myself at that time, as it was my first coat of whiskers and long hair as we hadn't seen a barber shop in several months.



The other picture standing was taken in Brownsville on the Rio Grande River when I was with Captain McNelly in 1875. I have tried to have them made over anew but the artist made a poor job of them. I will send you all of them and you can use any you wish and copy them off as soon as you can and return them to me. Be careful with Old Ball and Bill as it is only a piece of blank paper.

If you can find out by Grooms Lee or Walter Robinson the whereabouts of the fellow that painted Old Ball and me—he painted the Lost Valley Indian fight in good shape. He showed it to me after he painted it. It showed the Indians making their first charge and then where they went in to the mountains after Major Jones rallied his men and charged them. I send you a copy of the old *Houston Post*. Maybe Grooms can tell who he is if he sees his name.

P.S. I will later on—if my eyes hold out—will write out the details of our two trips over into Mexico: twenty-six of us at one time and ten of us at another time and also the disbanding of a lot of men that claimed to be Rangers that were not; and also the driving of the thirty-five head of cattle that belonged to old Captain [Richard] King that we got out of the seventy-five head we got out of Mexico. Four of us drove the thirty-five head back to his ranch, a distance of one hundred miles to his home ranch, Santa Gertrudis.

The cloud is getting over the sun; I will have to stop as I can't see the letters I make.

William Callicott

Ranger



Houston

April 29th, 1921

Mr. W.P. Webb, Kind Sir

You asked me to tell you what King it was that erected the four-thousand-dollar monument over the grave of our Captain McNelly at his old home [near] Burton, Texas. It was the old Captain King, the owner of the Santa Gertrudis Ranch in Nueces County, West Texas. He was a captain on a government boat before the Civil War in 1861 and after he gave up boat life he went into the stock business. He settled the name of the Santa Gertrudis Ranch that is located forty miles west of Corpus Christi City and one hundred miles north of the Rio Grande. This is one of the largest ranches in western Texas. Him and [Mifflin] Kenedy were partners for a long time till King bought Kenedy out many years ago. One of Kenedy's boys belonged to our McNelly Ranger company in 1875.



Captain Richard King

Old Captain King was one of the oldest settlers in West Texas and the wealthiest of them all. He owned more stock ranches, more land, more cattle and horses and sheep than all the balance of West Texas put together. He was called the Cattle King of West Texas.

He was the King that sent Captain McNelly the check to the Brownsville Bank for a thousand dollars each time we had a fight with the bandits, and also the one that turned over the seven room house to Captain McNelly in the city of Brownsville for us boys to stop in free of charge in case we had to go there at any time. He was the one that gave us fresh horses to ride when ours were rode down. He was the one that told Captain McNelly to never let us go hungry, to kill his beeves or anybody else's. He was the one we drove the thirty-five head of cattle to that we got out of Mexico, November 1875. He was the one that raised one hundred men to come to us in Mexico when Captain McNelly and twenty-six of us were reported to be cut off from water

and grub, and it would be a second Alamo massacre with us all with fourteen hundred armed Mexicans in front of us. We stayed there all the same, two days and nights with them in front of us; they were there—we could see them, they were not over twenty yards from us in the woods up and down the river. We were where we had plenty of water and grub and in Mexico too, but the old Captain King got word of us coming back into Texas and disbanded his men and went back home without coming to us. All of this I will explain in my next writing from start to finish and will give you the full details of it all as it really occurred, if you can make out my writing.

On the morning of November the 19th, 1875, when we charged in to the Cuchattas Ranch [in] Mexico between daylight and sunup, [there were] five on horseback and twenty-one on foot, with old “Casuse” [Jesus Sandoval] on his old Paint horse in the lead, yelling and shooting in every direction, and the other twenty-one of us closed in behind. If the angels of heaven had flown down on them they could not have been any more surprised, as we were the first Rangers or soldiers that had been in Mexico since the old Mexican War.

Don’t use this writing in [your] history. I am only giving you the outlines of it and to let you know the King that erected the monument over our Captain McNelly’s grave. As I have been so long getting the details of ranger life fixed up for you, that I guess you have got tired looking for it. The next writing I will try and not be so long. My eyes are so bad I can’t see, only when the sun shines the brightest.

William Callicott

Ranger with Captain McNelly in 1875



Since we were over there [in Mexico] in 1875 when there was no railroads in that country—now there is a big railroad town. [It] stands where the old Santa Gertrudis Ranch on the Gulf Coast railroad runs there, and now the old ranch goes by the name of Kingsville.

I have seen his wife and all of his family. The old captain has been dead for many years but I think his widow still lives. She was his second wife and many years younger than he was.

P.S. I send you a letter that I got from Mr. Jimines [?] many years ago in regards to the details of ranger life. I wrote off a heap of it and sent it to him in San Antonio, Texas, and his wife sent it back to me telling me that Mr. Jimines was gone. She didn't tell me where but the way the letter read I think they had a kind of breakup in their camp. Whether Mr. Jimines ever returned or not I can't tell but I still have the details of ranger life a-waiting his return.

P.S. I also send you a letter I got from my old friend Morton King [M. Kinney] who was our quartermaster in the major's escort in 1874. Him and I were the only ones that were from Austin County, Texas, as we lived close together, only he was many years older. He was a captain in the Confederate Army when I was only a small boy. Major Jones was a captain in the Confederate Army, a major in ranger life, and Adjutant General in Austin when he died. Major Jones, Captain King, and Captain McNelly were three great men.



Houston

May the 2nd, 1921

Mr. W. P. Webb,

Kind Sir:

. . . It has been many years since I have tried to read print on account of my eyes being so bad, but yesterday I had Mr. Coffe's [?] details read to me of the Palo Alto Bandit fight by Captain McNelly and twenty-two of his Rangers on Sunday, July [*sic*, June] the 12th, 1875. Mr. Coffe states that we found the dead body of the schoolteacher and dug the grave with Bowie knives and other implements and laid him to rest on the bandits' trail ride with both feet cut off and both hands [cut] off at the wrist. We [had] heard of the man being killed, and the bandit had on the white teacher's suit of clothes when we killed him [the bandit], but we never saw him, nor did we dig any grave with knives, nor did we deliver any of the two hundred head of cattle back to old Captain King or anyone else. We only passed the cattle rounded up on this side of the lagoon and we didn't stop to look at them. We left it to them to drift back to the range where they belonged, which is natural for stock to do. Both the cattle and horses will do that if they are not kept under herd. And about the wolf hole, we never seen one nor did I hear Captain McNelly speak of it nor any of the boys. And about the big rattlesnake, if there was one seen, we didn't stop to look at it because old Captain McNelly had bigger game ahead that he soon overhauled on the other side of the Palo Alto bayou lagoon.

Captain McNelly was in command of us all when we started across the lagoon in line of battle. While the Mexican bandits were firing on us all the time, the Captain— not paying but little heed to their bullets, happened to cast his eyes to the right and discovered a long skirt of timber running north and south in direction of the Rio Grande River. The Captain knew that as soon as we got onto where the water and mud was shallow enough to allow us to make the charge, it would be made. So he didn't want to give them [Mexicans] any chance to get to the timber. So he called old Casuse, our old Mexican Ranger, and five or six of the other boys nearest to him to follow him. He took the right flank going angling across the lagoon in water and mud from knee-deep to belly deep to their horses reaching the bank all okay.

The bandits saw they were going to be cut off from the timber, so they mounted their horses and started in that direction. They ran altogether for about a half mile. [They] saw they were cut off from the timber. They rallied and got ready to fight.

The Captain and his Rangers pressed up [as] close to them as they could get [and then] opened up, firing on them, killing one or two of them. They [Mexicans] lit out every man for himself, and the fastest horses in the lead. The Captain and his six men stay[ed] on the side next to the timber till we got them beyond the timber. Then we all closed in on them. It was a running fight from where the Captain and his men killed first to where the Captain killed the last one in the dagger thicket. It was between eight or ten miles, [a] running fight.

I was an eyewitness to it all, from start to finish, and I don't say but what Mr. Coffe's [article?] is correct. Part of it [is] and part of it is not. In regards to the wolf hole and the snake and the digging of the grave with Bowie knives and the handing of the cattle back to their owners and the graceful [?] riding in the morning breeze with the butts of our guns resting on our knees,

Captain McNelly's orders didn't spell that way. It spelt get there [early?] or die, and we went there in the old cowboy style of riding. For it took good riding to catch them.

Well, Mr. Webb, ...I have already given you the full details of the Palo Alto fight from start to finish, and this is only to let you know that Mr.Coffe was mistaken in part of it or he got details mixed together of different engagements with Indians or Mexicans and is not to blame for it.

This writing is not to go into [the] history. I am only explaining it to you, and you can use my details of it—or Mr. Coffe's, rather—just as you see fit about it, if you like.

William Callicott, Ranger

As I am in a hurry to send it off, I will close.

P.S. What I wrote to you in regard to our trips in Mexico: don't use any of it till I send you the full details from start to finish.



Houston

Dec. 29th, 1921

Mr. W. P. Webb,

Kind Friend,

. . . I wrote to you some time ago and sent you a letter that I got from my old comrade George Durham that served with me and Captain McNelly on the Rio Grande River in 1875. He still lives at Raymondville, Texas. He served with Captain McNelly a long time after I left and had many engagements with the bandits in Texas and in Mexico. He tells me I [*sic*, he] would be glad for you to write him and have him to give you the details of all the engagements that they had after Dec. 25th, 1875. That was the time I left the service on the Rio Grande River. He tells me of several trips they made into Mexico after cow bandits, and I think...he's had or [is] properly vaccinated with book learning. He can quote some details to you in the way of making up your history. George was only seventeen years of age at that time, but a truer or braver Ranger never lived. He was with us in the Palo Alto fight [and] with us in Mexico. Whenever the Captain called for volunteers, George was always ready and willing to go to the front. He was a native of Georgia and had been in Texas only a short while before he joined us. He was a cousin to the two Wright boys, Lon and Linton Wright: two noble Rangers.

P.S. I enclose [for] you a map of the Palo Alto fight. I made it, as [it is] still fresh in my memory as it was Sunday, July [*sic*, June] the 12th, 1875, the day it occurred though it has been forty-six years ago. The red dots stand for mounted Rangers; the black dots stand for mounted cow bandits—Mexicans.

As I am no sketch artist, I have no other way of explaining it to you. You will see two hundred fifty head of cattle rounded up on the left-hand side of the bandit trail, this side of the lagoon. The black dots stand for the bandits lined up on the other side of the lagoon, shooting at us as we were going over in mud and water from knee-deep to belly-deep.

You will see seven red dots going to the right. That's Captain McNelly and six Rangers crossing the lagoon to cut them off from the long skirt of timber to the right across the lagoon, two miles away.

As soon as the Captain and his six Rangers got over the lagoon, you will see the seven red dots going to the left to meet the bandits' first volley after they broke ranks and fled from the lagoon.

You will see the fourteen red dots making the charge as soon as we got up near the bandits. You will see where Old Ball made that unexpected lunge and went out from under my hat. When the lieutenant [T. C. Robinson] shouted out, "Let 'em slide, boys! Go for them!", the boys were all ready and willing to ride, and the faster horses went to the front. The red dots are the Rangers.

The "db" are the dead bandits on the running trail. You will see the dagger patch to the left of the trail where our sixteen-year-old Ranger boy was killed. To the left of the dagger patch, you will see the rough pond where we found [Spencer J.] Adams and old Sorrel Top guarding the wounded bandit as we came back over [the] dead bandits' trail.

The last dagger patch, on the trail to the right going towards the Rio Grande River, is where Captain McNelly killed the last running bandit. The four red dots you see around the dagger patch are four mounted Rangers guarding the patch to see if he came out while the Captain went in after him.

The five red dots you will see coming back over the dead bandits' trail after the Captain had the last one in the dagger patch—that [is] Captain McNelly and four of us boys. You will see to the left of the trail as we came back over the dead bandits' trail where Ball and Bill [Callicott]

got the dead bandit's hat. You will see where Lon Wright killed two bandits off of one horse at one shot with his Colt .45 pistol. Next you will see where Captain McNelly and his six Rangers killed two when the bandits left the lagoon and rallied for the last time, till the last one was killed by Captain McNelly.

[You will see where] our sixteen-year-old Ranger [died], from where he was killed going towards the Rio Grande River on the right-hand side of the bandit trail, or where Captain McNelly killed the last running bandit before we started back over the trail to where we first started them from the lagoon. The map will show you the whole thing from start to finish. All red dots are Rangers; all black dots are cow bandits; all dead bandits are branded "db." This is a true and truthful map of the Palo Alto fight that took place Sunday, July [*sic*] the 12, 1875, with Mexican cow bandits and Captain McNelly and twenty-two of his Rangers.

Mr. Webb, I hope you will be able to understand it and can read my writing. My eyes are bad. I can't see but little. If you get this, let me hear from you at once.

Yours Truly,

William Callicott

A McNelly Ranger in 1875

1408 Nance Ct.

Houston, Texas



Las Cuevas and the Invasion of Mexico

In 1875, while Captain McNelly and his little band of Rangers were on the march about forty miles north of the Rio Grande River in Texas, we came to a good creek of water where there was plenty of grass and wood. We camped there that night, being November the 16th, 1875. The next morning being November the 17th, 1875, at roll call the Captain McNelly said, "Boys, our horses are tired and need a day or two rest and as we have plenty of good grass and water, we will stay here a day or two. All of you wash and sun your clothes and blankets as I don't know when you will have another chance to clean up."

And he said [to me], "Bill, our jerked beef has gotten low. Go and get a good beef. Get a big one that will last several days as I don't know when we will stop again."

I rode Old Ball out about a mile to a big bunch of cattle, selected out a big four-year-old beef of old Captain King's, killed and skinned [him], cut him up, and tied him on top of Old Ball. I took the hide and spread it on top of the meat, with the flesh side of the hide next to the meat. I got on top of it and rode Old Ball in to camp, hung it up in a tree and told the boys to tighten up their wrinkles on good King beef. After they got all they wanted of it, I made me a scaffold and jerked the rest to take with us when we started out the next march.

The next day being November the 18th, 1875, about two p.m., a Mexican ranchman came to Captain McNelly with the news that he had seen a band of Mexicans with a herd of cattle going towards the Rio Grande River in the direction of the Las Cuevas Ranch, Mexico. [He] said they were bandits with a big herd of cattle, about seventy-five or one hundred head, and he thought they intended crossing the river near the Las Cuevas Ranch in Mexico. He said they were headed that way. The Captain said, "All right." The Captain asked Casuse how far it was to

the place where they would be likely to cross the cattle into Mexico, near the Las Cuevas Ranch in Mexico. Tom Sullivan, our interpreter, asked Casuse, and he said the nearest way we could go. It was sixty miles or more. It was then 2:00 p.m. The Captain told Tom Sullivan and Old Casuse to get ready as fast as they could and, not having all of the boys with him at that time, called out for twenty-four volunteers to saddle up and fall into ranks as fast as possible and not to take anything with them except what they had on, and to take with them forty rounds of pistol cartridges and forty rounds of gun cartridges.

“All ready and into ranks!” the Captain said. “Well, boys, this ride will have to be made in five hours or less, if possible. I want to beat them to the river if I can.” He told the guards left with the wagons to remain where they were till further orders. “All ready,” he said, “now follow me and Casuse.”

Casuse knew the way and took [illegible] him and the Captain in the lead. We went in a fast trot and a lope all the way, making the sixty miles in a little less than five hours. But we got there a little too late. They had beat us to the river and had crossed the cattle over into Mexico to the Las Cuevas Ranch, the headquarters for all the cow bandits.

A U.S. captain with two hundred regulars from some nearby fort had followed them to the river and camped on this side of the river. They had two Gatling guns planted on Mexico from this side of the river.

It had then gotten dark. The Captain said to me, “Bill, take two of the boys and go up to that near ranch and get two or three muttons and dress them for supper, and I will step up and see that U.S. captain and see what I can do with him in regards to getting one hundred of his men. You boys cook and eat all the mutton you want and broil a chunk for dinner tomorrow. You

won't need any breakfast. It will make us too late getting over. Have everything ready by twelve o'clock tonight and we will start to cross by one tonight. I have made the arrangements with this Mexican on this side to cross us [over] and to swim our horses over for us. He has a little dugout of a canoe that will hold up four at a time. It has a leak in it, but one of you can keep the water dipped out so as it won't sink with you. We will swim one horse at a time. Loosen your flank girths, as a horse can't swim well with a flank girth tight, and take your guns in your hands so if the horse drowns, you won't lose your gun. And take your morral on your shoulder that has your cartridges in it, and your dinner. Do like I tell you, and be ready by one to start over. I will be back and let you know what I can do with the U.S. captain. If I can get one hundred of his men we're all okay."

The Captain told him [U.S. captain] he had only twenty-six men in all and had rode sixty miles in a little less than five hours to beat them to the river. As he didn't [beat them], he wanted him to let him have a hundred of his men to go with him over into Mexico after the cattle. The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly he couldn't. It was against the law to invade a foreign country and he couldn't let him have his men at all.

Captain McNelly said, "Well, if you can't let me have the men, I will risk the law in Mexico with my twenty-six men. They can't get any more of us than we can of them. If we don't get the cattle back, we can say we had the pleasure of killing a few of them."

So at twelve o'clock, the Captain came back to us and said, "Well, boys, the U.S. captain says he can't let me have any of his men. Have everything ready by one to start over. I am going over if I never get back." So at one [o'clock] the Captain said, "Fall in to ranks!" We all fell into ranks on the Texas bank of the Rio Grande River.

The Captain stepped out in front of us and said, “Boys, you have followed me as far as I can ask you to do unless you are willing to go with me.” He said, “It is like going into the jaws of death with only twenty-six men in a foreign country where we have no right according to law, but as I have went this far, I am going to the finish with it.” He said, “Some of us might get back, or part of us, or maybe all of us, or maybe none of us will get back. And if any of you don’t want to go over with me, step aside. I don’t want you unless you are willing to go as a volunteer,” he said. “Understand, there is no surrender in this. We ask no quarter nor give any. If any of you don’t want to go, step aside.”

We all said, “Captain, if you can risk your life, we can certainly risk ours.” He said, “All right boys, that’s the way to talk it. We will learn them a Texas lesson that they have forgotten since the old Mexican War. Well, boys, all of you get ready to go over. I will take Old Casuse, Tom Sullivan, and myself over first. There can only [cross] but four at a time. I will take old Casuse’s horse as we go. Then I want Lieutenant Robinson and Lieutenant [John B.] Armstrong and Sergeant George Hall to come next and bring with them their horses, and the rest of you have your horses ready to swim over as fast as you can. You can’t swim over but one at a time alongside of the little canoe. Be careful and don’t drown any of the horses and don’t lose any of your guns or pistols. Keep them with you.”

After getting Casuse’s horse, Lieutenant Robinson’s horse, Lieutenant Armstrong’s horse, and Sergeant George Hall’s horse, and Sergeant George Orrill’s horse, the Captain came back on this side of the river and told us to let our horses stay where they were, that the quicksand was so bad on the other side, it was impossible to get them all over in time; that what horses he had taken over they had to pull them out of the sand with ropes; that he had only got

over five horses; and to take all the horses over that way, it would make us too late for the surprise on the Las Cuevas Ranch.

He said, "Unsaddle your horses and I will get this Mexican ranchman to look after them on this side of the river." So we did. The Captain said, "Boys, leave everything except your guns and pistols and your morrals with your cartridges and grub." The Captain said, "I will take over with me the Mexican guide that I have got to pilot us to the ranch." He said, "Two of you boys come on with us and the rest come as fast as possible. I want all [of you] over by half past three as I want to start up to the ranch at four. It is two miles and a half or three miles to the ranch, and it will take us hard walking to make it in time." So we all went, three at a time. One would have to dip out the water to keep the little dugout from sinking while the Mexican paddled us over. We all got over all okay, all twenty-six together. Once more in Mexico, the Captain said, "Fall into ranks, boys." That being the 19th of November 1875 and four a.m.

The Captain said, "Boys, the pilot tells me that the ranch is picketed in with high posts in the ground and has bars for a gate to get in at. The five on horseback will fall in behind in single file of the rest of us. The pilot said it is only a little cow trail for a road, not wide enough for us to go in twos. So we will go Indian file, one behind the other, till we get to the ranch. Then the bars will be let down and I want Old Casuse, Lieutenant Robinson, Armstrong, George Hall, [and] George Orrill to dash through the ranch, yelling and shooting to attract their attention. The other twenty-one of us will close in behind and do the rest as best we can. I want you to kill all you see except old men, women, and children. He said, "That's my orders and I want them obeyed to the letter."

Captain McNelly always planned his battles before he went in and told the boys what to do, and he expected them to do as he said. All ready, the Captain and the guide led the way up the little cow trail that had heavy undergrowth of bushes and trees so thick that you couldn't see a rabbit ten steps away. The Captain and [the] pilot stayed about fifty yards ahead of us till we got near the ranch, it then being daylight. Just before he got to the bars going in to the ranch, he came back to us. He said "halt." We all stopped.

He walked up and down the little line of only twenty-six of us, three miles in Mexico afoot. He looked in each man's face and said, "Boys, I like your looks, all right. You are the palest-looking men I ever looked at. He said, "That is a good sign. You are going to be good fighting [men]." He said, "In the Confederate Army, I noticed just before battle, all men get pale." He then went back to the pilot. We were then within fifty yards of the ranch. As soon as the Captain and the pilot got to the bars, the pilot let them down. When we got to the bars, the Captain said, "Stand to one side boys. Let Old Casuse wake them up, that being the first chance Old Casuse had to breathe Mexican air or to have a chance to give a yell in over twenty years."

It was between daylight and sunup. The Captain said to go through. The five went through, shooting and yelling. Old Casuse, as he went in, pushed his hat back on the back of his head, drew his pistol, rammed both his spurs to his old paint horse, gave a Comanche Indian yell, and away the five went, yelling and shooting.

The Captain had told them not to stop in the ranch, to get out of the way of our shooting. The Captain and the other twenty-one of us closed in behind and opened up on them, and if the angels of heaven had of flown down amongst them [Mexicans], they would not have been any more surprised, as we were the first Rangers or soldiers that had been in Mexico since the old

Mexican War. The Captain said [to] kill all except old men, women, and children. Lots of the men were on their woodpiles cutting wood while their wives were cooking breakfast outdoors. Not one of them moved a muscle. We shot them down on their woodpiles and wherever we saw one. We killed [them] till we killed all we saw in the ranch.

After we had them all killed, the pilot told the Captain that he had made a mistake in the ranch; that this ranch had been started since he was here ten years ago; that this was the Cuchattus Ranch; [and] that the Las Cuevas Ranch was a half mile up the trail. The Captain said, “Well, you have given my surprise away. Take me to the Las Cuevas Ranch as fast as possible.”

The rest on horseback, not hearing any more shooting, came back to us. The Captain then told the pilot to lead the way as fast as he could. The Captain said, “Come on boys.”

Old Casuse and the rest on horseback fell in behind us. We marched up to the main Las Cuevas Ranch. Just as we got to the ranch, we saw two hundred fifty Mexican Regular soldiers dash in to the ranch on horseback. The Captain said, “Form a line, boys.”

We were then about one hundred fifty yards from the ranch. The regulars opened fire on us from behind the horses. It was all open ground between us and the ranch, except now and then a big tree standing. We were lined up in the edge of the woods in plain view of the Mexicans at the ranch, only a tree standing now and then between us and them at the ranch, shooting at us from behind the houses.

Old Casuse, our Mexican Ranger, on his old paint horse, stood with us in line and whenever he could see one from behind the house, he would yell and shoot at him. He couldn't talk but a little English but he could say, “Son-a-bitch, kill ‘em.” They still fired at us all the time

from behind the houses, and whenever we could see one, we did the same. Their bullets went wild over our heads, not hitting any of us or any of our five horses.

We stayed there for about an hour. The Captain said, “Well, boys, as our surprise is gone and the Mexicans have got all the advantage of numbers and houses to protect themselves in, and we are only twenty-six in all against two hundred fifty Regulars and no telling the [number of] bandits that are there, this pilot tells me that this [next] ranch is the headquarters of all the bandits; that the ranch belongs to General Juan Flores; and that they have several pieces of artillery here; and to charge it with only twenty-six men would spell death to all of us. And [it would] do no good, so we will go back to the river.”

He told Lieutenant Robinson to take the five on horses and get in front and he would stay with us in case they charged us from behind while we were going back to the river. [He said] that they would be in our way on horses [and] to go the way we came and to stay close to us, so if they did follow us, they could dismount and help us fight. He told us to hit the trail the same way we came back through the Cuchattas Ranch. He said he would stay behind and keep a lookout if they followed us so as we could be ready for them.

We came back through the Cuchattas Ranch and there was nothing there except the dead, and they lay like they fell, on the woodpiles and in the streets or roads. The women and children and old men were all gone, not a living soul to be seen.

We went back to the river and put out pickets. Between the pickets and us at the river had been an old field with not a bush or tree from the eye of the thicket to the bank of the river where we had stopped. The old field was about one hundred fifty yards wide from the eye of the thicket to the river. The Captain told Lieutenant Robinson and Lieutenant Armstrong to keep a close

lookout; that he thought the Mexicans would think we had taken a scare or had stampeded and were swimming the river back into Texas and they could kill us as we were swimming over. We had just got to the river and were getting ready in case they did follow us, to be ready to meet them.

All at once we heard yelling and shooting towards the pickets, and about that time, Lieutenant Robinson jumped old Jack Ellis [the horse which had belonged to bandit Jack Ellis, killed on the Palo Alto prairie fight, now named “Jack Ellis”] off of a ten-foot bluff of the riverbank, almost on top of us. [He was] still on old Jack when he hit the ground. Lieutenant Armstrong was sitting on his horse sideways near the trail under a shade tree and so was Sergeant George Hall when General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, and twenty-five other Mexicans came out of the thicket, yelling and shooting. Armstrong’s and Hall’s horses jumped from under them and ran off with the saddle on. Sergeant Orrill made it to us with his horse.

Old Casuse was already with us, as the Captain never let him stand guard duty at any time on account of his age and [he] couldn’t speak but little English. He was between forty-five and fifty years of age, but a braver and truer Ranger never lived.

General Juan Flores and his twenty-five Mexicans ran up to the riverbank, yelling and shooting. Not seeing any of us on top, they thought we had taken a scare and were swimming the river back to Texas. There was not a tree on the bank at that place on the river. It was an open field for one hundred fifty yards back to the thicket.

The Captain said, “Charge them, boys!”

We ran to a cow trail going up the bank, low enough for us to go up in a run. After getting on top of the bank the Captain said, "Open up on them, boys, as fast as you can." We opened fire on them and they broke back to the thicket as fast as they could run on horseback. It only took but a second to make the one-hundred-fifty-yard run into the thicket towards the Las Cuevas Ranch. We fired on them till they got into the thicket. General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, fell dead from his horse within seventy-five yards of the thicket, with his pistol in his hand, with two needle gun bullets through his body, killing him dead.

The Captain then said, "Boys, I think the rest have stopped in the thicket. Widen out in line of battle four feet apart, march across, and fire into that thicket. We will start them out again."

We did fire volley after volley, till we had marched up to where General Juan Flores lay dead. The Captain stooped down and picked up the pistol. It was a Smith & Wesson, plated with gold and silver, the finest I ever saw. Old Casuse and the pilot knew who he was. They said it was General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, the headquarters for all cow bandits.

The Captain placed the pistol in his belt and said, "Boys, we will go back to the river. This is giving them too much the advantage in this open field and them in the thicket. They can kill all of us and we can't see them in that thicket."

He said, "We will go back to the river. March back, boys."

We went back to the river and placed out two guards, one up the river about fifty yards and one down the river about fifty yards from where we were stopping under the bank of the river. It was an open field for a mile up the river or a mile down the river, without a tree standing

on the banks. About seventy-five yards from the river in the middle of the field stood a big patch of dead blood weeds that were higher than a man on a horse, but next to the river there was nothing in the way, and down the river there was nothing in the way, nor in front of us there was nothing between us and the thicket.

Two guards were all that were needed in the daytime. It was then about 11:00 a.m. The Captain told Lieutenant Robinson to take charge of us and told the guards to keep a good lookout, and if they saw any Mexicans in the thicket, to report to the lieutenant. And [he] told the lieutenant if the Mexicans charged them, to meet them on the bank; that he would go over and see the U.S. captain again and see if he could get one hundred of his men to go back to the Las Cuevas Ranch with him. If he would get a hundred men from him, he would take it yet or get the cattle if they were there. And [he] told us boys not to eat our mutton till he got back; that he would try and get us some bread to go with our mutton.

He went and saw the U.S. captain and told him he would like to get one hundred of his men that he had already taken the Cuchattus Ranch and had killed all there except old men, women, and children through the mistaking of his pilot in the ranch for the Las Cuevas Ranch. And [he said] after killing all in the Cuchattus Ranch, his surprise had been given away by our shooting at the Cuchattus Ranch. That when we got to the Las Cuevas Ranch, that at one side he saw two hundred and fifty Mexican Regulars on horseback dash into the ranch, dismount, and open fire on us from behind the houses. [He said] that we stayed there for an hour and fought them the best we could without any protection, them being behind houses and in houses. [He said] we had but little chance to take the ranch with only twenty-six men and came back to the river. [We] had just got back to the river when General Juan Flores and twenty-five of his bandits

charged us at the river. We had met the charge and they broke back towards the Las Cuevas Ranch. We [had] opened fire on them, killing Juan Flores within seventy-five yards of the river.

[The Captain said,] “I have found out that Juan Flores (or the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch, the headquarters of all the cow bandits) and besides there are two hundred fifty Mexican Regulars camped near by, and that they have several pieces of artillery there. And if you will let me have one hundred of your men to go with [me] and [my] twenty-six Rangers, [I will] go back and take the Las Cuevas Ranch and get the cattle.”

The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly that he had no U.S. men to send over into Mexico to a slaughter pen to all be killed. [He said,] “And if you don’t come back on this side, you and all of your Rangers will be killed in less than twenty-four hours, for you have no right over there.”

Captain McNelly told him he was there all the same and intended to stay there till he got the cattle. Captain McNelly then asked the U.S. captain if he would let one hundred of his men go with him if they would volunteer to go with him over; that twenty-six Rangers volunteered to go over; that he never used any other kind of men but volunteers; that any other kind wasn’t any good.

The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly no, if the whole two hundred were to volunteer, he wouldn’t let them go. The Captain told him, all right, he would do the best he could with his twenty-six Rangers.

The Captain came back to us with some breadstuff and told us to eat our mutton and bread that we had broiled the night before we started over into Mexico. After we all got through eating our dinner, the Captain said, “Well, boys, it is all off. The U.S. captain says he can’t let

me have any of his men to go with us up to the ranch.” And he said, “I know of no other Rangers in Texas but Major Jones’ Rangers, and they are on the Texas northern frontier and too far away to get here.

“Well,” he said, “We will stay here awhile anyway. They can’t surround and cut us off from forage and water, as we have the river right at us. And I have made arrangements with that Mexican that paddled us over in the canoe last night to bring us over all the mutton and bread we need and coffee.”

He told Lieutenant Robinson to swim his old paint horse (the horse we killed Jack Ellis off of in the Palo Alto fight—we always called the horse “Jack Ellis”) and Casuse’s horse and Sergeant Orrill’s horse, as they would have no more use for them in Mexico. [He said] that he had got that Mexican over there to take care of all of our horses and [he told us] to swim one at a time.

After they got back, we were all together once more and all afoot, as the Mexicans already had Lieutenant Armstrong’s horse and Sergeant George Hall’s horse that jumped from under them that morning and ran off with the saddles. The Captain said, “I don’t like this place on account of the bank being too high. We will move from the river about fifty yards to that place yonder where the banks are not so high. The banks at this place were about four feet high and about fifty or sixty yards long, and a little further down, the bank was sloping to the sand bar at the edge of the river water.

The Captain said, “Boys, this is the place for us to stay. I have never seen better breastworks in my life. We can stand off a thousand or more without any trouble. We can stand here and see them when they come out of the thicket and see up and down the river for a half-

mile. And if they charge us, they will have to come across that open field for a hundred and fifty yards and we can stand here and mow them down with but little danger of even getting hit with a bullet unless it is in the head. And if you do, the pain won't last long."

It was then about 4:00 p.m. The Captain asked the sergeant how long had the guard been on duty. About two hours. The Captain asked who was next on duty. The sergeant said Bill Callicott.

The Captain said, "Bill, go and relieve him. I don't want any of you to stay on guard duty but two hours at a time till you all get a little rest."

I went and relieved the guard. I hadn't been there but a little while till I saw coming down the river about a half-mile off, five men with a white flag raised. I went and told the Captain that they were coming down the river with a white flag, five of them. He said, "All right. There is no danger in white flags." He said, "If they start down here, halt them. I don't want them to find out what a few men we have."

They came up opposite me and stopped. The Captain took five men and went to them. It proved to be the governor of the state of Mexico we were in and a white man from Arkansas [Dr. A.M. Headley]. He told Captain McNelly he came to get General Juan Flores' body that was killed this morning. The Captain told him yes; that his Mexican pilot and his Mexican Ranger Casuse Sandoval knew him and said it was General Juan Flores, the owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch.

The governor said, "Yes, you killed him and seven more in that charge. At least three or four have died from their wounds since they got back to the ranch, so I am told. The governor said, "I am told you wiped out the Cuchattus Ranch entirely—all except old men, women, and

children, and you killed several up at the Las Cuevas Ranch this morning. They tell me you have two hundred fifty Rangers with you, fifty on horses, and two hundred on foot.” The governor said, “Captain, you haven’t got men enough to stay in Mexico. If I were you, I would take my men and cross back into Texas. You are in danger of all being killed.” The governor said, “There are two hundred fifty Mexican Regulars camped near the Las Cuevas Ranch that will defend the ranch.”

Captain McNelly said, “Yes, I saw them this morning when we were there. That spells nothing. I came over after the cattle and I will stay here till I get them or leave myself and the last man I have in Mexico.”

The governor said, “Well, it’s with you. Do as you like.”

The governor and the five Mexicans went and got the [body of] General Juan Flores, bade the Captain good-bye, and left for the ranch.

The second day [in Mexico], November the 20th, 1875, found Captain McNelly and his little band of twenty-six Rangers still in Mexico and all alive, with plenty to eat, with no sign of trouble till about 10:00 a.m., when the guard on post duty called the Captain’s attention to the Mexicans lining up along the edge of the woods and along the edge of the thicket, composed of regular bandits and citizens.

The Captain said, “Boys, that looks like old Confederate War days in time of peace. We will prepare for war. Two of you boys go over on the other side of the river and get me two spades.”

They called the Mexican over that paddled the little dugout boat for us. They went over and got two spades and a shovel and came back to the Captain. The Captain went down towards

the river edge of the water. About halfway from the bank to the water, [he] stepped off a trench about forty feet long, fronting it towards Mexico. Then he stepped off thirty feet at each end and told three of the boys to come there.

He said, "Boys, I want this trench dug two feet deep and three feet wide and pile all the dirt on top of this bank and pack it down level and at each end the same way. For when they charge us again, they will come in big numbers. And when they do, we will fight them from the thicket to the bank and if we can't stand them off till they get to the bank we will fall back to this trench and fight them to a death finish. I am willing to die with you boys and I expect the same of you." He said, "Boys, now work. I will only work you one hour at a time. I will have three fresh men on every hour till it is finished." If ever you saw boys scatter dirt, we did.

The Captain went back to the boys behind the bank and watched the Mexicans lining up along the edge of the woods and thicket. And [he] kept time for us, and every hour he would send three fresh men to the trench to relieve each other. Every time they came, they would bring the news that the Mexicans were still lining up for the charge. The boys all worked hard to finish it, for well they knew that if the Mexicans did charge over the bank, that trench would be our death sellout. For the Captain always meant what he said.

We got it finished by 3:00 p.m. The Captain came and looked at it and said it was a good job [and] that the old Confederate veterans of 1864 and '65 couldn't of did any better in the way of trench digging. We all went back to the river bank to await the charge that evening.

About 4:00 p.m. that evening, the guard on duty came to the bank and told the Captain he saw five men coming down with a white flag. The Captain told him all right, that there was no danger in white flags but not to let them come under the bank, as he didn't want them to know

how many men we had. They stopped the same as they did the day before. The Captain took five men [and] went out and met them.

It proved to be the same governor. The governor said, “Captain, I have come to appeal to you again to take your men and cross back into Texas. I am afraid you and all of your men will be killed over here.” He said, “The Mexicans are gathering together and flocking to this place to either kill you all or drive you back to the other side of the river.” The governor pointed up the river along the edge of the woods and said, “Captain, can’t you see them lined up? The most of them are Mexican Regulars.”

The Captain said, “Yes, they have been lining up ever since about 10:00 a.m. and coming nearer all the time.”

The governor said, “Captain, while you have a chance, take your men and go back before it is too late for you to save yourself and men from death.”

The Captain then said he would stay till he got the cattle if we were all killed; that he came after the cattle and he intended to get them before he left.

The governor said, “Well, I hate to see you all killed that way.” The governor bade the Captain good-bye and went the way he had come.

It was then about 5:00 p.m. The Mexicans still lining up [and] down the timber edge, and by sundown had got opposite us at the riverbank.

That night was my turn to go on guard duty. After dark, the Captain came to me and said, “Bill, it’s your turn to go on guard.” I told him all right. He said, “I will locate you on the outside post next to the Mexican line.” He said, “I will tell you what to do before we go, for we will be too near them to talk.” After we got out there, he said, “You will be in a hundred yards of them,

or probably nearer.” He said, “I will locate you up there in that blood-weed patch about seventy-five yards up the river and about one hundred yards from the Mexican lines.” And he said, “When I get you to where I want you to stop, I will press you on the shoulder. And you sit down with your face towards the Mexican lines and keep a good lookout. And if one man comes toward the river, halt him three times. And if he don’t stop, shoot him and come to me at the riverbank. It might be a spy trying to locate us before they make the charge on us. Be sure and let him get close enough so you won’t miss him. And if it [is] more than one, fire to them and come to me at the riverbank.”

When we got to the place, he pressed me on the shoulder and I sat down in the blood weeds with my face towards the Mexican lines in the thicket. I had on the hat I [had] taken off of a dead bandit in the Palo Alto fight. I had been on guard about an hour, had seen nothing, nor heard nothing. Presently, I heard the dry blood weeds breaking towards the Mexican lines, coming towards me. It came nearer all the time. The weeds would crack every time they would move. It was a starlit night, and finally it got nearer to me. Finally, I saw the object and took it for a man. It still came on towards me. The weeds were so thick and high, I couldn’t see far ahead. I let it get in about three yards of me and I said, “Halt!” It still came on towards me. I said, “Halt!” again. It still came on. [illegible] felt my old Mexican hat Santy rose up on my head, but I still sat there, expecting about a thousand Mexicans to charge me at anytime. It still came on. It looked like one man. I cocked my gun and leveled it at him, intending to shoot as soon as I said “Halt!” But just before I said “Halt!” it turned to the left. The man proved to be a cow. My old hat went back on my head as fast as it came up.

In a little while, the Captain came with another guard to take my place. Me and the Captain went back to the riverbank together. When we got back, I told him how near I came shooting a cow for a man. He said he was glad I didn't shoot, for it might have woke up that U.S. captain on the other side of the river, and he would think the Mexicans were charging him, and he would turn them Gatling guns loose on us, and [we] wouldn't last twenty minutes. I am afraid of his Gatling guns than I am of the Mexicans.

But everything went off that night without any trouble. The next morning came November the 21st, 1875, with Captain McNelly and his little band of twenty-six Rangers still in Mexico, and the Mexicans still lining up along the edge of the woods and thicket. You could see them up and down the edge of the woods as far as you could see.

That day, the white citizens of Rio Grande City [the Anglos] heard that Captain McNelly and his Rangers had got back to the river all right [but] had no way of getting grub across the river to us. They sent the Captain down a fine skiff called *The Queen of the Lake* that would hold up fifteen or twenty men. But we had the little Mexican dugout boat that did the work. We always had plenty to eat.

That evening about 4:00 p.m., the guard on top of the bank came and told the Captain he saw five men coming with a white flag down the edge of the timber. The Captain told him all right; that there was no danger in white flags, but to stop them on the bank.

They came up opposite us and stopped as they did before. The Captain took five men and went to them. It proved to be the same governor, and the governor said, "Captain, I have come again to see if I can't get you to take your men and cross back into Texas before it is too late. If

you stay here till night, you will all be killed, and I don't want to see it. Take my advice and go back."

The Captain said, "I still say I won't go back without the cattle, if it takes my life and all of my men to get them."

The governor said, "Captain, there are four hundred or fifteen hundred armed Mexicans in front of you. They have conscripted every boy up and down the river from fourteen years old [and] up, and I fear I can't control them any longer." The governor said, "Will you go?"

The Captain said, "Not yet."

The governor said, "I am the governor of this state of Mexico and it is in my power to act, and I will act rather than see you and all of your men killed. If you will take your men and go back into Texas, I will deliver the cattle, and the two horses, saddles, and bridles to you on the Texas bank of the Rio Grande River at Rio Grande City tomorrow, and all the thieves I can find.

The Captain told him he didn't want the thieves; he had killed all he wanted of them. The Captain said, "Can I depend on you?"

The governor said, "Upon my word and honor you can, Captain."

The Captain said, "I will cross back this evening and we will go to Rio Grande City tomorrow after the cattle and horses and will expect them there on the Texas side of the river."

The governor said, "They will be there without fail."

The governor and Captain bade each other good-bye and parted.

The Captain came back to the riverbank and said, "Boys, get your saddle blankets and the two spades and shovel, and thirteen of you cross back at a time. The governor has promised to deliver me the cattle and both horses tomorrow at Rio Grande City, ten miles above here on the

Texas side of the river, and I believe he will. Take the big skiff, and thirteen go at a time. And I will get the guards, and the rest of us will come next. You can't trust a Mexican. When you get over on the other bank, keep your guns loaded, and stop on the bank. It might be possible that when I call the guards in, they might think we have taken a scare and are swimming the river. And if they do charge us, you can open fire on them till we and the other thirteen get across.

The boys, when they got in the skiff and started across, waved farewell to our Mexican trench breastwork that we thought at one time would be our death knell. They made it over all right and sent the skiff back after the rest of us. The captain went on top of the bank, and told the guards to come on, and left the Mexicans still lined up along the edge of the woods and thicket in front of where we were. We all landed back into Texas, safe after three days and nights. We all had a good supper and a good night's rest in Texas once more – [things] that we never expected to get when we went over on November the 18th, 1875, only twenty-six of us and the captain.

The next morning, the captain took ten of us and went up to Rio Grande City to get the cattle. We stayed all day looking for the cattle to come. They didn't come till about 4:00 p.m., and when they came with the cattle, the Mexicans in charge of the cattle stopped on the Mexican side of the river. The captain sent them word to bring them over. The Mexican boss in charge of the cattle sent the captain word back that he couldn't cross the cattle back to Texas until they were inspected.

The captain said, "Well boys, we are in for it again." We could see the cattle and the Mexicans from this side of the river. There were twenty-five of the Mexicans and only ten of us. The captain said, "Well, boys, twenty-five to ten. That's near enough. We will go over again if we never get back. What do you say, boys?"

We said, "We are with you, Captain."

A Mexican had a ferryboat at the place and on the Texas side of the river. The captain said, "All aboard!" We all went over. We found they [the Mexicans] had seventy-five head of cattle and our two horses. They had the cattle rounded up in a close herd, and when we got on top of the bank, they left the cattle and met us on the bank, all twenty-five of them armed with Winchesters and pistols. They stopped [with]in ten feet of us.

The captain told Tom Sullivan, our Ranger interpreter, to tell them that the governor promised to deliver the cattle and horses on the Texas bank of the river. The boss [of the Mexicans] shook his head and said not till they were inspected. The captain told Tom to tell him the cattle were stolen from Texas and drove to Mexico without being inspected, and that they could certainly be drove back without it. The boss shook his head and said no.

So the captain said, "Fall into ranks, boys." We all fell into ranks. He said, "Load your guns."

We all loaded our guns and presented them on the Mexicans. The captain told Tom to tell him [the Mexican boss] [that he was] a son-of-a-bitch [and that] if he didn't cross them cattle in less than five minutes, he would kill the last one of them.

If ever you saw cattle put across the river, they did it in less than five minutes, all except one cow that was so near gave out that she wouldn't take [to] the water. We roped her and pulled her on the boat, and they brought her back to Texas, and the captain gave her to the Mexican boatman for his trouble taking us over and bringing us back to Texas. We also got Lieutenant Armstrong's horse and saddle; and his gloves were still tied to his saddle. Also, [we got] Sergeant George Hall's horse and saddle.

That was the first curse words I ever heard Captain McNelly say when he told Tom to tell the son-of-a-bitch if [he] didn't cross the cattle in five minutes, he would [shoot] the last one of them.

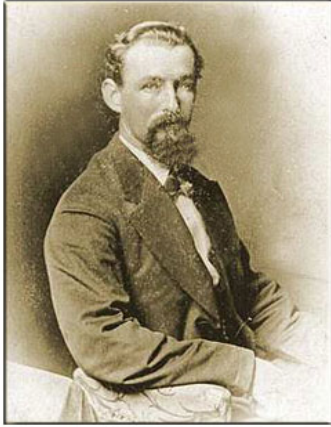
He would have done it, for he had his red feather raised. He was a man that seldom got mad and never did get excited. He always handled his men like a father would his children. I never did hear him speak a cross word to one of them, but whenever he gave a command, it certainly had to be obeyed. He would wrestle with the boys, run foot races with them or horse races with them like a father; but when he gave an order, it had to be obeyed to the letter.

Well, after we got back into Texas with the two horses, we penned the cattle at Rio Grande City that night, and the captain and three or four of us went up to the fort to get some forage for our horses. Captain McNelly and a U.S. captain were sitting on a wagon tongue discussing our trip into Mexico when one of our Ranger boys went up and sat down by Captain McNelly. The U.S. captain jumped up and said, "Captain McNelly, do you allow one of your privates to sit down by you?"

Captain McNelly said, "Yes, sir. I do at anytime. I haven't got a man in my company but what can lie down and sleep with me if he wishes to do so."

The U.S. captain said, "We don't allow our privates that privilege with officers."

Captain McNelly said, "I wouldn't have a man in my company that I didn't think was as good as I am."



Capt. Leander McNelly

That showed the kind of love that Captain McNelly had for his men, and he didn't have a man in his company but what would of stepped in between him and death. For we all loved him like a father as well as a captain. He always said, "Come, boys." He never said, "Go, boys." He never sent us where he wouldn't go himself. He always went in front to battle and told us to come. We always went after [him].

We got the forage for our horses. We all went back to the pen where we had the cattle penned, took our saddle blankets, and made our pallets down in front of [the] cow pen gate, Captain McNelly and all of us in a row.

The captain said, "Well, boys, we got the cattle back in Texas without losing a man." He said, "I went into the Confederate Army at sixteen years of age and at seventeen, I was given a company as captain. But I can say I was in many places that looked like me and all of my men would be killed before we could get out, but I always got out with part of them. But [this] morning, we went into Mexico with only twenty-six men, and all afoot but five, and three miles from the river, and no hopes of getting any aid. If the pilot hadn't of gotten mistaken in the ranches and we had of dashed in to the Las Cuevas Ranch instead of the Cuchattus Ranch, we wouldn't of been here tonight. Of course, we could have taken the ranch, but that two hundred fifty Mexican Regulars would of surrounded us. And two hundred and fifty of them against only twenty-six of us - we would of had but little show. And if we had went into the houses to protect ourselves, they could of taken the artillery and shot the houses down on us and killed us all. That

U.S. captain never would of come over to help us. God pity such a captain. I claim that to be the tightest place I was ever in for us all to get back alive.”

The next morning after we had all ate breakfast, the captain said, “Boys, I hate to ask it of you as you haven’t had but little rest for several days and nights.” He said [that] the old Captain King had been so good to him and us that he wanted to send what cattle belonged to the old captain to him at his home ranch, Santa Gertrudis. That was one hundred miles away, and he wanted four volunteers to drive them [the cattle] back to his {King’s} home ranch and turn them over to no one but the old captain himself. A Ranger by the name of [William L.] Rudd said he would go, for one. Ed Pitts said he would go. George Durham said he would go. William Callicott said he would go. That made the four.

We drove the seventy-five head of cattle out about two miles from Rio Grande City, and cut out the thirty-five head that belonged to old Captain King, and left the rest to drift back to their range where they belonged. The captain gave us money to get grub with and told us to take our time and not to drive them fast. [He told us] that we had no limited time to return to him, and to keep a good lookout: that we might meet up with some bandits. If we did, [he said] to hold the cattle, let come what would. He told us to pen them whenever we could get a pen at night; and if we couldn’t get a pen, to herd them at night. But if we did pen [the cattle], to always keep one guard on duty at a time so they couldn’t get away and to sleep at the gate or bars. So we did like he said.

Everything went all right until one night we camped at a ranch [and] got a pen from the Mexican to pen our cattle. The way they make a pen: they put the posts in the ground end way closest together. We penned the cattle in a good pen, ate supper, and put on a guard. The other

three of us made our pallets down side by side. We slept with our guns by our side. And in front of us had been a pen, but the most of it had been taken away, leaving a post standing every two or three feet apart that in the dark looked like a man standing.

All three of us were asleep. George Durham had one of his nightmares that he often had when asleep, jumped up with his pistol in his hand, pointed at the post that wasn't ten feet away, saying, "There they are, boys, there they are."

We all jumped up with our pistols in hand and leveled on the post, ready to shoot, when some of us happened to touch George and wake him up and found out it was only a nightmare he had. We then put him on guard in the other fellow's place and went back to bed. We slept all right till day. That was the only trouble we had on the trip.

We made the trip all right to the Santa Gertrudis Ranch, the old Captain King's home ranch, without the loss of a cow. We got there about 3:00 p.m. We sent the old captain word that we were there with a herd of cattle that Captain McNelly had sent him from Mexico.

The old Captain King came to us. He said, "Well, boys, I am glad to see you all and glad you are still alive. From the report at one time, I didn't think any of you would ever get back to Texas. How many men did the captain have with him over in Mexico?"

"He had himself and twenty-six of us."

"What? Only twenty-six men to invade Mexico with?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you mounted or afoot?"

"We had five on horses and twenty-one on foot."

"How long did you stay over in Mexico?"

“Three days and nights and all afoot but five.”

“And the ranch you attacked was Cuchattus and Las Cuevas?” The old captain said, “Them are the two worst ranches in Mexico. They are the headquarters of all the cow-thievin’ bandits that steal cattle from this side of the river. I know all about the place and knew when it first started. It was settled by General Juan Flores, and I understand he still owns it.”

“No, captain. The other fellow owns it. We killed the general after we got back to the river [following] the first charge him and twenty-five other Mexicans made on us. After we got back to the river, we killed him [with]in seventy-five yards of the river. They made the charge, and we stood it. They then started back to the ranch as fast as they could run on their horses. We opened fire on them as fast as we could. General Juan Flores fell dead from his horse, with his pistol in his hand, with two needle bullets through his body. Captain McNelly has the pistol. It is a fine one. It is plated with gold and silver. It is a Smith & Wesson of the finest make.”

“Well,” the old captain said, “I am glad you all got back to the river. It was reported that you all were surrounded and cut off from forage and water, and that it would be a second Alamo case with you all: that you all would have to surrender.”

“No, sir. Captain McNelly told us when we went over that he wouldn’t have any surrender. It would be death or victory or get out all together, the best we could. And he meant what he said.”

The old Captain King said, “Well, boys. There is not another captain on earth like Captain McNelly, [one] that would invade a foreign country with only twenty-six men and stay there three days and nights and all get back alive. I heard of it and had raised one hundred men

and started to McNelly's rescue when I heard you all had got back on this side of the river, all alive. Couldn't you all get no help?"

"No sir. A U.S. captain and two hundred U.S. regulars followed the Mexicans and the cattle to the river and camped on this side of the river before we got there, but he wouldn't go over the river after them. Captain McNelly tried to get a hundred of his men to go with him to the Las Cuevas Ranch, [seeing] that he only had twenty-six men with him. The U.S. captain told Captain McNelly that he had no U.S. men to send over to a Mexican slaughter pen, and that we would all be killed in less than twenty-four hours. After we got over, Captain McNelly told him if we did, we would all go together or get the cattle."

"Well, boys. That was a daring trip. Captain McNelly is the only captain that has ever invaded Mexico and got back stolen cattle." He said, "Out of the many thousand head I have had stolen and driven to Mexico, this thirty-five head is all I have ever got back."

He told a Mexican hand to go and tell his [ranch] boss to come and bring some ropes, saw, and two hands to help him. When the boss came, he [King] told him there were thirty-five head of cattle that Captain McNelly and twenty-six of his rangers had got out of Mexico and had drove them to him from Rio Grand City. . . . And [King said] for him to saw off the right horn of all of them and to turn them loose on the big range, with the understanding that none of the thirty-five head were to be sold or killed for beef; that he wanted them to remain the balance of their days in peace. He said, "I value that thirty-five head more than I do any five hundred head I have."

The old captain stayed at the pen and seen it done. He then told the boss to open the gate and let them go free as long as they lived and to never pen them again, if he could help it. He

then said to us four boys to ride our horses down to the stable, and to tell the man there to take charge of them, and for us to come up to the house and stay all night. We thanked him and told him we were too dirty to go where there were ladies [and] that we hadn't had a chance to change our clothes in ten days, since we left our wagons seventy miles below Rio Grande City.

“Well, boys, if you won't go to the house with me, I want you to go up to my warehouse and stay all night upstairs. I have a nice, vacant room up there. We told him no, we would camp near the stable; that we had our saddle blankets to sleep on.

He said, “No, leave your blankets with your saddles. You will have plenty bedding up there to sleep on. Take your guns and pistols and leave the rest. I will send you plenty of supper and I want you to make yourselves at home. Use anything you see up there,” he said. “I will see you all in the morning.”

He bade us goodbye and went back to the house. We went to the warehouse. Upstairs, we found plenty [of] nice clean blankets, pillows, chairs, tables, wash bowl and towels, water, candles, and matches - everything nice enough for a store drummer. We all got all the blankets we wanted, made our pallets, and got ready for a good night's rest - something we hadn't had in ten or twelve days. And about dark, the old Captain King sent us up a good supper: ham and eggs, butter, cakes, and pies - in fact, everything good to eat with plenty of good fresh butter, milk, and coffee. He had two daughters that had just graduated in Kentucky and had come home to spend the winter. They sent up two big pound cakes tagged, “Compliments of the two Miss Kings to the McNelly Rangers.”

Well, we hadn't had any dinner that day: we were all hungry. George Durham [was] the only boy in the crowd and the youngest one in the company after Berry Smith was killed in the

Palo Alto fight. . . . George was only seventeen years of age. We all went to eating the good thing we had in front of us. George, not having the first joint of his stomach gauged[?], he overloaded it with good stuff. After we all got through supper, we all went to bed. Everything went on all right till about 12 or 1:00 o'clock that night when George had the worst nightmare he ever had. We were all sound asleep when, all at once, George jumped up with pistol in hand saying, "Shoot, boys. Here they are, boys. Shoot!"

We had blowed out the light and, all in the dark, we could only find him by the sound of his voice. Two of us caught him and held him till the other one disarmed him; for if we hadn't, he might have killed us all in the dark. We kept his gun and pistol till day, and we all slept well till day. The next morning, the old captain sent us up a nice breakfast, but poor George couldn't take on any more. He said the old captain sent too much for supper. We ate breakfast and got ready to start back to the Rio Grande River to Captain McNelly.

Captain King came to us and said, "Boys, don't you all want fresh horses? If you do, leave yours and take fresh ones." We told him ours would do.

"Well," he said, "don't you all need some money?"

We told him Captain McNelly gave us money to buy grub with.

"Well," he said, "go by the house. I have had you all plenty of grub fixed up to last you two or three days." He said, "Tell Captain McNelly if he ever goes into Mexico again, to let me know and I will go with him if the U.S. captain can't."

We got our wallet of good eatin' stuff, bade the captain goodbye, and started back to the Rio Grande River. The two Miss Kings waved us goodbye as we rode away. They are still living at the old home place, Santa Gertrudis. But [it] now goes by the name of Kingsville, as the Gulf

Coast Railroad runs through there, where no railroads in western Texas [were] when I was there forty-seven years ago.

We got back to the captain and boys all okay and glad to see one another. In three or four days after we got back, Captain King sent Captain McNelly a check on the Brownsville Bank for one thousand dollars to divide with the twenty-six of us that were with him in Mexico.

This ends our two trips in Mexico after cow bandits. It is the details as it occurred, from start to finish. I enclose one of my pictures with my little eight-month-old grandbaby boy, William Charles Marndrich [?]. If you can use any of my pictures in your history, let me and him have a place near Old Ball and Bill. [Illegible-I will send?] you two of them.

P.S. I will finish up the rest of my details of ranger life in 1874 and 1875 the next writing. And if you have the time to spare, if you will write up what you have in book form and send me a copy of it, I will pay you whatever you ask. Write all you have of the other boys. They were the last four, and they have been dead for several years. If you have space in your history, I would place these pictures on the first page, for they are the ones who made Texas what she is. I have read the battle of San Jacinto by Sam Houston and think it was the best-planned battle that was ever fought. The old battlefield is still kept up. It is only twenty miles from Houston, and these four [in the] pictures attended the last reunion there by the old veterans of 1836. They were in the battle and pointed out everything as it occurred [on] the day the battle was fought by Houston.

P.S. This little grandbaby boy is my oldest daughter's child, Mrs. Anne Marndrich [?]. I have two other little granddaughters by my dead son.



[Undated # 4]

After the funeral, we went out about three miles from town and camped for two or three days to give our run-down horses a little rest, as they hadn't had any for over a week. The captain sent three or four of the boys after our wagons that were sent miles away, that we hadn't seen in over a week. They got in all right. The next day we were glad to see the old boys once more and glad to have a chance to get one more good meal, as we hadn't had but a little while we were on the bandits' trail and but little sleep. What little we did get was on our wet, sweaty, saddle blankets.

The captain sent Old Ball and Bill [Callicott] out after a good, fat, four-year-old beef, which he got all right. That was my job only when we were on a bandit trail. After I got him [the beef] into camp, I hung him up in a tree, and the boys would help themselves to all the good, fat beef they wanted. Old Captain King told Captain McNelly to never let us go hungry nor ride tired horses to kill his beeves or anybody else's, and when we rode our own horses down, [he ordered] to send to his ranch and get fresh ones.

What beef the boys didn't eat fresh, I always made me a scaffold and jerked it so as we would have plenty to take with us when we started on a scout. There are not many people that know what jerked beef is. I would make me a scaffold, cut it [the beef] up in thin slices, and spread it on the scaffold, and start a fire under it, and cook it till it was done. That ended my job till we wanted more beef. After staying in that camp two or three days, the captain's wife and Rebel [Rebel Leander McNelly] left Brownsville for their old home [in] Burton, Washington County. The captain then came out to our camp [and] told us his wife was gone and for us to get

ready to march. Everything ready, the captain and old Casuse [Jesus Sandoval] led the way in [the] direction toward the old Captain King's Santa Gertrudis, the old Captain King's home ranch, a distance of one hundred miles from the Rio Grande River. We headed in to the old captain's home ranch and camped in his little saddle-horse pasture. For the first night, Captain McNelly left us in charge of Lieutenant [T. C.] Robinson, and he went up and stayed all night with the old Captain King.

The next day, Captain McNelly and Captain King came to our camp. Captain King had forty-two head of fresh horses penned up at his ranch for us to ride and to let ours rest. Captain McNelly sent me and two other boys after them. We went up [and] the boys let me have the first pick of the bunch.

I had the first pick of the horses and picked a big ball-faced chestnut sorrel horse, the finest one in the bunch. I led him back to camp with me. When we got back, Captain McNelly and Captain King were setting out under a tree talking [when] Bill Templeton, one of our Ranger boys, walked up to me and said, "Bill, you better let me have that horse, as I am so much larger than you. Any of them smaller horses will do you as well."

I told him, "Well, as I had to give up Old Ball, I didn't have much choice. One would do me as well as the other, [but] none of them could fill the place of Old Ball."

So, I picked another little roan that proved to be a splendid horse and let Templeton have that one. Templeton was six feet and a half high and weighed something over one hundred seventy-five pounds. He said to me, "Bill, let me have your saddle, as it is a better one than mine." Mine was a double-ridged stock saddle. I told him all right. He saddled the horse; got up on him.

It was just one mile around the pasture. When Templeton got on the horse, he slapped both spurs to him at once and hit him with the whip at the same time. The horse downed his head between his front legs and went at it for all he could. He pitched around that pasture a solid mile around. [He] pitched up in front of us where old Captain King and Captain McNelly and several of us boys were standing, watching Templeton ride the western outlaw horse. He pitched up to where we were standing and stopped still. Templeton got behind the saddle, put both spurs in his flanks. He wouldn't move. He then got back in the saddle, putting both spurs in his shoulders. He still wouldn't move. Templeton then got down and led him to where we were standing.

Captain King reached down in his pocket and got out a little blank book, wrote out a bill of sale to the horse, handed it to Templeton, saying, "Young man, I will make you a present of that horse. You are the only one that has ever been able to ride him. That horse is an outlaw. I have never had a Mexican on my ranch that could ride him. He has throwed everyone that tried to ride him. You can't get a Mexican in twenty-five miles of this ranch that will try to ride him." He said to Captain McNelly to not think hard of him for sending such a horse to him; that he told his boss to send nothing but the best and gentlest horses I [he] had, for most of these western horses will pitch a little when they are rested up. And he said, "I know nothing about the cow horses that's used on the ranch. It is all left to my boss to handle the stock horses. I have a few that I keep and feed for my family's use."

Templeton was proud of his horse. That one ride broke him [the horse] forever. He never did pitch anymore. Templeton could go out to the herd at night or day and walk up to him, put a half hitch on his nose, jump on him bareback, and ride him into camp. He proved to be the best

horse in the company and the best saddle horse. He was a natural racker. He could buck as fast as a [?] horse could lope.

The rest of our horses proved to be gentle, except a few of them. Sometimes when the boys saddled them up, they would show a little spine[?] that they wanted to pitch. All the boys would have to do was to call Templeton to come and ride him. Templeton would come take the bridle reins in his hands [and] make a lip in the saddle if he was already saddled; and if he wasn't, he would go on to him bareback [and] ride him just the same.

Old Captain King finished [evaluating?] our horses that evening, giving all of them a good price. [?] in Ranger life, your horse is evaluated at what he is worth; and if he is killed in battle, you get full value from the U.S. government. In the Lost Valley fight, the Indians killed fourteen head of the Rangers' horses. They all got full value for them.

After Captain King got through, he told Captain McNelly to have us turn our own horses loose in the little pasture, and that he would have his boss send them on to his big pasture where they could have plenty of good grass and water. And [he told him] to ride that forty-two [horses] down and to send back and get forty-two more if we needed them. [He said that] those horses were nothing to him: that he had western Texas full of them. The old captain told Bill Templeton that if he ever happened around again and he had another outlaw horse, he would make him another present of a horse.

Then Captain McNelly told Lieutenant Robinson to have everything ready to start out the next morning; that he would stay all night with the old Captain King. So, the next morning, Captain Mc. was on hand bright and early, on a good, fresh horse. He ordered us to saddle up.

All ready, him and Old Casuse led the way back to the Rio Grande River, all on good, fresh horses. We scouted the country out from Roma to the Corpus Christi Bay.

We seldom went further north than Corpus Christi or King's Ranch, as the bandits hardly ever got that far from the river. We never stopped, only when we were compelled to, and that was only long enough for me to kill a beef and jerk it. And then we were gone again. The captain told me, as I understood it, if I would kill the beeves and jerk them, he would let me off of all other duty except when we were on a bandit trail. I could ride out and kill a four-year-old beef, skin him, dress him and cut him up, tie him on Old Ball, spread the flesh side of the hide next to the meat, get on top of it, and ride into camp by myself without any trouble.

P.S. Mr. Webb, Kind Sir, I am writing more than there is any use, but you will please use only what you wish and send the rest up in smoke? I can only see how to write a little when the sun shines bright by a big window.

William Callicott

A McNelly Ranger

age 68 passed.



Houston

May the 2nd, 1921

Mr. Webb, Kind Sir

I have written you all the details of Ranger life of 1874 and 1875 with the exception of Captain McNelly and twenty-six of us in Mexico at one time and ten of us at another time. [This was] after bandit cow thieves and the disbanding of a company of men that claimed to be rangers [but] that were not . . . were doing devilment on this side of the river. Captain McNelly disbanded them and sent them home with orders to never let him catch them anymore.

I will give you the details of our trip to old Captain King's home ranch with the thirty-five head of cattle we got out of Mexico and what he did with them. I think the driving of them back to King's is where Mr. Caffee made his mistake. In the Palo Alto drive to the range, . . . we didn't stop to look at the two hundred fifty head rounded up on this side of the lagoon and near the range where they belonged, as western Texas had no limit this side of the Rio Grande River in 1875.

Don't use any of our trip in to Mexico until I send you the full details of it all from start to finish, which I will do as fast as my eyes will allow. The sun has to [be] mighty bright for me to see at all. If my details gets to you too late to use, send them back to me at my expense. Don't leave them there. I have explained it the best I can, with the eyes I have, the career of Captain McNelly in DeWitt County with the Sutton and Taylor party and[?] the Palo Alto fight. The captain never claimed that he did much good in DeWitt County. I will give you a few names of the men that was with the captain on the Rio Grande, the time I was [with] Sergeant George Hall, a cousin of Mrs. McNelly [of] La Grange, Texas:

Linton Wright, Sheriff; Corpus Christi City, Nueces County

Sergeant George Orrill; Cuero City, DeWitt County, Texas

Bill Templeton, the outlaw horse rider; Kingsville, Nueces County, Texas

Well, I will close for this time. Let me [know] if this gets to you okay, and keep all the writing in the envelopes they belong to, so you will not get it mixed up. Always start at the first number. It is all numbered, if I haven't made any mistake.

Callicott