

Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum Educational Resources



Oral History: Seargent (ret.) John Aycock

Interview Conducted by TRHFM Staff in 2023

Oral History Interview with Sgt. (Ret.) Johnnie Aycock

Interview conducted by Rusty Bloxom, Byron Johnson, & Eric Richard on August 22, 2023.

The interview was conducted in the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. The interview is in two parts. This interview has had some information corrected at the request of Mr. Aycock. The interview starts mid way through conversation as the recording was started late. It begins with John Aycock talking about his childhood.

Johnnie Aycock (00:00:03):

[inaudible 00:00:01] and- and we dropped on every- every little nothing place in West Texas we lived in, and when I got kind of a certain age, and I don't know what age it was, probably five or six, my mother put pressure on my dad and said we needed to find someplace to settle for him. And so they found a place in San Angelo that my dad could afford. They bought it and it- it was a house that has been built before World War II, I guess. Good house. Wood. And it was a two bedroom, one bath, living room, dining room and kitchen. And, uh, we stayed there for forever, I guess.

(00:01:05):

My daddy fell in with... he was working for Sam Crunk, which was a driller from Abilene who was a, what they call a wildcatter.

Rusty Bloxom (00:01:16):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:01:19):

And he was making good money, but it wasn't enough, and so my dad met Frank Poole and Peter Gurlick-

Rusty Bloxom (00:01:36):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:01:37):

... and Mr. Poole-

Byron Johnson (00:01:38):

How are you, my friend?

Johnnie Aycock (00:01:40):

You?

Byron Johnson (00:01:41):

Great. Running around 100 miles an hour [inaudible 00:01:44].

Johnnie Aycock (00:01:43):

Yeah, I know (laughs). Anyway, my dad met Pete Gurlick and Frank Poole in San Angelo and they had a drilling company, so he went to work for them. And later the business changed from drilling to well services and Mr. Poole and Mr. Gurlick both kept my dad on. They downsized several times but they never downsized him. And, uh, all during that period of time, I don't know exactly when, but my mother and dad were having problems at home and so my dad separated, went his way and my mother stayed in the house. She got that in the divorce, I think. Of course, I didn't really know a whole lot about all of it, but... at the time. And, uh, he later remarried, my dad, and at age 50 he had a set of twins by his second wife and that's my half brother and half sister, Jeff and Martha.

(00:02:57):

And, uh, anyway, it was kind of during that period of time that I was growing up and I don't know if I was, like every kid I guess, I was looking for something to get into more exciting than sitting at home and raising sheep or whatever I was doing for FFA. Anyway, my mother saw problems and so a rancher name Jim Tom Roach from El Dorado, Texas came into the picture there and he just picked me up lock, stock and barrel and took me to El Dorado. Put me with his son, Henry Roach. He had two boys, Henry and Tom. Thomas was in the Army at the time and Henry was at the ranch. And so he told me, he said, "If you'll listen to me, I'll teach you how to be a man." He says, "And what I'm going to teach you, you ain't going to make a good living, but you're going to make a living."

(00:04:00):

So he taught me how to plow and plant and harvest. He taught me how to pull windmills. He taught me how to raise animals, what not to do with them and what to do with most of them. Uh, taught me how to work on tractors and trucks and I was with him for four or five years. And when time come, I felt like I needed to go in the Army myself because there was a war, Vietnam. And so at some point I think I was fixing to start the eleventh grade maybe, I quit and joined the Army. And, uh, Jim Tom, he really didn't approve too much of me going in the Army, but he told me, he said, "You know, if that's what your calling is, go and if you need me, call me." I thought well, I'm never going to need a rancher from El Dorado.

Rusty Bloxom (00:05:10):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:05:11):

I got [inaudible 00:05:12] to Oklahoma and needed a rancher from El Dorado. I got in a mess with some Marines and called him and told him, I said, "I'm broke and I need \$200." He said, "Be there in the morning." And he brought it and gave it to me and I paid them boys off. He told me, he said, "Did you learn anything?" I said, "I sure did." He said, "As long as you learned it, it's worth it." He got in his pickup and went back to El Dorado and I didn't see him anymore until after I got back from Vietnam.

(00:05:41):

I did, uh, one tour [inaudible 00:05:44] First Infantry Division attached to an eight-inch gun self-propelled outfit. And when that year was over, I didn't feel like it was... I'd done enough and I didn't feel like it was time to go home because I had several years, couple years, left in the Army. And there were protesters spitting on people and all kinds of stuff, saying things I didn't know what they were saying and I told my first sergeant and said, "Somebody spits on me I'm going to cut their head off." He said, "You might not want to go home just yet."

Rusty Bloxom (00:06:24):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:06:25):

So I decided to stay. They call that extending- extending your tour. And I got interviewed... first sergeant hooked me up with some people and they interviewed me for two, three days I guess and told me, said, "Don't worry about it. We'll be in contact with you if we need you. And if we don't, go home." So come time when we got the airplane ticket, went to Saigon and turned in all my gear and was waiting on the airplane and these two non-commissioned officers came in there where I was sleeping and they walked right to me, called me by name and said, "You need to go with us." I said okay. I said, "What am I going to do about these orders?" He said, "Forget them." He said, "We got all that covered." I said, "Well, I'm waiting on an airplane." He said, "Do you want to go on that airplane?" I said, "Not really." He said, "Then forget about it."

Rusty Bloxom (00:07:33):

(coughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:07:33):

Said, "We got it covered." I thought who are these guys? I mean, you know, they just come, get you out of bed, load all your stuff, take off with you and not tell anybody what they're doing. Who are these fellas? So I spent another, I guess two, three days and nights with them and with a man that was in civilian clothes. I later found out he was a... an officer, Major. I didn't know it at the time. And they would ask me questions and I would be honest with them, and that was, uh, what they call now, they call it, uh, mind's not working. God doggit. It'll come to me in a minute. But, uh, there's a name for it now. I don't know what the name was back then.

(00:08:29):

But what they were doing is they were evaluating me to see what I could do and what I couldn't do. And they ran me through a bunch of weapons, which country boy, I knew about weapons. Never had any trouble with... you know, I had taken a 45 down far as I needed to take it and put it back together for them and I think a Carbine and a M1 Garand, I think, an M14. And, uh, that was... I don't... they kind of tested me a little bit.

(00:09:09):

And so bottom line is I had, with them, they agreed to take me and they told me, "You got two places you can... we can put you. You can either go MACV-SOG, M-A-C-V SOG or you can go to the MACV Teams." And I said, "I know what SOG is pretty much. I'm not familiar with the Teams. And so they explained the concept to me and I kind of liked that. And they were kind of pushing me to go with SOG and I told that Major, who I didn't know he was a Major, I said, "you know, I don't know that I know enough." And I said, "If I go with those guys and get into a situation where I don't know how to handle it, somebody's going to die." And I said, "I don't want that on my shoulders." And I said, "Why don't I go with the teams for a while, get some experience and then make a decision later on? He said, "Perfect."

(00:10:29):

He said, "I need two types of people. I need medics and I need radio operators. Do you know anything about medicine?" And I said not really. I mean, I'm good at bandaging and things, but no, I'm not a trained medic, never have been. "What about a radio?" I said, "In my sleep I can work a radio. Carry it." He said, "That's settled. You're going to be a radio operator." Okay.

Byron Johnson (00:10:38):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:10:43):

Though then it come down to where I wanted to go, and I'd already been in the rubber tree plantations and I'd been a little bit further north and I'd been to the border and, uh, I didn't want to go back to those rubber trees, particularly [inaudible 00:10:59].

Byron Johnson (00:11:00):

John, where were the rubber tree plantations [inaudible 00:11:03]?

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:03):

They were, uh, they were out of Loc Ninh, L-O-C-N-I-N-H and, uh, my mind ain't working. Hmm. It'll come... maybe it'll come to me in a minute, but-

Rusty Bloxom (00:11:22):

Lot of them were, up, uh, to the northeast of-

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:23):

An Loc.

Rusty Bloxom (00:11:23):

... of Saigon.

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:26):

An Loc and Loc Ninh, that's where they were.

Byron Johnson (00:11:28):

Were these things that were originally set up by the French?

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:31):

They were. And from the air they looked like cotton fields and the... these trees were in a line and from the air you'd look down and they're just... as far as you can see, there's trees and they're all in a line. They're planted that way. And Michelin rubber was- was buying that rubber from the French and the US was involved in it in some fashion too, but all of those plantations, they were pretty huge and every one of them had a Frenchman that was in charge, and he lived, all of them did, they lived within that plantation at some point and they had their whole family. And, uh, they drove a little- little French car. They were kind of... I don't remember the name of them now, but one of them I remember was a Renault Dolphine or something one was a kind of hatchback thing and I don't... can't remember the name. But the daughter of that plantation operator had a [inaudible 00:12:46] blowout or a flat or something on that vehicle she was in and she was-

Rusty Bloxom (00:12:49):

(coughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:12:53):

... out in the middle of nowhere. And we saw it and we stopped and help her... help her get that spare out and put it on that car and bid adieu and got back in our three-quarter ton truck and went on. She took notice of who we were. I didn't know she did. And within a week or two her daddy, was a big operator, her daddy came to the boss, our boss, and said, "I want these men to come to my home. I want to have a party for them." Well, we hadn't bathed in-

Rusty Bloxom (00:13:33):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (00:13:35):

... no telling. I mean, we took little showers, but that didn't get it off of you. And so he had this party and I guess there were about 20 of us there maybe because a whole bunch of people hooked onto that when they found out there was going to be a party. And he opened the swimming pool up to us. Oh my, he had to change the water when we got through with it. It was bad. And he fed us and we had wine and everything and he said, "This is because you helped my daughter." And he says, "Anything I can ever do for you," you know, that type of thing and we went on about our business and never had any contact with him again. But it was nice of him out in the middle of a war zone just-

Rusty Bloxom (00:14:20):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:14:21):

... have a party for a bunch of nothings. You know, thought that was nice.

(00:14:27):

And so I didn't want to go back there and, uh, and Major asked me, said, "Well, where would you think you might want to work?" And I said, "I never been in the delta." And I said, "I hear there's a lot of farming there." And he said, "Oh, there's a lot of farming." And I said, "I'm kind of used to that type stuff." I said, "It might not hurt to go down there." And he said, "Hmm, can you swim?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Can you swim well?" Well, I think so. "Where'd you learn how to swim?" I said, "They threw me in the Colorado River when I was a young man and I learned how to swim there." He said, "You going to need to know really well how to swim." I said, "What you talking about?" He says, "Nothing but water." He said, "What's a field is a field, but right next to the field is going to be a river," or canal or a tributary and he said, "All over that country all the way to the ocean, that part of the country." I said, "Sounds interesting. That's where I want to go."

(00:15:31):

He said, "Well, got any idea exactly where?" And I said no. So he showed me a map and I saw a peninsula sort of, kind of jutted out from two rivers, only big rivers on each side and I said, "That don't look too bad." Got an opening, he assigned me to Cho Loc sub-sector Vinh Long province and Team 52. And they changed those numbers every once in a while. I don't know why, but they did. But anyway, Team 52, and that was a five-man team, supposed to be. We had a Major, a Captain, three sergeants. That's how they're supposed to be set up. And those men lived with Regional and Popular Forces troops that are assigned to that area, and it's not just the troops, it's their entire families. Grandmother and mother and father-in-law. I mean, one guy is liable to have 10 behind him as family members but they all... they're lived together.

(00:16:50):

And, uh, so I went there and the team wasn't full. I think there... I made four guys. We didn't have any Captain and the Major was a guy named Wurlixer and he was an artillery major and he was scared to death. Every time we went out I could tell he really didn't want to do much. He didn't stay long and he left, and the next Major I got was a man named Richard Drensek D-R-E-N-S-E-K. He was a Major, he was Ranger, Special Forces qualified and a better boss I've never had than him. Um, he wasn't there very long when he come to me and said, "You don't... have you been on all these canals?" I said, "Not all of them, but most of them." So he said, "You know kind of where they are and everything?" I, yeah. "You know how to get across them?" Yeah, sometimes it's not very easy, but yeah.

(00:18:01):

So we talked a long time and he said, "Look, I'm going to be busy with this Vietnamese officer most of the time." And he said, "I've..." we'd been out a couple of times. He said, "I have seen what you do, how you do it." He said, "Just keep doing it." He said, "If you call in an air strike or something, I'm going to stand behind you whether I'm with you or not at the time because you know what we need." And so he pretty much just said do it. And, uh, he was a.... he was a good guy. Loved kids, they loved him. He was

like a Pied Piper when we weren't working. If he was walking around, them kids would just follow him everywhere he went.

(00:18:50):

And, um, we had, um, myself, Drensek and a Sergeant First Class named Glen Snow, and Sergeant Snow was a medic. I was the communications guy and Drensek was a commander, and we stayed that way for a long time. And they just weren't sending replacements they couldn't find replacements for what we did that were willing to do what we did and live like we lived. To me it was normal, but to a guy up in Saigon somewhere, far from normal.

Rusty Bloxom (00:19:32):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:19:33):

I mean, there ain't no ice cream and there's not any buses and there's not any paved streets and any big buildings. It's the jungle.

Byron Johnson (00:19:40):

What did they tell you your primarily... primary objective was?

Johnnie Aycock (00:19:44):

We had several, uh, come front, bunch. One of them was to- to try to help train those troops that we had in modern warfare as the US government was saying it was modern warfare. And we had to train them in the use of the weapons. Um, one time we got a mortar, small mortar, we had to help train them on that. And when the LAWS rockets came around, we got those, a bunch of them, and we had to show them how to operate those things. And we had to teach them pretty mu- I mean, these were people picked off a farm and put in a uniform and hold your hand up and assign you. And they were local. They lived somewhere nearby. So we had to... we were supposed to train them. We were supposed to do operations to come up with where the Viet Cong were traveling at night, how they were traveling, how many of them were traveling. That was pretty touchy. Um, though I guess that would be intelligence.

(00:21:00):

And once... about once or twice a year, what I remember, we would take the medic and we would go out to a village somewhere that had never seen a doctor, and that medic would treat those villagers best he could as, you know, sores on their feet or broken out arms or mumps or measles or whatever they had, pain. And, uh, we would do that a couple times a year and that was a part of it too. Part of it was an operation called Phoenix, which was so sensitive at the time, you know, when I got out I had to sign a paper I wouldn't talk about it for seven years, and I didn't. Now there's a book that's coming out about it.

Rusty Bloxom (00:21:48):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:21:49):

And we- we were... we had... our was minimal Phoenix, but it was Phoenix, some of it. And, uh, that covered a whole- whole different kettle of fish. Basically, you were doing what some agency in Saigon wanted you to do. Uh, sometimes we would interview... observe and then interview village chiefs and we'd turn them as informants to that agency because they were on the water and they'd see to travel between, uh, where we might not know it. We turned some informants. Whole lot to that, but that's about all I can say about that.

(00:22:40):

We always were... at night were looking for... if we were out at night, we were looking for pay masters, and they would... they would send... this don't sound believable but they would send a Vietnamese, uh, North Vietnamese records man. I don't know exactly how to put it, but he would have a pretty large amount of cash and he'd have two or three body guards that would go with him. And he would travel through the delta and he would pay those soldiers, the North Vietnamese soldiers, and sometimes the VC. He would pay them just like we got pay, and that's the only way they had to do it.

Byron Johnson (00:23:23):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:23:25):

And so if you caught a pay master and knocked him off and seized whatever records he had, that would give you the amount of people that he had seen from Point A to Point B, if nothing else, in numbers. Somebody could crunch those numbers and come up with how many people he had paid. Give you an idea of how many folks are there that we might not know about.

Byron Johnson (00:23:49):

What were they being paid in?

Johnnie Aycock (00:23:52):

Uh, some of them were MPCs and some of them were South Vietnamese money. Very little North Vietnamese stuff, mostly South Viet- because they had to be able to spend it.

Byron Johnson (00:24:04):

Yeah. Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:24:06):

And what shocked me was the military payment certificates like we got. I don't know where they got those, you know.

Byron Johnson (00:24:13):

And for North Vietnamese?

Johnnie Aycock (00:24:14):

Yeah. And, uh, they didn't pay us in cash, they paid us in-

Byron Johnson (00:24:20):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:24:21):

... military payment certificates. Just like cash but they looked like Monopoly money really. And some of those pay masters had some of that, that they were giving and we... I never did figure where... I don't guess anybody ever did figure out where they got that stuff. Because normally- normally those pay masters couldn't talk to you after you caught them.

Byron Johnson (00:24:41):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:24:44):

They were gone.

Byron Johnson (00:24:46):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:24:48):

Um, anyway. We did that and we- we had one particular time the North had trained a cadre, I want to say four or five people, usually one or two girls. And those cadre would get the local VC to go to a village and secure that village and then in would come the cadre, and this is in the middle of the night, and that cadre would do a- a play, and they were trying to brainwash them into the communist way of doing things. And the villagers were a captive audience, they couldn't just get up and walk off. And so we were always on the lookout for that, and we caught one group of cadre one time and, uh, Vietnamese interviewed them and the boys broke pretty quick. The girl never broke. And we were... myself and another advisor and some Vietnamese officers we were taking her to Vinh Long, which is 30 kilometers from us by water, and we used the Navy to come get us to take us because it's the quickest way.

(00:26:12):

About halfway she kind of wiggled her way to the back of that boat and jumped over the side of that... back of that boat, hands tied, feet tied and drowned herself.

Byron Johnson (00:26:23):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:26:23):

I never seen anything like that before. Rather than talk, she'd rather die, and she did. Pretty amazing. That told me right there they got a different aspect of this war than we have. They want to win it. I'm not sure what the government wants us to do.

Rusty Bloxom (00:26:50):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:26:53):

That told me that. I spent, uh, three tours on that team. Those tours were six months long and, uh, uh, there's some detail in talking to that Major what the life expectancy was in MACV versus the teams. It wasn't that much difference, maybe a month. But they allowed that you would probably survive four months with SOG, s- maybe five to six months with MACV Teams, maybe. And anyway, so I did... I did three tours on that team. One tour with the Americans and then I had to make a decision and, uh, I was promised that if I stayed in the Army, they will change my MOS start with and I told them don't worry about it. And they wanted to send me to Special Forces school, and if I re-enlisted for four years, I would've. They got me examined. They couldn't guarantee I'd get in there, but they'd get me that. And I got thinking about it and talked to the Major and he said, "If you're not going to re-enlist, you need to go home. You've come too close too many times and I've seen it and, uh, probably need to go home."

Byron Johnson (00:28:16):

What was the biggest danger to you in the field?

Johnnie Aycock (00:28:20):

Snipers, uh, mines, booby traps. That was the biggest danger and then ambush. We got ambushed a lot because, uh, young guys we were trying to teach-

Byron Johnson (00:28:38):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:28:39):

... they had their own idea about some of that, and we couldn't get them to cover the flanks. They- they just wouldn't do it.

Byron Johnson (00:28:48):

Do you think you... this gave you a sensitivity or awareness that other people in DPS or Rangers might not have had-

Johnnie Aycock (00:28:57):

Yeah.

Byron Johnson (00:28:57):

... because you went through all this?

Johnnie Aycock (00:29:01):

Absolutely. Absolutely. It never left me ever. Ever. It hasn't left me yet.

Byron Johnson (00:29:08):

Yeah.

Rusty Bloxom (00:29:12):

Were you advisors ever in direct command of the RFPF troops?

Johnnie Aycock (00:29:17):

Yeah.

Rusty Bloxom (00:29:17):

Okay.

Johnnie Aycock (00:29:17):

Regional popular forces. We lived with them. Now, when you say command, they had their own officer, and we would go to that officer and we would make suggestions and nine times out of ten he would follow them unless somebody way above him said, "We ain't doing that." Of course, we wouldn't have any way of knowing. We got along with the officers, Vietnamese officers, and they understood that whatever we were asking them to try to do was for the benefit of everybody, but all of them weren't that way. Some of them were, "Listen here, you're not from here," type. Ours weren't that way. They listened.

(00:30:04):

So when you say command, yeah and no. We were in command all right, but that Vietnamese officer gave the order, to his troops.

Rusty Bloxom (00:30:12):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:30:16):

And, uh, the only time I circum... that I can remember, the only time that I circumvented that was if we were in a mess and there wasn't time to go find this one or go find that one. It was either do something or I'm fixing to get all of us fixing to get whacked here, and then I'd do what I had to do. And they

understood that too. Sometimes they'd look at me a little funny, but they understood it. And, uh, yeah, that was, uh, golly, that was '65 to '68, I guess. Yeah, about this. '65/'66 to '67/'68. Something like that.

(00:31:05):

And then I came home, got out. Uh, couldn't sleep all night. Had troubles. Had a friend named Harvey McGinley and he told my mother, he said, "Let me have him." And Harvey was National Guard. He'd been in the military before and so I went with him and his wife and they put a little lock on the spare bedroom door where I could lock it from the inside. Said, "We're not going to bother you. You need something, you let us know. If you don't feel right, get up and we'll help you." And that went on for a good while and I got to where I could sleep all night, most of the night.

(00:31:54):

And had a couple of jobs, Harvey McGinley found for me. Didn't like them, either one really. And my mother needed money and I had to do something and DPS advertised for highway patrolmen and I went ahead and talked to my mother and she didn't want me to do it. I said, "Look, it's paying \$400 a month. That's a lot of money and we can use it." "Yeah, well, what happens if you get shot?" I said, "I already been shot."

(00:32:33):

So anyway, I applied in San Angelo, and there's a highway patrolman named Arthur Sykes S-Y-K-E-S. He got my paper work. He did the background. There was some change-ups we had to do because I had put in position sought Texas Ranger and he said, "No, you don't do that." He said, "You go to the Highway Patrol first and you work your way into the Rangers. You don't put down you want to be a Ranger right away. They ain't going to hire you." Okay. So we changed that and some other little things we changed and, uh, he got me to a board and I think there were five people on the board. They never asked me one question about Vietnam, not one. Never asked me what I did, what I didn't do, what unit I was in nothing. And they had my DD214, but they had abbreviated all that stuff, so unless you knew kind of how to read one of them, it's just a piece of paper.

(00:33:42):

And so they agreed to hire me for the next school, which was in October/November. Can't remember now. And Arthur Sykes got them to agree to put me on early to work in the driver's license office and ride with the highway patrolmen at night some, and they paid me for that. Not that much money, but they paid me and he later told me, he said, "If I hadn't done that, your mother would've lost the house." And I said, "You're right." You know, he said, "I didn't want to see that."

Byron Johnson (00:34:21):

And where was she living at that time?

Johnnie Aycock (00:34:23):

San Angelo.

Byron Johnson (00:34:24):

San Angelo.

Johnnie Aycock (00:34:24):

Um-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:34:24):

Okay.

Johnnie Aycock (00:34:25):

Same house my dad bought.

Byron Johnson (00:34:26):

Okay.

Johnnie Aycock (00:34:26):

Same place. And, anyway, so we- we got assigned to go to school in Austin, and there were a group of guys that met in San Angelo on Sunday and we'd flip a coin or something, figure out whose car we were going to take and everybody would ride in the same car to Austin. And then Friday afternoon, or whenever they turned us loose, we'd all come back to San Angelo and then those guys would go to their homes and I'd go to mine. And one of those guys was Stan Guffey and he was from Happy, Texas and he was one of those fellas. So he and I went to patrol school together.

Byron Johnson (00:35:19):

Was the academy at that time in the same place that it is now, in that Garrison building or did that exist at that time?

Johnnie Aycock (00:35:29):

It was in... it was off of, uh, North Lamar Boulevard and it was a... an old part and a new part and it was like three or four stories.

Byron Johnson (00:35:41):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:35:43):

And there were... there were individual rooms in the old part where you could put about six bunks maybe, five or six, and then the new part, it was kind of like base, open bay. And, uh, we started off in the old part, in fact, I started my school in the old part. And we start off with a hundred and, I want to say, 25. We ended up with 37 highway patrolmen and one driver's license guy. So it got weeded out. We lost men along the way up until graduation.

Byron Johnson (00:36:25):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:36:28):

The driver's license man was interesting because there were four- four or five guys that wanted driver's license, I don't know why, and the only opening was Houston. And these are guys from West Texas and South Texas. What- what are you going to do... I'm thinking to myself, what are you going to do in Houston? He ain't going to know how to get to work. And, uh, one guy, his wife had cancer and she was taking treatment at MD Anderson and all the other guys got together one night and they decided we're going to withdraw our names and let him have it for his wife, and that's what happened. We had... there was 35 of us that were in my school. There were two that were... had left and come back and were being re-trained, and then that DL man. There were 37 highway patrolmen, one driver's license what I remember. So I graduated D-School in 1969.

Byron Johnson (00:37:31):

Talk to us a little, because it's changed over the years, I know this from talking to people like Bob Mitchell and that kind of thing. Talk to us a little bit of what your training involved both in, um, study for things there and also in the things like... Bob told us that he was in one of the last classes where you had to learn to ride a motorcycle.

Johnnie Aycock (00:37:55):

Um-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:37:55):

And had to turn it over and things like that. What were the... what were they, uh, teaching you at that point?

Johnnie Aycock (00:38:04):

As far as vehicles, it was all car and they would... they would, uh, they would put f- four guys in an automobile with a highway patrolman.

Byron Johnson (00:38:19):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:38:19):

Or license and weight, or driver's license, and they would tell us, "Okay. Your turn. Here's a map. Go where you want to go." Well, I kind of like to go home. Let's go. And while you were driving, that highway patrolman was, or whoever... whichever it was, license, weight, RDL, they were evaluating what you were doing. And an hour or so into it well, he'd say, "Okay. Pull over. Pull over." And get another guy in the backseat. Say, "Your turn. You know how to get to San Angelo?" Yeah. "Well, let's go." It might take

three or four hours, but we'd get to San Angelo and might go by and see my mom, might not. But we'd eat and turn around and we'd head back to Austin. Same thing. Same drill.

(00:39:22):

And they did that in the daytime and they did that at night, and there were two phases of training. One was city driving and one was country driving.

Byron Johnson (00:39:33):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:39:35):

And so by the time you got finished with that, by the time you passed the mustard with that instructor, you pretty well knew how to drive.

Byron Johnson (00:39:45):

And what was the difference between the two of them?

Johnnie Aycock (00:39:48):

The city was, uh, a big city somewhere. He would have it on paper.

Byron Johnson (00:39:54):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:39:55):

He's say, "All right. We're going to Houston today. Well, we're going to San Antonio today. We're going... we're going to stay here in Austin".

Byron Johnson (00:40:03):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:40:05):

And so he would evaluate you for any kind of violations of, you know, not giving a signal, not, uh, stopping too close to somebody in front of you, on and on and on. And by the time we got through with that, we pretty well knew how to safely get around. And that was part of it and then on the firearms, when it came to that part of it, everybody was pretty well trained the same. We started off training on .22 caliber Smith and Wesson revolvers and the- the range was right there at the academy.

Byron Johnson (00:40:46):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:40:47):

And Reese Junkin and, McIlroy and one other, and I can't remember that third one, they were in charge of everybody's training for firearms. There wasn't any... didn't have anybody floating in, floating out. They were there. So if you ever had a... from the time they trained you and you got out of school until you left or they left, if you had a question about a gun or something wasn't acting right or you felt like you needed something done to your weapon, you'd call them and bring it to Austin, they'd fix it. And, uh, you didn't have to get no outside approval, just, you know, it's important.

(00:41:34):

So anyway, Reese Junkin and McIlroy and, god, I can't remember that other one. There were three of them. And when it came to rifles, we were... I don't remember exactly how that went. Shotguns we trained right there too. Rifles, I'm not sure about that. I can't remember how we did those.

Byron Johnson (00:42:00):

What did they issue you, your regular service firearms?

Johnnie Aycock (00:42:04):

A .357 Magnum Smith... no, no. A .357 Colt Trooper and no bullets. And so I wasn't old enough to have bullets. I don't think I was old enough to have the gun. So I show up in Hallettsville, which is... oh, that's another story. I got to tell that story. Show up in Hallettsville, my partner reached me and all, we get out on the road, we'd stop... he'd stop two or three cars and I'm left-handed and he looked over at my gun and he said, "You got any bullets in that gun?" I said, "No." He says, "Why not?" I said, "Nobody give me any." He said, "Boy, sometimes you got to talk."

Rusty Bloxom, Byron Johnson, and Eric Richard (00:43:02):

(laughter)

Johnnie Aycock (00:43:05):

Okay. So we pulled over and he opened the trunk and started shoveling bullets to me and I loaded my pistol. And he said, "You know how to use that shotgun?" I said, "Yeah, I know how to use it." He said, "Pull it out and crank some rounds off in that bar ditch." And I did and god, that thing was a... it was a 1930-something model semi-automatic copy. Might have been a Browning. I can't remember now. It had Highway Patrol Number 3, I think, on it. You know, kick you oh, it will hurt you. And after I did that he said, "All right. Reload it and let's put it back in the trunk." Okay. He said, "I'll clean it when I get home." I said, "I don't mind cleaning it." "No." "I clean my own guns."

(00:44:00):

Anyway, but how that came to be, interesting story. Arthur Sykes did my background. He got me hired. He went to two promotional exams same day. He did two interview boards that same week, one of them was for highway patrol sergeant, the other one was for Texas Ranger, and he made highway patrol

sergeant first. So his new duty station was Cuero and Hallettsville is within his... that was his area and it had an opening there and so by then... he left his wife in San Angelo and his family. He moved to Cuero.

(00:45:03):

He realized I was fixing to get out of patrol school, so he came to Austin, pulled me out of class and asked me, said, uh, "Boy, you think you can work for me?" I said, "I know I can work for you. You got me this far." He said, "No, you got yourself this far. I got you looked at." Well, okay. He said, "I got an opening in Hallettsville, Texas. You ever heard of it?" Never heard of it. "You know where Victoria is?" I said, "No, sir." "Corpus Christi?" Yeah. It's about 150 miles from Corpus. He said they're German, Bohemian people and if you go there, your new partner has been on for over 20 years, he's a stout guy. I said well, it's either that or probably Houston or somewhere I don't want to be. He says, "Think about it." I said, "I don't have to think about it. I'm- I'm- I'm ready. Let's go." He says, "Say nothing about it." Okay.

(00:46:15):

He gets a hold of my sergeants that are what they call monitors, you got three of them, driver's license, license and weight, and highway patrol and they're with you from day one of that school until that school is over with and you graduated. And I guess... he talked to them. So when the assignments came back, everybody's up at the bulletin board trying to see where they're going and I wasn't really that interested. I knew where I was going. Directly it kind of weeded out a little bit and I go up there and look at the board and sure enough, Hallettsville, Lavaca County, Texas. Oh, okay.

(00:46:55):

So that's where I went, and my partner was a guy name Wilbar Horstmann H-O-R-S-T-M-A-N-N. He's a World War II vet and got shot in the hand. German shot him. And they pulled him off the line and put him, uh, guarding for the Army Air Corps guarding airplanes. And the morning they put the atomic bomb on the Enola Gay, my partner was guarding that plane.

Byron Johnson (00:47:26):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:47:27):

So when I found that out, he and I had a whole lot in common. We got along fine. He adopted me. A chief deputy adopted me. The sheriff adopted me. The game warden adopted me. I was single. Uh, mo- almost all my money was going home to my mother. So I had enough for rent and a little bit of stuff, but nothing extra much. And so they got to feeding me. One of them would feed me on Friday, one of them on Saturday, one on Sunday. You know, I got- got to where I was gaining weight actually. You know, they loved fried chicken and stuff. It was a good place to work, and live. Ronnie Dodd sheriff, Albert Jakubek chief deputy, Emmet wolsdroff game warden.

Byron Johnson (00:48:14):

Where were you living at the time?

Johnnie Aycock (00:48:17):

It was in a... it was a duplex right off the main highway in the middle of Hallettsville and it was a World War II building, but it... big house and it was divided in half. And there were doors that led from one half to the other half but they were locked because one person lived over here and the other over here.

Byron Johnson (00:48:37):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:48:37):

And back then we didn't violate anybody's privacy. That's where I was living. That's where I was living when I met my wife, future wife. And anyway, I don't, w-we lived there, we lived in a little bit bigger house in Hallettsville, and then we ended up in the country in Albert Jakubek home after he and sheriff Dodds were murdered, and we lived there for a while. My wife was teaching high school in Hallettsville and she was making about the same amount I was, so we were... we were doing pretty good really.

(00:49:26):

And that Sergeant Sykes, so he got a hold of my partner, hadn't been there very long, maybe a week, he got a hold of my partner and said, "Say, you all ever get long weekends around here?" Horstmann says, "No. Don't really have a lot of time. Only two of us, now there's three of us."

Byron Johnson (00:49:53):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:49:54):

And he says, "Well, what do you think about starting some?" Horstmann said, "Well yeah, that'd be fine with me." So the sergeant says, "Every once in a while we're going to have a long weekend." Okay. And he says, "I am going to come get Aycock on Friday and we're going to work our way to San Angelo and he can see his mother and I can see my wife. And then Sunday we're going to come back." Oh, okay. And so that happened for a pretty good while. And I forget how long now. It wasn't... it was maybe a year. Can't remember. Sergeant Sykes got promoted to Texas Ranger.

Byron Johnson (00:50:36):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:50:38):

And so he left Cuero and they assigned him right back to San Angelo. And the next sergeant I got was Dudley Melvin Thomas. And Dudley Thomas came from deep East Texas as a sergeant. He later would become the director of DPS.

Byron Johnson (00:50:58):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:50:58):

So the sergeants were... they were great. My Captain was Herbert Weekes and he was wonderful. The Major was Major Odom and he was good. Lieutenant, all of them were good people. They cared about you more than they cared about traffic.

Byron Johnson (00:51:19):

Um-hmm. What did your schedule look like?

Johnnie Aycock (00:51:21):

Back then?

Byron Johnson (00:51:22):

Yeah. In terms of days per week or how long a day of work-

Johnnie Aycock (00:51:25):

Six- six days a week, at least nine hours a day. Um, usually had one day off, if there wasn't a wreck.

Byron Johnson (00:51:38):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:51:41):

If there was a wreck or something major happened or maybe two wrecks-

Byron Johnson (00:51:44):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:51:45):

... then the car working would have one and they call you to go... you worked through the Sheriff's office. KKL362 Hallettsville. We worked through them and so they would notify you to go wherever and they would get their information from Victoria. There was a DPS station, about 45 miles away and we couldn't... you didn't hear them at all. The scanner wouldn't pick them up.

Byron Johnson (00:52:13):

So were most of your communications relays through local sheriff's offices or things like that?

Johnnie Aycock (00:52:19):

Yeah, most of them were. We had a radio in the car. Uh, it was... according to what the clouds were like and what the... if it was raining or not and stuff like that, how good the communications were. Now, you could talk car to car pretty good if you could see the car.

Byron Johnson (00:52:41):

Line of sight.

Johnnie Aycock (00:52:43):

If everyone is out of the county, you-

Byron Johnson (00:52:45):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:52:45):

... you're going to have to call Hallettsville and they're going to have to relay it. Wasn't any cell phones. Wasn't any, uh-

Byron Johnson (00:52:52):

Nope.

Johnnie Aycock (00:52:52):

... magic stuff back in that day. Radio was a two type and the antenna would... it... we folded the antenna down on the car or it would whip whenever you're running down the road. And if you reached out there to undo the antenna and your partner was talking on the radio, that antenna would burn your fingers. And so I mean it was] way back there in the day.

Byron Johnson (00:53:17):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:53:20):

So cars were good. We had good cars.

Byron Johnson (00:53:25):

What were they?

Johnnie Aycock (00:53:26):

They were Dodges and Plymouths mainly. And then later on we ended up with, I want to say a Ford, but most of them were Dodges and Plymouths. And they were big cars, they weren't little bitty cars. They were... they were strong enough to where if you roll one of them, it wasn't going to kill you. And, uh, we

drove pretty fast and we were real careful on maintenance and we were careful our own selves, careful of our tires and things like that. If something did look right, we'd change it. And if Corpus Christi didn't have the money for it, we'd go the Sheriff and say, "We need another tire." Go get it. We knew the Sheriff will pay for it.

Byron Johnson (00:54:12):

How big was your patrol area, was it one county or multiple counties?

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:17):

Ours was one, Lavaca County. We could go anywhere we wanted to but we- we didn't have time to go piddle. I mean, that county, it had... Highway 90-A ran through it, Highway 77, Highway 77-A, uh, Highway 95, which was a major highway. There were several big highways. We were between Houston and San Antonio, so there was always traffic on that road.

Byron Johnson (00:54:47):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:48):

And some of them were smooth idiots and some of them were doing what they're supposed to do.

Byron Johnson (00:54:52):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:54):

So-

Byron Johnson (00:54:54):

How did you estimate speed at that time? Did they give you radar units?

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:59):

No, not at first. We would watch them from off road and if- if your mind told you they're speeding, you'd wait until they passed you and get behind them and pursue them.

Byron Johnson (00:55:11):

Clock them?

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:12):

Clock them by your own speedometer.

Byron Johnson (00:55:21):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:22):

And then stop them. Then later on they... later on they provided us a radar, um, hang out the window type thing. We would have it, I forget now, a week or two weeks at a time maybe.

Byron Johnson (00:55:29):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:30):

And then it would go to somebody else.

Byron Johnson (00:55:30):

Ah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:33):

And you'd go back to pursuit again. But, uh, if-

Byron Johnson (00:55:40):

Are you-

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:41):

... you made... if you made 15 contacts a day, that was... that was a hard day.

Byron Johnson (00:55:47):

What do you think... in terms of your later Ranger service, what do you think w- were the most valuable lessons that you took out of your Highway Patrol service?

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:57):

Hmm. We hadn't got to Narcotics yet. When I left Highway Patrol, I went into Narcotics and I was agent in Austin and, um, I worked Austin, Waco, Temple, Killeen, Del Rio in Narcotics, and that started teaching me more about criminal law and, uh, how to build cases on-

Byron Johnson (00:56:29):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:56:30):

... that- that would stand up in court. How to write search warrants, things like that, that the Highway Patrol didn't... we didn't do that.

Byron Johnson (00:56:40):

Um-hmm. Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:56:43):

So anyway, so Narcotics I was nine years there. Six years undercover and three years open and so during that period of time I expanded my thought process to go from the traffic side of things to the criminal side.

Byron Johnson (00:56:58):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:56:59):

Which is not really easy to do that because one you're born and bred in the Highway Patrol, that's about all you know.

Byron Johnson (00:57:04):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:57:08):

And, uh, Narcotics was a whole- whole different situation. Had good bosses. Bill Pruitt and Benny Boyd was my Captain, one of them. Richard Harlan was my supervisor. Richard was another one of the original 12 DPS Narcotics agents for the whole state and, uh, knew everything... knew everything literally and, uh, he was one of my bosses. Jimmy Kellner come out of Narcotics, was a sergeant in Waco, went into DEA. He was a great guy to work with.

Byron Johnson (00:57:48):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:57:51):

Brantley Foster and Ronnie Tucker and Skipper Allen and different one... Pat Wilson. They were all good people to work with. So you know, I'm learning. You learn by doing in Narcotics.

Byron Johnson (00:58:04):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:58:05):

You know, you do it and you do it wrong and you got to trash what you just did, then you learn. I don't need to do it like that anymore. I need to make it better. And there were people that would t- teach you. They would tell you. Whether or not you listened to them sometimes was a different ballgame because they had a different way of doing things.

Byron Johnson (00:58:27):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:58:28):

But, uh, you know, I had to learn undercover, and once I learned that, I was off to the races and, um, then I had to learn the paper work part of it, supervisory part of it. And once I... once... and they were really good about trying to teach me things because I'm kind of hardheaded and they weren't accepting that most of the time.

(00:58:58):

So from there, then I put in... I got asked if I was interested in the Rangers by Captain Bill Wilson.

Byron Johnson (00:59:10):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:59:10):

And I told him I was. And I had met Captain Wilson years before when I was at Del Rio.

Byron Johnson (00:59:14):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:59:14):

So he and I had sort of kind of worked alongside one another as much as Rangers and Narcotics can, I guess. And, uh, so he knew me. Floyd Hacker was a chief, he knew me. And Bill Wilson came to me and asked me if I wanted to apply and I said, "What are my chances?" He said, "Pretty good." He said, uh, "You know, you're going to have to work at it, but probably pretty good." And I said, "Well, what's your thoughts?" He said, "I'd make you tomorrow, but I can't do that. It's got to be a board to do that." Okay. I went ahead and applied, turned my paper work in. Course, then Narcotics knew I had applied for the Rangers and that pretty much x'd me with some of those guys.

Rusty Bloxom, Byron Johnson, and Eric Richard (01:00:03):

(laughter)

Johnnie Aycock (01:00:05):

They said, "Oh, no. We don't need him around here." And, uh, one thing led to another and Captain Wilson called me and asked me if I would withdraw my paper work until the next year and I told him, I said, "Captain, I can't do that. I either make it or don't, but if I withdraw my paper work, I'm dead over here."

Byron Johnson (01:00:24):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:00:26):

And, you know, nobody wants to work with somebody that wants to be a Ranger. Over here anyway.

Byron Johnson (01:00:30):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:00:32):

Wilson said, "Well, I can't understand that." And I said, "I can't either, but that's the way it is, so," I said, "Not all are that way, but most of them are." He said, "Well, leave the request in place and roll the dice."

Byron Johnson (01:00:42):

Why do you think that was?

Johnnie Aycock (01:00:45):

He had... they had had... Narcotics had promoted some Narcotic agents in the past and one of them had messed up so bad they had to leave the department and he got indicted federally and, uh, they were embarrassed.

Byron Johnson (01:01:00):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:00):

And so they were afraid of Narcotics people and so Captain Wilson talked to me and he said, uh, "You're going to need to talk to everyone of those captains either when they're down here, when they're in their office, somehow you're going to have to either go see them or call them. But my suggestion is talk to every one of the and some of the sergeants." Ranger Sergeants. There weren't any lieutenants back then. There was Private, Ranger Sergeant, Captain-

Byron Johnson (01:01:35):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:36):

... Senior Captain. And so I said okay and so I called all of them. Saw Bob Mitchell and saw the captain out of Dallas. The rest of them I called and they made me promise that I would not go in a bar or a beer joint or a honky-tonk unless I was serving a warrant or closing it down, and that I would not try to use prostitutes as informants. They made me promise that. And I said, "I don't see any problem with the bars." I said, "I kind of have an issue with the prostitutes, they're pretty good informants." "Yes, but it is certainly embarrassing when it comes out.

Byron Johnson (01:02:21):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (01:02:22):

And we just assume somebody else will do that, like Narcotics."

Byron Johnson (01:02:25):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:02:26):

I said, "Okay. I understand." I said, "Well, you got my word." And so I interviewed and there were three names on... there were three openings within the next year and myself and, uh, Doyle Holdridge and one other boy. My mind's not working right now. We made the list.

Byron Johnson (01:02:59):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:02:59):

So they asked me where I wanted to go and I told them I wanted to go to the border. And then Holdridge called me and he said, "I can't survive off this border."

Byron Johnson (01:03:08):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:03:09):

"I don't know how to act with white people." And he says, "Do you think you might want to give up the border and let me have it?" He said, "I can't... I can't make it somewhere else. I know I can't. Tried." Okay. So I called them and I said, "What's number two?" And the openings were, golly, I forgot now. Waco, Houston, Laredo, I think that was it. So I told him, I said, "Waco's not bad." Well, the opening really wasn't Waco, it was Bell County.

Byron Johnson (01:03:51):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:03:55):

Belton and the Ranger there, I knew him from working in Narcotics and working in Bell County.

Byron Johnson (01:04:00):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:02):

He went to the Sheriff, the Sheriff got a hold of his son, the son was a Ranger. The son told him, "Daddy, I don't want to come home for this. I'd have to arrest people I went to school with." And so his daddy then said, "Well, what do you think about Aycock?" He said, "He a good one. Take him." So the Sheriff chose me and the Ranger there chose me and they told Captain Mitchell and Captain Mitchell... anyway, I ended up in Bell County and I had Bell and Coryell and Fort Hood and all the prison systems in Coryell and I had Bell County. And, um, anyway, I forget, that was about '80... '81 or '82. I don't remember exactly when.

(01:04:55):

I started working with the locals and I- I played off that old Ranger, his name was Ed Gooding, and Ed Gooding would introduce me to people even after he left and he would tell people who I was and what I did and all that stuff. And then when I would leave he would tell them, say, "Give him a chance. He's not me, but give him a chance."

Byron Johnson (01:05:16):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:18):

And so he helped me a lot. Sheriff helped me a lot, Bell County Sheriff, name was Lester Gunn. And, uh, Mitchell, of course, did. Mitchell was one-of-a-kind guy. Other than Drensek, Mitchell was probably the other second best officer I ever worked with. You know, Major Drensek was top of the line, nobody can beat him. Course, that was during the war.

Byron Johnson (01:05:49):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:52):

But, uh-

Byron Johnson (01:05:52):

What were you working on primarily in Bell County-

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:55):

Murders.

Byron Johnson (01:05:55):

... was there any significant-

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:56):

Mur- mur... violent crimes. Murders, kidnappings.

Byron Johnson (01:05:59):

Murders, violent crimes.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:00):

Yeah. But if somebody called me to help them on something, either get a picture for them, a photo lineup for them, do an interview for them, whatever it was, I'd help them. Didn't matter what it was.

Byron Johnson (01:06:16):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:16):

Burglary or gas station break-in or whatever, wouldn't matter, I'd do it. But the majority of the cases were all bloody cases, murders and mainly murders and double murders and violent crime.

Byron Johnson (01:06:34):

What was most... what were the motivating factors of it most, were they crimes of passion or were they burglary or what?

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:41):

All of it.

Byron Johnson (01:06:41):

All of it.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:42):

Yeah, passion was part of it. Some of the robberies panic was involved. Uh, payback was involved in quite a few of them around Killeen area.

Byron Johnson (01:06:55):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:56):

You know, you can't do that to me, I'll show you, and the next thing you know, guy's laying in a hole somewhere. And, uh- here we go.

Byron Johnson (01:07:04):

Environment of the military base have an effect on it?

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:08):

Lot of effect. When you... when you head toward Nolanville out of Belton, it's a whole completely different world. Those- those folks are from all over the US and some places outside the US, and some of them are real young, they're not mature some of them. And whenever they'd get their paycheck they'd go nuts and next thing you know, one of them's pushing the other one and next thing you know, one of them stuck another one in the gut with a bayonet or something. And, you know, now what do I do? So take the body out in the county and dump it in the lake. Nobody will know the difference. And military base was pretty wild around paydays.

Byron Johnson (01:07:52):

Did the military get involved with any of your investigations?

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:55):

Yes.

Byron Johnson (01:07:56):

How so?

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:59):

They... if it had anything to do with a military person, they would provide pretty good assistance on. They got different laws than what we have.

Byron Johnson (01:08:09):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:11):

And they can do interviews differently than we do, and they can do a lot of things that we really can't do.

Byron Johnson (01:08:17):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:19):

But they also do them sometimes in such a way where you can't file a case once you make it.

Byron Johnson (01:08:26):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:26):

Because it's violating, you know, constitution.

Byron Johnson (01:08:30):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:31):

And so you had to be real careful when you were working with them if they didn't give off... otherwise you got a District Attorney that says, "I'm not going to take because of so-and-so."

Byron Johnson (01:08:41):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:41):

And you got a military prosecutor that says, "I don't want it. It's yours."

Byron Johnson (01:08:47):

So what do you do?

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:48):

What do you do? Transfer the guy to Germany and forget about it.

Byron Johnson (01:08:49):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:49):

Well, that don't work too good.

Rusty Bloxom (01:08:57):

Did your experience, uh, having been in the Army help you out working with those folks?

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:58):

Yes, a lot. After they learned it... I didn't talk to them much about it, but after they heard, they'd ask questions. Somebody asked me a question I'd answer it.

Byron Johnson (01:09:11):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:13):

So yeah, that helped quite bit. The main thing that helped was that Ranger badge. Those guys, lot of them were... they think a Ranger walked on water. And until they got their own federal law enforcement out there on Fort Hood, that's the way they felt. When they got their other law enforcement out there, they kind of put the Rangers on the back burner. They still revered them, but they didn't need them anymore. Didn't need us.

Byron Johnson (01:09:41):

And so they brought them in to involve during the Fort Hood shootings too?

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:47):

Yes. Yeah, that was interesting. You talking about the- the kid... what you talking about, the movies? No.

Byron Johnson (01:09:59):

No. The guy that got on the base and shot all those people.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:00):

Yeah.

Byron Johnson (01:10:01):

Or the guy that was on base and shot all those people.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:05):

Yeah. Nidal Hasan or whatever. I wasn't involved in that, but some of them were. Yeah.

Byron Johnson (01:10:15):

But a lot of the people I talked to were surprised that they has ac- asked the Rangers to come in and conduct some of the post-shooting interviews and things like that to try to put it all back together.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:31):

Yeah. Well, they were pretty good at that. They- they had learned... they do so much stuff now that we didn't do that we- we could've done some of it back then.

Byron Johnson (01:10:41):

What was you most memorable... you spent a lot of time in Bell County there; what were your most memorable... what was your most memorable case in that area?

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:51):

Probably Luby's Massacre. That was one of them, and the Missionaries that were kidnapped and killed on Fort Hood, that was another one. There was a whole lot of them.

Byron Johnson (01:11:03):

When did you get pulled into... how did you get pulled into the Luby's Massacre situation?

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:08):

We helped... we were working with a detective sergeant in Killeen. Rick Moriarty and Lanny Ryan. Myself and Fred Cummings, we'd been working with him off an on a whole lot, and, uh, when that happened, we called to see if there was anything we could do and they told us, "Come on. We need you." So there you go.

Byron Johnson (01:11:30):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:33):

Uh, DPS was involved in that massacre within 10, 15 minutes of it starting, and what happened was motor vehicle theft. An agent named Jody Fore had an auto theft school going on at a hotel, hundred yards from Luby's. And when all that was going on, they were... the a- agents were coming back from lunch to go back to class and this woman, hysterical woman, come running up and jumped at them... because they... she saw the badges, jumped at them they're killing everybody in Luby's.

Byron Johnson (01:12:15):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:12:17):

So DPS and motor vehicle theft and, uh, Killeen PD, the ones that were in... whoever was in that school responded to it right then. They got in a gun battle with Hennard. They got him off in the bathroom foyer and, uh, that's where he ended up killing himself. But if they hadn't been involved so quickly, it would've been a whole lot worse.

Byron Johnson (01:12:44):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:12:45):

But when we got there, the bodies was there and all the blood and everything else and you had to do each one of them individually. What happens if you got more than one person involved and you don't know who the second person is? What, you know, how do you psychoanalyze this dead guy laying on the floor? On and on and on and on, so we had to work each one of those bodies as if it were an individual crime, which it was in a way but they were all together. So it just took forever and most of the officers there knew people that had been killed. I know some of them. The Lieutenant there was personal friends with half of them. And, uh, it was just a difficult situation.

Byron Johnson (01:13:33):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:13:33):

You know, and, um, and, uh, the, uh, two Missionaries kidnapped and murdered on Fort Hood, that was hard too because I had worked with one of them's father and knew her ever since she was a baby. And, uh, god, that's hard, uh.

Byron Johnson (01:13:53):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:13:56):

I just told myself I'm going to get to the bottom of this one way or the other. And I'd been asked to come over there, but the right one hadn't asked me.

Byron Johnson (01:14:07):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:09):

And so we had a policy back then that if you're not requested and it's none of your business, you stay out of it, back then. So I got another request and it wasn't the right person. So I said, "I'd be willing to get involved, but I can't right at this minute." The next call I got was from US district judge and he said, "You are involved. Go to work."

Byron Johnson (01:14:34):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:35):

I said, "You got it." And so anyway, when that was all ended up, we ended up with, I don't know, six or seven codefendants blood gang members. Two of them... several of them got life, some of them got lesser sentences. One of them... no, two of them, federal jury, they got life in federal prison and the federal death penalty. That never happened before, probably never happen again. And during Donald

Trump's term, he instated the federal death penalty. The Department of Justice and Bureau of Prisons saw to it that both men were executed.

Byron Johnson (01:15:12):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:15:14):

So they paid for what they did. And we had to be careful how to work it. I mean, it was federal versus state. It was which prosecutor wants this, which one wants that? Um, we decided to go federal because they had so many people. Worked with ATF. ATF was good to work with back in the day. Charles Meyer and Byron San Marco and, Wayne Appelt, were all good folks to work with and we did work with them all the time.

(01:15:51):

TDC was involved in that death too because the lady that I knew as a child that I'd worked with her daddy, he was KPD, he had retired from KPD and went to work for the prison system as an internal affairs officer.

Byron Johnson (01:16:10):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:16:12):

And I'd been working with him there and so TDC was involved in it. I needed some people to guard some roads and protect some crime scene. I couldn't get the army to respond to me very well, they were done with it.

Byron Johnson (01:16:27):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:16:28):

And the prison system sent two busloads of employees out there and just shut the roads down until I said it was okay to open them back up. Drew a little heat but it worked.

Byron Johnson (01:16:44):

You had a long and very well respected relationship with the prison system, you still do.

Johnnie Aycock (01:16:50):

Um-hmm.

Byron Johnson (01:16:51):

How did that develop?

Johnnie Aycock (01:16:54):

In about '69 or so, '70 maybe, I can't remember exactly, but I had made a- a parole violation case on a guy that was causing some problems there in Hallettsville and there was any way to get him to Huntsville and he was causing problems in the jail and the Sheriff said, "I want him moved. I ain't got nobody to take him to Huntsville." I said, "I'll take him." He said, "Are you sure? You better call your sergeant." So I did and I think it was Dudley then said, "Go on, take him. You got time."

(01:17:32):

So I loaded him up and took off. He knew where we were supposed to go, but he didn't tell me. When I got around Huntsville, I got lost and I drove by a bunch of guys on horseback with a bunch of inmates using hoes and I slowed down, looked out the window and this captain come up to me. Think it was a captain or a major, I can't remember now. Anyway, he came up to me and said, "You lost?" And I said, "I am." "Where you trying to get to go?" And I told him and he said "That old thing knows where it's at." I said, "I know, but he's not talking to me." He says, "You ain't talking to him right." And I said, "I don't really know how to talk to him." He said, "Well, let me tell you how to get there." Told me how to get there and he said, "When you leave, come on back by this way. We'll have coffee." And I thought h-how's he going to do that in the middle of a pasture?

(01:18:32):

So I dropped the fella off and said... bid him adieu and get in the car and come back and I found those horses, pulled beside of them and captain... think it was a captain, got off the horse. Said, "Come on, boy." Cut my car off and went over to a big old trailer and he had a coffee pot in that trailer and we sat up there and watched the inmates work and drank coffee and visited for I don't know how long. And, uh, anyway, he later would become one of the best-known wardens in the system.

Byron Johnson (01:19:04):

How did he figure out initially that you were law enforcement? Was it because you were dressed as a ranger?

Johnnie Aycock (01:19:13):

No. That was, uh, I was Highway Patrol then.

Byron Johnson (01:19:14):

Oh, you were Highway Patrol.

Johnnie Aycock (01:19:14):

Yeah, I was in-

Byron Johnson (01:19:14):

So you were in a cruiser.

Johnnie Aycock (01:19:14):

... a black and white car.

Byron Johnson (01:19:14):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:19:20):

Highway Patrol uniform. So I met him and his name was Cousins, Bob Cousins and, uh, from then on, just the relationship just got better and better and better and better. Man, I worked... there's no telling how many wardens I worked with. Um, when I was a Ranger we had a gun smuggled into Hughes with some tobacco and ammunition and we ended up getting involved in that with ATF and we solved that and we proved... mainly we proved the employees didn't have anything to do with the illegality of what went in that prison, which is important. Because if you got a boss that's crooked that's done something he ain't supposed to be doing, you need to weed him out and put him in jail, and that wasn't h- that wasn't the situation on that gun. Gun got recovered, ammunition got recovered. Uh, nobody was injured. Wasn't any bad problems out of it for the prison. Just on and on and on and on and on.

(01:20:39):

If there was an escape in my area, I was called almost before the guy got over the fence, and I was expected by the warden to show up and help him. And by helping, that means go to- to the Highway Patrol for him, to the Sheriff for him. That warden is too busy to be calling all these people and try to set up roadblocks and stuff. He's too busy.

Byron Johnson (01:21:02):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:21:04):

He's trying to catch a crook. And so they'd use me for that. Sometimes I was on horseback with them, chasing the guy. Sometimes it wasn't. Made a film about it. The proper use of a TDCJ tracking dogs.

Byron Johnson (01:21:27):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (01:21:28):

Made a film about it. Sure did. Proud of it. Good training film. Um-hmm.

Byron Johnson (01:21:34):

Were you in it?

Johnnie Aycock (01:21:35):

I was briefly. Myself and Byron Sage with the FBI, David Miller with Temple PD, uh, god, Bell County, Coryell County, Copperas Cove, Belton PD, Temple PD, on and on and on.

Byron Johnson (01:21:57):

As an aside, it might be w- good to check the archive of the moving image and see if they have a copy of that or contact the TDC museum and see if they have a copy of it.

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:08):

I got that disk- I got one... I've got one at home. I've got one at home. You all use it in your film here.

Byron Johnson (01:22:15):

Do we?

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:16):

You used part of it.

Byron Johnson (01:22:17):

Oh.

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:19):

Yeah. You got me and the dog trailers and shaking hands with people.

Eric Richard (01:22:22):

Yep.

Byron Johnson (01:22:23):

Because of you and the rest of it, we ought to have that in our archives.

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:27):

Oh, I have it. Hope so. Someone looked at that here a while back and they're wanting to re- bring it back out again for training. I don't know if they're going to do it or not, but that's what I was told.

Byron Johnson (01:22:40):

Can we go back to narcotics a little bit?

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:42):

Um-hmm.

Byron Johnson (01:22:45):

Narcotics has changed a lot in the-

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:48):

Um-hmm.

Byron Johnson (01:22:48):

... last few decades. Back when you were in it, they didn't have cartels to any extent like they do here or anything else. Can you tell us a little bit about the nature of Narcotics when you were working Narcotics?

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:00):

Um-hmm. Uh, if it was hard drugs like heroin or methamphetamine or something like that, normally it was in the big cities-

Byron Johnson (01:23:14):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:14):

... back in the day, and normally you didn't have any trouble picking out who was doing what because they was messed up on the street.

Byron Johnson (01:23:21):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:22):

And the local PDs would generally have records on them. What we tried to do is we tried to figure out who was supplying that person and how to get to that supplier to get him arrested to take him off the street to where it would drive up what was going to those addicts.

Byron Johnson (01:23:41):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:41):

And then, uh, meth labs came in, that was a different ballgame.

Byron Johnson (01:23:46):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:47):

And, uh, meth cooks were... man, they were proud of what they made and if it was a really good product, they would almost put it in the newspaper they were so proud of it. And word would get around.

Byron Johnson (01:24:03):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:05):

But we saw... we worked with DEA a lot and saw that they were using chemicals that were bought, uh, legally. And so DEA got some laws passed, and I'm not sure whether we did or not, but DEA did, where it made those chemicals... you had to register to buy those chemicals. You had to put your name on paper. And if you bought a whole bunch of those chemicals, DEA knew it. So if- if you hadn't got a great, big Kodak factory somewhere, you better be able to explain what you're doing with all those chemicals.

Byron Johnson (01:24:38):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:40):

So that helped shut it down for a while. Then they started importing it from Mexico and different ballgame. You can buy it now cheaper from Mexico than you can make it.

Byron Johnson (01:24:50):

The heroin and the other stuff when you were involved with it, w- where was that originating from?

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:56):

San Antonio. Uh, most of... there were some Mexican drug gangs back in the day before the cartels.

Byron Johnson (01:25:04):

Um-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:25:05):

And they were... they were doing some smuggling, making profit. And then a person on this side would have it and of course, they would pass it on in a higher price and they would make money too and on and on and on and on. But-

Byron Johnson (01:25:21):

Anything coming in from organized crime from other parts of the US?

Johnnie Aycock (01:25:25):

Yes. Back, uh, not so much to drugs back in the day, but other things. Prostitution and gambling and things like that, that was more like organized crime and those were made... other than the... there was a thing called the Dixie Mafia. They were out of Dallas and Waco.

Byron Johnson (01:25:42):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:25:44):

And they did a lot of illegal activity, but other than them, the big mafias and stuff out of Chicago and New York and- and places like that, they were trying to traffic through Dallas. So they had... what they basically had, they had strip joints and bars set up that they actually backed and they had somebody running those things and that's kind of how they would do their meetings and so forth.

Byron Johnson (01:26:12):

Distributing through there.

Johnnie Aycock (01:26:14):

Um-hmm. Yeah. Mainly girls and pornography and, uh, gambling with the mafia-type stuff. The drugs... at first the mafia didn't want anything to do with drugs. It was dirty and they didn't want to mess with it.

Byron Johnson (01:26:32):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (01:26:32):

They didn't start messing with it for a long time, then finally when they did it just went poof.

Byron Johnson (01:26:35):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:26:37):

Crazy. But, uh, yeah, airplane smugglers were big back in the day. Weed, marijuana and they were bringing that straight across the border in airplanes from Mexico and dumping it out on the strip somewhere and we had a section that worked those and I worked some of that sometimes. And, uh, if you're lucky you'd catch the airplane. If you're not lucky, the got the ground crew you catch. You're going to catch somebody if they drop a load of dope, but might not be the one you want, but you're going to catch somebody.

Byron Johnson (01:27:17):

You guys want to think about breaking and going to have some lunch?

Johnnie Aycock (01:27:21):

Sure.

Rusty Bloxom (01:27:21):

Sounds good.

Byron Johnson (01:27:23):

We'd be honored if you'd let us take you- (Recording stopped)

PART 1 of 2 ENDS [01:27:23]

Beginning of Part 2 of 2

John Aycock started talking before the recording was resumed so the interview and transcript start mid-way though the conversation.

Johnnie Aycock (00:00:02):

Driver's License Division were uniformed highway patrolmen.

Byron Johnson (00:00:10):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:00:11):

With a Driver's License patch.

Byron Johnson (00:00:13):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:00:14):

And no gun. None. Zero.

Byron Johnson (00:00:18):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:00:20):

So it was born and a boy named, uh, Bill Berger, Bill Berger, he was from Gonzales. He worked about five or six counties for Driver's License. He would save all the cash, there wasn't any credit cards back then, it was either cash or a check. He saved all of those deposits until he got a substantial deposit, and then he would work his way to Gonzales to his bank and he would go in and make a deposit to the DPS to that bank of his driver's license money.

Byron Johnson (00:01:04):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:01:06):

And he walked into the bank one day and he got stuck in the face with two guns. And he hit the floor. Yes.

Byron Johnson (00:01:15):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:01:17):

Hit the floor. "What's in the briefcase?" "Well, a bunch of checks and things." [inaudible 00:01:22] "What's in the briefcase?" "Well, driver's license." "Driver's license? What? Money? Open it." And they robbed him. And he's in uniform, he's laying on the ground, he can't do nothing, he ain't got a gun, he's not authorized to carry one. And after that happened and two or three other incidents similar to that, DPS said, "That's bullshit. We're gonna issue the DL patrolmen pistols." And so they took up all of our Colts and reissued them to Driver's License, and when they did, they got us brand new Smith and Wessons to [inaudible 00:02:09] I don't remember what year that was at all. Do not remember at all.

Eric Richard (00:02:17):

Uh, can you recall any other equipment to that Highway Patrol? Vehicles, uh, radio equipment, anything like that?

Johnnie Aycock (00:02:23):

Mm-hmm. All of it. Mm. The radio was a tube type radio. One transistor. It worked off of an antenna and a coil in the trunk. And when you keyed the mic, that coil would wind up in the trunk and you could hear it. And when it reached a certain w- winding, then you could transmit. And it seem to me like we had a light on it but I can't remember exactly. But we were on 37.180, 42.9, and I can't remember the other one. 37.180 was a Sheriff's Office 42.9 was DPS. And we had a car-to-car but I don't remember what that was. So if you are calling Victoria it was 42.9, Lavaca County was 37.180.

(00:03:28):

And the county had a.... They didn't have it at first. At first only Victoria had the capability to check on a, an individual's name. Driver's license, warrants, whatever. So you had to call Victoria and it might take two hours. So you got this guy stuck on the side of the road, no driver's license, for two hours, waiting on

somebody to tell you whether or not he's a crook. So a lot of times we... (laughs) A lot of times we'd go through his wallet and pick something out that looked like it was some kind of official, take his name down and get a phone number and a address and let him go. If it come back clean, he'd get a ticket. If it come back dirty, somebody would set up a warrant on him. But hell, we were, sometimes we sat for two and three hours.

(00:04:28):

Um, and then later on, within six, eight months, a year maybe, Hallettsville got a telex machine. And a telex machine was, shifty, it was bigger than that copier. And it had another part to it that was at the dispatcher. And whatever you wanted to run, he had to type physically, had to type out a long, thin, tape-size thing. And when he got through typing, it was all in code, he got through with it, he would tear it off a certain way and he would feed it through that machine, it would go through that machine, there would be a green light saying it was received, and you'd wait for however long it took Austin, which is where that went. And they always had to hand pull stuff back then. So if, if it was during the day, wasn't his problem. If it was at night, it might be a while. Then the telex would come back with everything to do with that name on it.

Byron Johnson (00:05:37):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:05:37):

And so if you had a prisoner going to jail, you would call the county and have them run that stuff to where it would be there maybe by the time you got to the jail. Where you could look at it and just... Or they could tell you on the phone. You treated the prisoners a little different compared to what the record was. You know, you know, well, that was what communication was. Mm...

Eric Richard (00:06:08):

Uh, do you recall any equipment you carried in your car with you?

Johnnie Aycock (00:06:11):

Mm-hmm. We had a 12-gauge shotgun in the trunk. Semi-automatic. Mm, based back in the '20s or '30s, maybe. And uh, magnums, pistols. And 18 rounds on us and then whatever was in the trunk. Horstmann always had a lot of ammo 'cause he was like me in believing we're not running out.

Byron Johnson (00:06:34):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:06:37):

And that was pretty much it. And now, you could pack your own gun, which you had to pack in, in addition to this. So I mean, if you wanted to carry something else you could, but it gets kinda bulky after a while. You know, it's just hard to sit in the car, and hard to move, and-

Byron Johnson (00:06:56):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:06:57):

Stuff like that, so.

Byron Johnson (00:06:58):

Big question, given the weather these days, do you have air conditioning in all the cars?

Johnnie Aycock (00:07:05):

No. Mm-mm. Mm-mm. We didn't have any air conditioning. Didn't have any good time radio. And the windows were all manual.

Byron Johnson (00:07:13):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:07:13):

They had vent windows back then. So driving down the road you could open those vent windows, it was pretty cool that way.

Byron Johnson (00:07:20):

I, for the life of me, can't imagine how people did it in the '30s and '40s when there were black cars and wool suits-

Johnnie Aycock (00:07:29):

(laughs) mm-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:07:29):

In the middle of summer.

Johnnie Aycock (00:07:30):

We had wool too. Early. They changed it, and then we had poplin shirts and heavy pants. You had to have them dry-cleaned. You couldn't wash them. The shirts you could wash, pants no. Had to have them dry-cleaned.

Byron Johnson (00:07:49):

The other thing that, you know, I knew Bob Mitchell pretty well, and Bob of course died of melanoma, and one of the things that I was wondering is how much of that melanoma was due to the fact that he was sitting in cars throughout all his career-

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:04):

Mm-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:08:05):

And in some cases he said short-sleeve shirts and that kinda thing, with no sunblock or anything else.

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:14):

Mm-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:08:14):

Getting exposed to that day after day after day-

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:15):

Mm-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:08:15):

In, in the sun weather.

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:17):

Mm-hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:08:18):

I think that I, you know, to me it would be uh, it would be hard to believe that didn't have something to do with-

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:23):

It did. It had to. And side of the road, if you have a wreck in the daytime, I mean you're there, you're through with it. Might take you four hours.

Byron Johnson (00:08:31):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:32):

And you ain't got much help. I mean, once in a while the Highway Department would come direct traffic for you if you lucky, but otherwise if there's two of you, one guy's standing out in that hot highway directing traffic while the other one's working the wreck.

Byron Johnson (00:08:46):

Now, in the '60s when you were doing that, did they issue you any kind of cameras to take crime scene photos-

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:53):

Nah-ah [indicating no]

Byron Johnson (00:08:53):

Or were you just doing measurements and diagrams mainly?

Johnnie Aycock (00:08:56):

Measurements and diagrams and if it was a... mm, nobody's gonna believe this, but if it was a serious accident or incident, we called the Lavaca County Tribune Newspaper.

Byron Johnson (00:09:14):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:09:14):

And they had a boy there that was a reporter. He was an expert photographer, and he would come to the scene and take your pictures for you. When they were developed, he would give you the pictures and the negatives and he wouldn't put 'em in the paper.

Byron Johnson (00:09:30):

You wouldn't get that today.

Johnnie Aycock (00:09:30):

Hmm.

Byron Johnson (00:09:30):

[inaudible 00:09:33]

Johnnie Aycock (00:09:32):

And if he had to testify, he'd testify. And that's just the way it was.

Byron Johnson (00:09:37):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:09:37):

And that was because of who those people in Hallettsville were. You know, other places didn't have particularly, Victoria had it like that. But all ours were Lavaca County photographs. Paper, from

newspaper photographs. Um, we didn't have any walkie-talkies, stuff like that. That was, that was narcotics and intelligence, if they had any equipment like that. Maybe the rangers. I remember the rangers having a big, old radio like that with a pullout antenna. You put it up to your head and you had to make sure you wasn't under a tree or you'd break a limb.

Byron Johnson (00:10:24):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:10:26):

And it wasn't very good. Most of it wasn't. Um, air conditioning. If you didn't wreck the car-

Byron Johnson (00:10:38):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:10:40):

And you're saying your partner would make awful damn sure that you didn't wreck the car, and he didn't either. After a period of time, he would put an under-the-dash air conditioner. But DPS, you couldn't drill a hole in an automobile and have it visible when you got done with it. So all of, everything had to be under the dash and the holes had to be hidden from view. And the same thing with the, we got a radio, transistor radio first, and then we got a air conditioner later on. And we, you know, you go together and up the money and pay for it.

Byron Johnson (00:11:26):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:27):

And uh, DPS didn't mind you having one, they just wasn't gonna pay for it.

Byron Johnson (00:11:30):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:33):

And so transistor radio was important to us 'cause we didn't have radar back then, and if you're sitting out on the highway in the middle of the night and you don't have something to listen to, you sure get sleepy quick. (laughs) A lot of us would go to sleep.

Byron Johnson (00:11:53):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:11:53):

Especially after we got the air conditioner in the car. Mm. You could go to sleep pretty quickly then.

Byron Johnson (00:11:58):

Mm. (laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:12:00):

So we had a transistor radio, and Mr. Horstmann, every day, from 11:30 to 1 o'clock, I think it was. 12 o'clock. Can't remember now. Anyway, every day during the day, we would park somewhere to watch traffic and listen to the polka music. Every day. After we'd had lunch.

Byron Johnson (00:12:31):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:12:31):

And Mr. Horstmann used a toothpick. He [sat] there with a cowboy hat over his eyes and you'd think he was asleep. Mm, here'd come a car and he would hear it. Just wake up and look at that car. If it wasn't doing anything, he would just go back (laughs). But we listened to polka music every day. And when the polka music was over, over with, Mr. Horstmann say, "Time to go to work." And we'd leave wherever we was at and go to patrolling.

Byron Johnson (00:13:04):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:13:05):

And on Friday night we listened to the Louisiana Hayride, and on Saturday night we listened to the Grand Old Opry. Every week. And there was something else we listened, some, Wolfman Jack out of Del Rio.

Byron Johnson (00:13:22):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:13:23):

We listened to him some.

Byron Johnson (00:13:25):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:13:27):

But that radio was important. That transistor radio. And all, all the guys were that way. If you were lucky you had a partner.

Byron Johnson (00:13:38):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:13:38):

To share the expense. If you didn't have a partner, kinda on your dime.

Byron Johnson (00:13:45):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:13:45):

And so, in Hallettsville it was myself, it was Wilbar Horstmann, Pete, uh, Pete Whitcomb, and later, LB Gamble Jr. Which made four of us. And that was two cars, two different shifts most of the time, sometimes the weekend off, and uh, made it a whole lot easier. Pete Whitcomb ended up going to the FBI and ended up being the chief FBI agent in Houston, chasing spies.

Byron Johnson (00:14:32):

Oh!

Johnnie Aycock (00:14:33):

Gamble ended up going to the Valley, ended up in DPS Narcotics, ended up resigning, ended up running private jails. In the last 15 or 20 years of his life, he was a constable in Freestone County, and 87% of his constituents were Black.

Byron Johnson (00:15:03):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:15:03):

And they voted for LB Gamble Jr. every time. So white people could stay home, Black people would put him in office. And when he died, he was still an elected constable over there. His story was his wife was in Fairfield and he was in Driver's License, and his wife got head-on run over by a drunk driver. And LB vowed over her grave, "I will get to a position someday where I can do something about these drunks."

Byron Johnson (00:15:46):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:15:46):

And he kept on until he made the Highway Patrol. And he was death on drunks. I've seen him catch four a night.

Byron Johnson (00:15:54):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:15:56):

And lock 'em up. And he never thought about it. And in Lavaca County, there was a lot of always drunks. I mean folks that always drank a lot every day.

Byron Johnson (00:16:05):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:16:05):

You know, my partner, on the other hand, he knew them all. So if he st- I mean, if he stopped someone for that and he realized after a bit they were drunk, and he knew they had a wife and six or seven kids and she was trying to work, he was working, neither one of 'em were making it very and the guy just made a mistake, Horstmann would hide his keys. And he would tell him, "You know how to run, don't you?" "Yes, sir." "We're gonna be working this highway until 3 o'clock in the morning. If we drive by here and don't see you walking or running, you're going to jail, you understand?" "Yes, sir."

(00:16:52):

And we'd drive by a couple times, here'd be this guy hobbling along in the bar ditch. Running around. And right before we went home, Horstmann, either he or I, one would drive back to that car, make contact with the guy and make sure he could make it home, and then Horstmann'd tell him, "Go face the fence." And the guy would and Horstmann would produce the keys and start the car for him and say, "Home. Nowhere else." And, "Yes, sir, Mr. Horstmann." And he did that a lot. But he knew all them people and they all knew him too. Now, if he locked them up and they had to pay a fine, they all plead guilty. And they all said, "I deserve it."

(00:17:36):

And if he caught 'em more than once that way, the way I just described, he didn't give 'em a break second time.

Byron Johnson (00:17:42):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:17:42):

And he'd say, "I warned you last week. I ain't warning you tonight. You going with me."

Byron Johnson (00:17:47):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:17:48):

And that's the way he was. Same thing with a speeding ticket. If he knew somebody couldn't afford to pay it, what's the use of going after him for a warrant? Give 'em a warning ticket and tell 'em, "If I get you again in 10 days, you're gonna get two tickets." And it always worked. But he knew all of them, he'd already been there so long. He'd been there like 20 years. He knew everybody, everybody knew him.

(00:18:17):

This is the important part with Mr. Horstmann. When he come out of rookie school, they trained on motorcycles. And when he came out on the road, they had changed to the automobile.

Byron Johnson (00:18:29):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:18:31):

And his first station was Three Rivers. And he worked, working maybe about six months in, he and his partner went to Corpus to get supplies and Mr. Horstmann went in to see Captain Herbert Weeks, who later was my captain too.

Byron Johnson (00:18:52):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:18:52):

Man, and he'd been working that long. He worked like, 60 years. Long time.

Byron Johnson (00:18:57):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:18:59):

And Horstmann took his hat off and standing there and he said, "Captain, I guess I'm going to have to quit." And the story goes, the captain said, "Sit down." And Horstmann did. You had to be asked to sit down in the captain's office. You didn't just sit down.

Byron Johnson (00:19:18):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:19:18):

And he said, "What have I done to you?" "You haven't done anything to me." "What's the DPS done to you?"

Byron Johnson (00:19:27):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:19:29):

"They haven't done anything to me." "Then what's your problem?" He said, "I don't have a church. I'm trying to raise a family and I've got to have a church. And I've looked and down there where I am, there are none. Not my kinda church." And so Weeks said, "Is that the problem?" And he said, "That's the problem." He opened a drawer, I was told, and dug around through the drawer and he came up with a, what they used to call a courtesy card, with Humble Oil Company. He handed it to Horstmann and said, "You know what that is?" And Wilbert said, "Yes, I think so. It's a gasoline courtesy card." And he said, "It is." He said, "You use that card for gasoline when you leave here and find you a church." And he said, "Now, every once in a while, stop somebody, write 'em a warning or something so Austin doesn't think I'm letting you mess off." He said, "They get all our reports, you know."

Byron Johnson (00:20:39):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:20:42):

So it was a while. Horstmann went back to Corpus, gave the card back to his captain and the captain said, "What's the verdict?" He said, "I found a church." And Captain asked him, said, "Well, where is it?" He said, "Well, Hallettsville." Captain said, "Oh, praise the Lord." He said, "That's still in my area." (laughs)

Byron Johnson (00:21:04):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:21:04):

He says, "As of in the morning, you are transferred for the betterment of the department to Hallettsville, Texas." And they told me that Horstmann looked at him funny, and Captain said, "You don't know what that means, do you?" And he said, "No." He said, "That means you don't have to pay for the move."

Byron Johnson (00:21:22):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:21:24):

So my partner said, "If you do this for me, I will stay in Hallettsville my whole career and I will cause no problems for anybody in the department of public safety." He stayed there 34 years.

Byron Johnson (00:21:37):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:21:38):

And there was never one thing that ever happened that had any kind of discredit to it at all. And he got involved in that Lutheran church in Hallettsville, and every time they opened the door he was there, and he was a strong, strong Lutheran and raised his family that way.

Byron Johnson (00:22:03):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:22:03):

That was DPS, back in that day.

Byron Johnson (00:22:05):

Hmm. Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:22:07):

Would they do that now? I don't know.

Byron Johnson (00:22:09):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:22:10):

But they did it back then. Then, uh, he worked 34 years there, or 35? 34, 35 before he retired.

Byron Johnson (00:22:21):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:22:23):

True story. Herbert Weeks was a good guy. I stopped a woman one day. She was... I had a radar then and she pegged that nail and bounced, I thought she was gonna break it.

Byron Johnson (00:22:36):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:22:37):

I didn't even know it was a woman. It was just a car. And by the time I caught her, she was halfway to Victoria.

Byron Johnson (00:22:44):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:22:45):

And she saw me and she pulled over and when I walked up to the car, she was bawling out both eyes and snot was running and I thought, "Mm, mm-mm, mm." I tried to talk to her. I talked to her for a long time. Couldn't figure out what was wrong with her. She wouldn't say. And I said, "You have any-" I went through my seven step violator contact, which you-

Byron Johnson (00:23:07):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:23:08):

Called it birth(?), I think. And I said, "Do you have any reason at all to be running this fast?" I said "Do you even know how fast you were running?" She said, "No." "You got any reason to be speeding?" And she said, "No." She says, "Do what you need to do." I wrote her a ticket and talked to her a while longer and she quit crying and I let her go and said, "Please don't drive this fast. Where are you going, anyway?" "I'm going back to Corpus Christi." I said, "Please don't drive this fast. Y- you're gonna blow a tire out, turn that car over, and kill yourself."

(00:23:44):

Anyway, she went on, and about, I don't know, ten days later I guess, I got a call and it's Captain Weeks. And he said, "You stopped a lady on Highway 77, name was so-and-so?" And I said, "Yes, I remember her." He said, "What was she doing?" And I said, "Well, all my radar could show was 100. But it was bouncing the needle, I thought it was gonna break it." He said, "What was wrong with her?" I said, "I don't know. She was crying. She never would tell me."

(00:24:18):

He said, "Let me tell you a story about a woman." I said, "Okay." He said, "There's a woman that's a secretary in my church. She's lost her husband and her family. They're all gone. She got nowhere to go. God is her only hope and she hasn't found exactly where she needs to be yet." And I said, "So you telling me maybe I oughta kinda dismiss-" And he said, "No, son. I'm not telling to do that. I'm telling you, did you do what your heart tells you to do?"

(00:24:54):

I said, "All right." I hung up the phone, called the judge and dismissed it. He asked me why, and I told him and he said, "I don't have any problem with that. She's not from here, I'm not worried about her." Well, anyway, that's Captain Weeks.

Byron Johnson (00:25:11):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:25:11):

He wouldn't say, "You need to dismiss this." He'd say, "You do what your heart tells you to do." So I dismissed it. It's the only one I can remember I ever dismissed. And Horstmann, when he wrote a ticket, if it went to court and if it was from Houston, it always went to court because they always worked for NASA.

Byron Johnson (00:25:35):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:25:35):

And they figured they could analyze things a whole lot better than anybody else. And they knew a whole lot more than them Germans and Bohemians. And they lost every case they ever took to court.

Byron Johnson (00:25:49):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:25:51):

And those local people, they would tell them defense lawyers, "If Mr. Horstmann said this happened, it happened. We have no doubt in our mind."

Byron Johnson (00:26:05):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:26:05):

And so I held him, oh, God. There was a real famous lawyer, mm, not up here right now. Mm, mm, mm. High dollar lawyer. He took a NASA engineer to court in Lavaca County. Racehorse Haynes. And beat him.

Byron Johnson (00:26:27):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:26:29):

Beat him in court. so...

Eric Richard (00:26:36):

Uh, do you recall what equipment you had when you were in the rangers?

Johnnie Aycock (00:26:40):

Yeah. Quite a bit more. We had a rifle, shotgun, pistol, mm, camera. Wasn't a very good one, but camera. Binoculars. And ammunition for all of it. A lot of ammunition. They expected-

Johnnie Aycock (00:27:03):

They expected, Rangers expected you to be able to use what you carried and be adequate with it. And they would ... And in Highway Patrol we would go to Victoria once a month and shoot, every month, all of us.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:27:04]

Byron Johnson (00:27:22):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:27:24):

And we would shoot a normal course and if a passing score was 70, you had to make 85 to pass Captain [Week's 00:27:34] standard. And, uh, we all did, even horsemen with a shot up hand. And, um, in the Rangers, we qualified maybe every three, four, five months maybe, but it was a two-day affair usually. And they expected, whenever you was shooting they expected it to be serious shooting and not any horseplay. But when you weren't shooting, well it was, you know, jokes and talks and barbecues, camaraderie and all that. Narcotics, same way. We had, uh, we had a, I had a 38, let's see. The supervisors had a 38 Special two inch and a 45 automatic and the agents had a 38 Special for a while then they went to a Model 66 Magnum, plus whatever you wanted to carry that you were comfortable with that you could qualify with. I don't care what it was, you had to qualify with it. And, uh, though most of us had 1911's and Brownings and ... But the issue gun was a revolver in narcotics. Shotgun was an Ithaca and if you had a rifle it was a .30-06 Winchester, if you had one. Everybody didn't have a rifle in narcotics, didn't need one.

Byron Johnson (00:29:14):

John, what was the theory behind why, why they issued some people automatics and some, uh, some, uh, revolvers?

Johnnie Aycock (00:29:22):

The revolvers were for the street agents and they felt like we could hide a revolver better than we could a government model gun.

Byron Johnson (00:29:32):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:29:32):

It wasn't accurate but that's was the thinking in Austin.

Byron Johnson (00:29:39):

Okay.

Johnnie Aycock (00:29:40):

And, uh, these 45s, oh man, they, they go back to World War I and World War II and, um, Texas Highway Department. Some of them, some of them were their initial guns that the Highway Patrol had, some of them. And their deal was when the guns get turned in, the gun people would go through them, rebuild them if they had to, make sure they were accurate and they'd work, and then they would put them back in supply to save money.

Byron Johnson (00:30:18):

For reissue, yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:30:19):

Yep. And then Rangers, most of us had 30-30 Winchesters, saddle guns. Most of us had those. Mm-hmm. When I, when they finally turned those in a lot of us bought them. I ended up, I buy, I bought two. I still got one of them, one of them got stolen.

Byron Johnson (00:30:46):

Hm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:30:48):

Never found it but I've got one of them still. And those guns were interesting. DPS ordered those weapons, 3030s, and the war was going on, I want to say Korea, I can't remember. So Winchester and everybody else was making carbines for the Army so they went back on parts that they had leftover from World War II guns and they put together those guns for DPS's contract. At the same time, they were making carbines and M1 Garands for the government. They were, somebody somewhere was putting together pieces to satisfy DPS because of the border cause the government was worried that we were going to get Germans and Japanese and all kinds of stuff coming across that river and they wanted DPS to have some kind of weapon to be able to stop it.

Byron Johnson (00:31:54):

Right.

Johnnie Aycock (00:31:55):

Um, that's the story I was told.

Byron Johnson (00:31:58):

Hm.

Eric Richard (00:32:01):

Uh, do you recall where y'all had, where y'all got your horses from? Whether from DPS or-

Johnnie Aycock (00:32:05):

Mm-hmm, we had, um, Rangers had some horse trailers. None of the rest of us did particularly. [To Rusty Bloxom] Can you open that [waterbottle]? Boy I can't do too good. Uh, but it's interesting, the Highway Patrol supervisor's cars, they were, the DPS narcotic supervisor's cars and the Rangers cars all had trailer hitches on them. And, man, the Rangers didn't have, I bet they didn't have over three or four, um, horse trailers. I don't remember exactly but I've seen them a couple of times but I never saw anybody pulling one. But, but everybody had a trailer hitch. So the thought was, if you need to be somewhere on horseback, you go get you a trailer and hook it up and go on. And so prison, because of my contact with prison, I always had access to horses if I wanted them from them. And then later on, when I went in the Rangers we were doing things up with TDC, we always used their horses. And if I needed a horse, which was really very seldom ever, all I had to do is call a warden at Gatesville, next thing you know I got two or three of them showing up in a trailer with a bunch of horses saying, "Where do you want 'em? Your saddle or mine?" You know?

(00:33:41):

So, anyway, the horses ... Now, early days with the Rangers, I don't know how they did that. I've heard but I don't know if it's right they had their own horses and the state furnished the money for the feed if I remember right.

Byron Johnson (00:33:58):

This museum was, I got, we've got the early diagrams for this museum and it shows a corral out back designed to have horses in it. I don't think they ever built it or they ever did it but it, it was on the original plans that were supposed to have been built.

Johnnie Aycock (00:34:14):

It was there for aesthetics maybe, yeah. Be surprised how many of em don't know how to ride now.

Byron Johnson (00:34:22):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:34:22):

Unbelievable- When I left in 01 there were eight of us that, to my memory, I might be wrong it might have been a few more but there were eight of us that could work as a cowboy, throw around rope, castrate, ride horses, there were eight of us, that's it. So it was already starting to go away. The Ranger in Laredo and the one in Uvalde, they were big team ropers and they roped all over, when they weren't working law enforcement they were roping somewhere. The boy in Abilene was the same way, he was, he was a roper also, him and the warden at Abilene TDC, they roped together a lot. Yeah. Doyle Holdridge was in Laredo, he's the one I swapped with and he finished his career in Laredo and I finished mine in Bell, Coryell County. He finished his under Jack Dean, I guess. No, Charlie Havrda [00:35:44], Jack Dean had already come and gone I guess. And I finished mine under, god, who was here, Dendy [00:35:55]. Yeah.

(00:35:56):

I had Bob Mitchell, Bobby Prince, Joe Wiley, Kirby Dendy. I had four Ranger captains I worked for, worked with, worked for. Sergeants, I, Jack Dean, hm, Clete Buckaloo, Joe Wiley was one, he was a Sergeant before he was a Captain, I can't remember any more right off the top of my head. That's like where I use that at, it's just not there. Hm. Ain't that horrible? Hm.

Eric Richard (00:36:54):

Did you do any law enforcement work following your retirement from the Rangers?

Johnnie Aycock (00:36:58):

No, I got asked, I got pressured, I didn't want it. Uh, people showed up at my house, I don't remember the year, they wanted me to run for Sheriff of Coryell County and I listened to them, very patiently listened to them, wife and I both, and I told them, I said, "I'm through, I'm tired of it. I don't want to see anybody else bleeding. Uh, thanks but no thanks." Said, "Well, we've already got the money together." I said, "What are you talking about?" "We got the money together to pay your fee and we've already got enough votes to get you elected." I said, "I don't want it." So a man got elected sheriff, he came back to my living room, he sat in a chair and he said, "I gotta have a Chief Deputy and you're it." I said, "No I'm not." "Well, why not?" And I said, "I told you before, I'm through. I don't want it. You need me I'll come help you but I ain't going to work no more for that." Okay, he left. He lasted a term or two. Here come the next guy, same thing. I didn't want to do it and I didn't do it. He got elected, he said, "I need a Chief Deputy." I said, "It ain't me."

(00:38:38):

So, but since you brought that up, Bob Mitchell, Bob Mitchell called me to Waco one time and all the way over there I'm thinking, mm-hmm, what have I done now? And I got over here and we had coffee and sat in his office and he shut the door, which didn't happen very often and I thought, oh this is not good for the boy. And he said, "Look here, you don't have to work as hard as you're working. Don't take me wrong, I don't mean you not to work at all. What I mean is you don't need to do all you've been doing. You're doing too much." I said, "Cap, I can't not do too much. Too many things are going on, people calling me, stuff happening all around me. I gotta be involved in it." He said, "This is going to eat your ass up. Sooner or later, you're going to get too heavy on the top end." And he said, "I've seen it before."

(00:39:55):

He said, "You find you something that those agencies over there don't have and you go learn it and that might get you out of some of the stuff that you're in and so forth." I said, I said, "What do you suggest?" "Oh," he said, "whatever it is. You know those agencies." But he said, "You gotta, I want you to find something." He said, "Go fishing." I said, "Well, I don't fish." He said, "Go hunting." I said, "Well I don't hunt unless I'm hungry." "Dammit boy" he says, "Get away from this job." And I said, "Okay." So I go and I look and I look and I look and I look and the only thing those people over there didn't have was bloodstain. They didn't have anybody to interpret bloodstain for them. So I called Captain Mitchell and I

told him that and he said, "I'm familiar with that. We used to have people that did that. They're all gone now" but he said, uh, "Yeah" he said "Find out what it's going to cost me."

(00:41:06):

So I lined out, talked to some folks. One of them is a guy named Tom Bevell from Oklahoma, Choctaw Indian, Vietnam Vet, 25th Division, won a Silver Star. And, uh, talked to him, he said, "Well, I'll train you." I said, "What's that going to cost?" He gave me a price and he said, "That's my" how did he put it, "That's my family price." I said, "Okay, all right then." So I go to my DA and I ask him what's your thoughts? And he said, "Absolutely. You tell me how much it is and I'll write a check." Oh, okay. I go call Captain Mitchell and I tell him what I decided on, he said, "Wonderful, wonderful. How much is it going to cost me?" I said, "Nothing." He said, "Even better, even better."

Eric Richard (00:42:01):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:42:02):

And so I went and got trained and all that did was put me involved in more stuff. I mean I didn't see it but, man, if you're a bloodstain guy, whatever violence, something happens they want you there.

Byron Johnson (00:42:18):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:42:20):

And then you gotta testify, that's a whole nother proposition. And basically bloodstain is like a tree and you're at a level on that tree with your learning, you're not below that level and you're not above that level. And if you can use what you learned and you can testify on your level and not go nuts and get off on some limb you hadn't been on before, you'll last forever. If you start getting above your tree line, you ain't going to be long for the law enforcement world because they're going to overturn you, you're going to get chastised, you're going to get talked about, DPS is going to have to cut you loose. And so that was something Bevell also taught me, Tom Bevell. David Miller and I did that blood work and, uh, Chuck Cox, did it. And when I left, I got so many offers and these were very, very serious offers. We're talking minimum \$5,000 a case minimum and testimony was even more, but it was for the defense.

Byron Johnson (00:43:44):

Yeah, who-

Johnnie Aycock (00:43:44):

And I wouldn't do it. And looking back on it, the evidence is the same whether it's prosecution or defense but it just wasn't in me to try to get a guilty guy off. If he's guilty he needs convicted and that's up to a jury, not up to me. So I never did go to work for the defense but-

Byron Johnson (00:44:09):

When I got here back in 1996 they were still talking about you and your expertise in that area.

Johnnie Aycock (00:44:14):

Huh?

Byron Johnson (00:44:15):

I said when I got here back in 1996 they were still talking about you and your expertise in that area.

Johnnie Aycock (00:44:22):

Yeah, it was hard learned but it, and it was, it was really hard learned. I mean you, eh, if you have a theory and bloodstain, you need to know how to set it up and how to experiment and how to either prove your theory or disprove it. Either way works. If you disprove it that means what you think happened couldn't have happened, you need to figure out what did happen.

Byron Johnson (00:44:47):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (00:44:48):

And that's the way you prove it is through experimentation and books and other's experiments, redoing them. And all that takes time. I don't know how many times at 4:00 in the morning I'm throwing blood in my carport with extra lights up to try to figure out what I'm doing wrong or what he did wrong or whatever. Anyways, but Mitchell, that's another thing now. Mitchell got back ahold to me after about a year and he said, "What are you doing for pleasure?" I said, "Are you really asking me things like that?"

Byron Johnson (00:45:28):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:45:29):

He said, "No, no, no" but he said, "What, eh, uh, what are you doing?" He said, "You gotta, you gotta get away from this, John." "Only thing I know to do," I said, "I know some people in the music business and they're all the time needing somebody to go travel with somebody and do security for them." And I said, "It ain't that hard really." He said, "Get after it, uh, get, uh, what do you gotta do?" I said, "Well, I'll get ahold of the right people and, and sign a, you know, get it authorized where I can travel." He says, "Go, do it."

(00:46:12):

So Lone Wolf Productions out of Austin sent a, uh, thing to Captain Mitchell that showed him what my duties would be, you know, and Captain Mitchell knew who these people were but he never really met them. He knew they were honest. And, uh, one, one of the bands was going to be ZZ Top and Mitchell

said, "Huh-uh, we ain't putting that on paper." He said, "If Austin sees that, somebody up there will have a stroke." He said, "Just put Lone Wolf Production security for concert," he said, "That'll work." So that's what I did and that's what everybody approved. And I started traveling with ZZ some and anytime I got pent-up and I had a break or something I'd call, I'd call, uh, Lone Wolf Productions' Bill Hamm and I'd tell him, "You know, I got a week and need to kind of get away for a while." He'd say, "I'll send you a ticket." And then I'm gone. It's either Clint Black or ZZ Top or some other band that Hamm was handling or, um, some group somewhere. You know, worked around Willie several times, became real close friends with him. He could-

Byron Johnson (00:47:39):

Wind up working with George Strait at one point didn't you?

Johnnie Aycock (00:47:42):

Yeah. Yeah. George never paid me and I never asked him for any money. It was an honor for me just to be beside the guy. And I found out later on he felt the same way about me.

Byron Johnson (00:47:57):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:47:58):

And, uh, you know, I don't know, he, he was, he was good. I knew all those guys with George. See, those, they were kind of a family. All his guys were in college with him. His road manager, his big manager in Nashville, his record man and production person in Houston. All of those guys were all, they grew up with George Strait, pretty much, from San Marcos, from the college town. And so he didn't have, actually he didn't have that many people working for him that he didn't personally know and had known for years. And, you know, back in the day I was kind of an exception to it and I got along with all those guys and they got along with me and they knew what I did for a living. Never, never inter, it never interfered with it. None of them ever, ever asked me for a favor. None of them ever, ever ... I had a couple of them call me on things that had occurred and want my opinion on something, but nobody's ever ... You know, I never had to go out on a limb for any of them. They knew better than to do that, I guess, out of respect.

(00:49:14):

And that's like Willie. If something was going on in the bus and I kind of wanted to get up on the bus and visit with Willie, he'd tell me, "Come on up here. You're welcome. But you might see something you might not want to see."

Byron Johnson (00:49:26):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:49:26):

I'd say, "Well, why don't I just wait a while." He said, " I'll come get you." And in a little while, he'd come get me and say, "Come on, let's play cards or whatever, dominoes." Biggest hearted guy I ever met. Still is as far as I know. Yep. Anyways, that's how, that's how I got in that music stuff. Mitchell wanted something to get me away from blood and guts for a little while.

Eric Richard (00:50:02):

I think that's all my main DPS questions. Do you have any more Vietnam questions?

Rusty Bloxom (00:50:05):

Um, oh, just filling in some blanks. Uh, when you first joined the Army where did you do your basic training?

Johnnie Aycock (00:50:12):

Fort Polk.

Rusty Bloxom (00:50:17):

Fort Polk?

Johnnie Aycock (00:50:17):

Mm-hmm. And AIT, it was Fort Sill. [AIT= Advanced Individual Training]

Rusty Bloxom (00:50:25):

Let's see. Most of what I had, uh, you sorta answered in the process of, uh, telling your story. And you talked, at lunch you talked about working with the SEALs because of the PRU and the-

Johnnie Aycock (00:50:37):

Yeah, this, what happened with that early on, uh, uh, really I'm not going to go, won't go into depth of it, but we, myself, the Major, the medic and seven Vietnamese, that's 10 of us, we walked at night to an area to get ahold of a village chief. Well, the Navy was also in that area and we probably walked right through them without ever seeing them. And we made contact with this person and my radio got to clicking. When the Vietnamese officer and the Major had the guy off in the corner, doing what they were doing, um, my radio got to clicking in my ear and I clicked back. And it was a brevity call sign and that's a SEAL Team. And they wanted to come in to where we were, I think three or four of them, three I think. It was Frank, Frank Toms, T-O-M-S, a Lieutenant named Tony Friedley, and Jackie Lee.

(00:52:05):

and they told me, on the radio, they told me how they were going to approach and they asked me to have the Vietnamese put their weapons down. And, uh, these Vietnamese, we felt like we could depend on, but they were dressed in black pajamas and had rubber shoes. And we were dressed in, I think, camouflage or I can't remember now, I think. And they were in the lead. So if, and I think we did, when

we walked through those guys I don't know why they didn't kill them and us too because those guys looked like VC.

Rusty Bloxom (00:53:04):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:53:06):

And that's the way we worked at night. You can't see black at night. And, uh, so anyway, here come the SEALs. Uh, the Lieutenant, I didn't know him at the time, I later learned who he was, Friedley, but he goes to talk to the Major. I don't know whether he told the Major they were coming, and they visited for a pretty good while actually. And this guy kept looking at me from the side and in a minute he called me by name. I said, "Wait a minute" (laughs) "No." I go up to the light. He had all that stuff on and I said, "Who are you anyway?" And he took all his stuff off his head and it was Frank Toms and that's a boy I went to school with.

Rusty Bloxom (00:53:58):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:01):

8000 miles from anybody.

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:02):

Eight thousand miles from anybody, those two meet up, in a jungle like that.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:54:04]

Rusty Bloxom (00:54:06):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:08):

So, when we got done with that, they... They pulled back the way they came, and they, they, we gave 'em time and they got out of the area, and we started figuring out how to get back. Also, walking. And Major and I are talking, he said, "John, this ain't workin'." (laughs). I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Man." He said, "You realize how bad that could have been?" Yeah, think I do. He said, "I talked to that Lieutenant. He's gonna talk to his captain." Their captain's the same rank as a major.

Rusty Bloxom (00:54:49):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:54:50):

Navy captain. And, he said, "We gotta start, we gotta start sharing some intel. Because, we're gonna kill each other. Either they're gonna get us at night, or we're gonna get them in the daytime. Something bad is gonna happen." And, uh, you know, he said, "We can't tell what we're doing in that airstrike. And if we think they're VC, we're gonna take 'em out, and uh-"

Rusty Bloxom (00:55:13):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:16):

"And, might not, might be a SEAL team." Hmm. So, we had meetings and that, and we started, we started sharing intelligence. And then, if it was in our area that we had worked a lot, and we knew about, we would go with them at night. And, if it was something that we needed to do in the daytime, and we thought we needed them for support from the big boats out on the ocean-

Rusty Bloxom (00:55:42):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:55:42):

They had sixteen-inch guns out there. And, uh, they did not operate in the daytime very much but sometimes they would for us. And there's always different ones. There's two SEAL teams that work 6 months at a whack. SEAL Team 1 and SEAL Team 2. And, uh, we worked with both of them off and on. Now, not all the time, no. But, we worked with both of them. And, uh, one morning, this is kind of a sidebar story, but, ends up being a good story. One morning, a group of them was going out to insert... They were in a metal boat, steel boat. They were going to transfer to a smaller boat, an insert. And a sear pin slipped out of a stoner machine gun, and the gun starting firing and fell on the deck. And it was firing in a circle-

Rusty Bloxom (00:56:42):

Oh. Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:56:43):

And, it caught Frankie Toms from one ankle all the way across his body. And, the other boy that owned it, realized what happened, he fell on it. And, the only thing holding him together was his spine.

Byron Johnson (00:56:58):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:56:58):

And, when the gun run out of shells, it quit shootin'. Well, they called another boat in quick that had a, I think, had a doctor. They got Frank on it first, my understanding is, and he died. And, the other one,

Pope. A boy named Jackie Lee, also from San Angelo was passing Pope to the other boat, and Pope turned and looked at them and said, "See ya on the other side." Shut his eyes and died. Well, so. Lieutenant was told Frank died. He saw Pope die. They're dead. Well, what happened was... When the boat pulled away, the doctor brought Frankie back. And when they got to another station that had more intense medical, I think he died a second time, and he died a third time in surgery. They brought him back every time, but that don't matter. He was dead to the Lieutenant.

Rusty Bloxom (00:58:03):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (00:58:04):

So, a day or so later, they come up the canal, where I lived. My canal. They got off the boat, long-faced. All of them. They got ahold of the major out the back, where we was sleeping. And they told him, "Frankie Toms been killed, and we don't know how to tell Aycock. We feel like we owe it to him." Major said, "He's a grown man. Tell him." Well they came to me and they told me.

Rusty Bloxom (00:58:36):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:58:38):

Messed me up, pretty bad, and I told the Lieutenant, "Well, he died doing what he chose to do." And I said, "This ain't the end of it. I promise you." And we both smiled at each other. They knew what that meant.

Rusty Bloxom (00:58:53):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:58:54):

They went on about their business. All my time there, Frank's gone. All I had was memories. Him and Pope both, really. Mainly Frankie. So, I was in the Rangers. And I got a telephone call. It was a retired, or he might've been active duty, I can't remember... Ranger out in San Angelo. He also had won the Medal of Valor. And he said, uh, "John," he said, "My church... Some people in my church got ahold of me, and there's two Navy SEALs out here hunting you, and I ain't telling them where you are, I know how you are. But, you interested in talking to them?" I said, "Yes." I said, "Who are they?" "I heard one of them's named Frank Toms." And I said, "Mm mm, no. He's dead." I said, "You know, it ain't unusual for people to claim they are when they ain't."

Rusty Bloxom (00:59:57):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (00:59:58):

You know, said, "I, I'd look at him a little closer. Do you want me to come out there?" "No, no, no. No, I'll do it." "Okay." Couple hours later, he called me back and he said, "Can I run some stuff by you?" And I said, "Sure." Well, one of the stories is the one I just told you, and another one's even in more depth than that that happened, and that other Ranger said, "Did these things happen?" And I said, "Yeah, both of them did." He said, "John, worked with you thirty years and never knew any of this stuff." I said, "You never asked me." (laughs) And he said, "Boy, I don't know who these SEALs are, but they know those stories, and if they weren't there, I don't know how they'd know them, 'cause you ain't talking." I said, "No, I ain't talking."

(01:00:44):

So he give me a phone number. And I give it a little while and I said, "You know, I'm the police, and I got a badge. I got a gun. I got a state car. I can handle this." And I called that phone number, and it's Frankie Toms that answered it. He was alive.

Byron Johnson (01:01:06):

Mm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:08):

And he never knew that the Lieutenant had come told us he'd been killed.

Byron Johnson (01:01:13):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:14):

'Cause once he got removed from that-

Byron Johnson (01:01:16):

Uh, yeah. He's-

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:16):

He's, he-

Rusty Bloxom (01:01:16):

Everybody went their own direction.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:19):

He's tryin' to survive.

Byron Johnson (01:01:21):

Mm hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:22):

He's the most shot-up Navy SEAL alive on this earth today.

Byron Johnson (01:01:26):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:29):

Frank Toms. You met him. We had coffee.

Byron Johnson (01:01:31):

We had lunch that one day.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:36):

Frank Toms. San Angelo, Texas.

Byron Johnson (01:01:43):

How's he doing these days?

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:45):

You know, pretty good. He's had some surgeries that helped his... He had a 12-hour surgery on his back. And that helped him some, and he's due another one pretty quick on... I think, a hip or something.

Byron Johnson (01:01:58):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:01:59):

But he's still around.

Byron Johnson (01:02:02):

That's remarkable.

Johnnie Aycock (01:02:03):

Yeah. He sure is. So, a year or two... Mm, less than that. Six months after I got that phone call, Frankie wanted me to come to California. I said, "What am I going to do out there?" I said, "That place is full of you-know-what," and Frank said, "Oh, they ain't all that-a-way, come on out here. I got some people that want to see you." I said, "What people?" He said, "Man, just come on." So I loaded up and went out there. And he had a Vietnam-era SEAL party at his house. And I've never been... mm... It was a long night. Long, long, long night.

(01:02:51):

And, the next morning, a bunch of those guys got with me and they said, "You need to apply for our association." And I said, "Man, I... I'm not a SEAL." "You let us handle it." I said, "Yeah, but, I never was trained." They said, "You let us handle it." "No... I remember everything in God's earth," I said, "I don't qualify." And, anyway, I put it off. And they kept on, and kept on. Finally, I went ahead and did it, 'cause I wanted to. And, I called that president in Virginia, and I said, "Look, I don't qualify. I know I don't. Y'all go ahead and do what you gotta do. Turn me down. It's okay. You're not gonna hurt my feelings. I'm doing this 'cause them guys are on me about it." "You let us handle it." Ok.

(01:03:46):

Next call I got, they'd had a board meeting, and it was unanimous, and I'm a member.

Byron Johnson (01:03:53):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (01:03:53):

And I found out since, there are 3 army men that are members of their association. The other 2 are special forces people that set up the initial training for BUD/S. [BUD/S = Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (training)]

Rusty Bloxom (01:04:05):

Oh, okay. Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:06):

And then later came back and went through the training as a recruit. Nobody knew who they were. And they finished that training. And so they're able to wear a Trident on their uniform. Army uniform.

Byron Johnson (01:04:17):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:22):

And, and me. There's 2, 2 colonels and myself who are members. That's it.

Byron Johnson (01:04:29):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:29):

What an honor.

Rusty Bloxom (01:04:31):

That... I... Yeah. When I saw the pictures of you at the reunion, wearing the, the shirt with the bud-

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:36):

Mm-hmm.

Rusty Bloxom (01:04:36):

B-Budweiser. Uh, I did, I thought, "For the guys on the teams, to give that to somebody-

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:46):

Mm-hmm.

Rusty Bloxom (01:04:47):

-that was not actually a member of the team..." That's exactly what I thought. That is an honor I had never heard of.

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:52):

Yeah. I hadn't either.

Rusty Bloxom (01:04:54):

Yeah. That's...

Johnnie Aycock (01:04:55):

And I think a few got on me the other day wanted me to come out there, to today and a couple other days, and, for the past, and I couldn't do it. Estelle's sick, and I can't leave her. And he understands that. But he's going to have another Vietnam-era party at his house and he said, "We're all gonna miss you." You know. Anyway, that, that's my association. So when I said the other night that I'm a member of their association because they want me to be...

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:22):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:23):

That's true.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:24):

Yeah, mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:26):

So.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:26):

That's-

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:26):

Very proud of that membership.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:28):

That's-

Byron Johnson (01:05:28):

It's an honor.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:28):

That's amazing.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:28):

Oh, yeah.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:32):

One of my students gave me a SEAL Team 2 ball cap, but I promise you, I never put it on.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:37):

You can wear it.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:37):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:37):

If they gave it to you.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:37):

Yep. Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:42):

You can wear it. I mean, as long as you don't go around telling them that's what you are.

Byron Johnson (01:05:44):

Hmm.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:45):

Well, I just- just telling' Eric this morning-

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:47):

Takes one phone call (laughs), that's all it takes to figure out you ain't (laughs).

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:50):

That, that former Navy, or that former SEAL Senior Chief, Don Shipley-

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:55):

Mm-hmm.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:55):

-who tracks down fake SEALs?

Johnnie Aycock (01:05:57):

Mm-hmm.

Rusty Bloxom (01:05:57):

He was a student of mine on my last deployment. So, uh, yeah, I don't want to get on Don's-

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:02):

I think he's, I think he knows me.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:04):

Probably does.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:05):

And I know he knows Frank Toms.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:08):

Yeah, I've, I don't want to get on Don's list for any reason other than he remembers taking my class (laughs). That's-

Byron Johnson (01:06:15):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:15):

You don't want on any of 'ems list, that's for sure.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:16):

Um, when you were in Vietnam, did you take any R&R leave?

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:19):

Yes.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:20):

Where'd you go?

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:23):

Hmm. Hmm. R&R, no.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:27):

Okay.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:29):

But, when you extend, they give you a 30-day leave.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:36):

Uh huh.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:36):

And you can take it wherever you want. I came to San Angelo to check on my mother, and went to Japan and over to Australia.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:40):

Okay.

Byron Johnson (01:06:40):

Huh.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:43):

Spent a month in each place.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:46):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:47):

Yep.

Byron Johnson (01:06:48):

Where'd you go in Japan?

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:48):

Hmm?

Byron Johnson (01:06:50):

Where did you go in Japan?

Johnnie Aycock (01:06:55):

You know, I can't... Tokyo, I think. But, I, you know, Japan got old pretty quick for me. Too many people.

Rusty Bloxom (01:06:59):

Hmm.

Byron Johnson (01:06:59):

Yeah.

Rusty Bloxom (01:07:00):

Did you ever work with any of the Australians that were in Vietnam?

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:04):

I did. Worked with some of the Navy guys.

Rusty Bloxom (01:07:05):

Uh huh.

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:05):

And, uh, yeah. When I met them, when I took that leave to Australia, they were out by then. But they were there. You know. And I called them, of course we had a reunion and everything.

Rusty Bloxom (01:07:20):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:21):

And, you know, there were some pretty... man... you don't want to get in a drinking match with an Aussie

Rusty Bloxom (01:07:26):

(laughs)

Byron Johnson (01:07:26):

(laughs)

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:26):

(laughs) You gonna lose. I don't care what your stomach's made of, it ain't strong as theirs.

Rusty Bloxom (01:07:34):

Uh, total time, First Infantry Division, and you're three tours with Team 52. How, how much time were you in Vietnam altogether?

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:41):

It's on that DD214, and it will say, uh... Somewhere right in there it'll say.

Rusty Bloxom (01:07:47):

Okay.

Johnnie Aycock (01:07:48):

Off, uh,] it'll say foreign service or whatever.

Rusty Bloxom (01:08:01):

Okay, yeah, there it is.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:01):

Hmm. See when I enlisted, I enlisted airborne.

Rusty Bloxom (01:08:04):

Yeah.

Eric Richard (01:08:04):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:05):

And when I made it through basic, I talked to a drill instructor pretty deeply about it all. And he said, "Airborne's going to take you 6-8 weeks, maybe longer. You gonna have additional training, gonna have some AIT training," he said, "Hell, you ain't going to Vietnam for 18 months." Said, "If you just go along the normal way, be there pretty quick." And I said, "Let's go there." Pretty quick. That's what I did.

Rusty Bloxom (01:08:32):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:32):

My whole thing for enlisting was doing my part for the government.

Rusty Bloxom (01:08:36):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:36):

'Cause of my daddy had done it. He was in Patton's army. My uncle was in the Navy. One of 'em was in the Air Force, and they were all heroes in my book. And it was my turn.

Rusty Bloxom (01:08:50):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:08:51):

And so, you know, [inaudible 01:08:53] around here, and tryin to get a deferment, or spraining an ankle, or spending time in training that might or might not ever help you. Yeah. Yeah, I wasn't interested in that.

Rusty Bloxom (01:09:03):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:03):

I was wanting to go on, and I went on (laughs).

Rusty Bloxom (01:09:11):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:11):

Well. Anyway.

(01:09:11):

Lucky.

(01:09:14):

I told them, told some guys one time, and it's, you know, in 18 months I lost 4 guys. In 6 months, SEAL Team 1 lost 17.

Rusty Bloxom (01:09:27):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:28):

And the 25th division, in less time than that, lost a whole bunch more. I learned that from [inaudible 01:09:36] So, my friends lost friends, just like I've lost friends.

Byron Johnson (01:09:41):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:43):

We've got a lot in common.

Rusty Bloxom (01:09:46):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:09:46):

You know? And the SEAL guys, they don't talk about things like that. When they talk about Pope as a big, ol' happy-go-lucky farm boy, this and that and the other. They talk about some of the other things, motorcycle guys and this and that. But they don't, they don't dwell... Now, at home, they might dwell on it. But they don't dwell on it when they're out in public.

Rusty Bloxom (01:10:11):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:14):

And unless it's a group of them together, unless somebody brings it up, they ain't going to talk. And DELTA's even worse. DELTA won't say nothing. I've got friends that were in DELTA.

Byron Johnson (01:10:25):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:25):

They won't talk about that stuff.

Byron Johnson (01:10:27):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:29):

They won't sit around and talk. And I hadn't talked about it until this happened. Nobody in DPS knew anything, what y'all know now. Most of my family didn't know. So. The only reason I'm talking now is 'cause it's history, and you know I have... Somebody keeps reporting that my official bio has me one year in Vietnam in the First Division.

Byron Johnson (01:10:52):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:53):

I wished I could find that official bio and shove it somewhere.

Byron Johnson (01:10:58):

(laughs) Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:10:58):

'Cause it's wrong.

Rusty Bloxom (01:10:59):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:01):

If you're gonna report something, report the truth.

Byron Johnson (01:11:03):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:03):

That's my thoughts.

Rusty Bloxom (01:11:05):

Well, the personnel folks at First Division probably said, "Okay, here's... That's all we know," and, the rest of it, since-

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:17):

No, that's something either out of here, or out of there.

Rusty Bloxom (01:11:21):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:22):

This office or that office.

Rusty Bloxom (01:11:23):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:24):

I don't know which office, but somewhere there is an official bio.

Byron Johnson (01:11:29):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:29):

And the newspapers are quoting that official bio.

Byron Johnson (01:11:32):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:33):

And they got the time wrong.

Byron Johnson (01:11:34):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:36):

And something needs to change on that, I think. I don't know.

Byron Johnson (01:11:38):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:40):

I don't know whose bio it is.

Byron Johnson (01:11:41):

(laughs) But it's not yours.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:43):

Don't know who wrote it, but I had a l-lot longer than one year.

Rusty Bloxom (01:11:48):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:48):

And those tours were back-to-back in Vietnam.

Rusty Bloxom (01:11:52):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:11:54):

And I had a choice, you know. I really did have a choice. Actually, I had 3 choices. I could either stay in and go to special forces, try to make it. I could extend up until my out-date for the army, and then I could sign a contract. You know, I mean those contracts are pretty common now. Back then, they weren't that common. But I could sign a contract, and I could work for an agency, stay on Team 52, get paid by that agency, and still be under the umbrella of the army. But I wouldn't be in the army.

Rusty Bloxom (01:12:33):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:12:34):

And I had that choice. Along with the other, the others, and we talked about it a long time. My old man said, "You know if you gonna stay in the army, let me get you examined." And he said, "You gonna pass it, and then you gotta work." He said, "It's up to you. I can't get past you that, past that. I can get that for you. And I'll do that. And I can do it." But, he said, "If you're not going to do that, go home. Don't be signing no contract with no 3-letter agency." He said, "In my opinion, that's a mistake." I said, "Okay."

(01:13:23):

I mean, they offered me all kinds of, the army offered me E6 for 30-day extension. E7 for a second 30-day extension, and then, my time would be up in the army. Then I had to either reenlist or sign that contract.

Byron Johnson (01:13:40):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:13:40):

Yeah. I couldn't look it. And it'd be so much different now. I wouldn't, none of this would ever, DPS wouldn't have happened.

Rusty Bloxom (01:13:50):

Yeah.

Byron Johnson (01:13:50):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:13:51):

Those children, I wouldn't have been able to help those kids. I would have never met y'all. I mean.

Byron Johnson (01:13:59):

Life has it's own direction.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:03):

Yeah, it does. Works out, doesn't it?

Byron Johnson (01:14:06):

Yep. Anything else Rusty? We don't want to hold John up, so-

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:07):

No, you're not holding me up.

Byron Johnson (01:14:08):

Don't want you in bad traffic to get home.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:10):

No, you're not bothering me. I'm-

Byron Johnson (01:14:11):

Now hold up-

Eric Richard (01:14:14):

Just the ranger questions.

Byron Johnson (01:14:15):

Pardon?

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:17):

One more thing on the army.

Rusty Bloxom (01:14:18):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:20):

So, hard to talk about this. I do, I'm gonna talk about it because it's the truth. We had a volunteer medic. When Glenn Snow left, we couldn't get a medic. And I had learned a lot from him, and I could do a lot of things, so could the Major, I mean, he's special forces, right?

Byron Johnson (01:14:48):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:48):

He's got his stuff he's doing. I've got my stuff I'm doing. I'm trying to keep us all from getting killed. I ain't got time to train somebody.

Rusty Bloxom (01:14:57):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:14:58):

Neither does he. And so, there was a boy named uh, Ed, uh, mm, mm, mm, mm. Lumpy was his nickname. L-U-M-P-Y. Lathrop. Edwin Lathrop. He was Air Force. He was at a civilian hospital in Vin Long treating Vietnamese, and some military, but mainly Vietnamese. And he volunteered to come out there, until we got somebody. And, the old man knew him, we'd met him, at the MACV bar in Vinh Long, Vietnam, which we didn't was in safe compound and all. Drinking place for Team guys. And, uh, I liked Lathrop. Major liked him all right. So, Major put in a request.

(01:15:58):

His boss at the hospital let him come out there. And, he spent several months with us. Worked well. Liked the Vietnamese. They liked him. He was easy-going guy. He was a weight-lifter. His arms were huge. He has no end to his upper-body strength. And, we went out one day, because the communists had cut the only road leading into or out of Cho Lach. They had cut it down close to... Way away from where we slept. And, we went out to check that and try to repair that road 'cause no way, you ain't got no way to get help to you. A lot of times they don't want to fly where we were, 'cause they get shot down pretty easy.

Byron Johnson (01:16:49):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:16:52):

Anyway, we got ambushed. And, I threw smoke, and it... to mark for helicopters, and it bounced off of a tree and bounced back into the bar ditch. And Lathrop said, "I'm closer than you are." And I'm telling him, "Don't do that. Don't do that. Don't do that." And I'm trying to get my radio off. He's running for that smoke. They walked the BAR on down the road got him in both his legs. Course, he fell off in the bar ditch, and I had to re-throw the smoke. And get to him and try to help him. That's when the Sea Wolves [Navy helicopter gunships], two of them, helped us by beating the enemy back and hauling him and a Vietnamese troop out of there. Saved his life. He is 100 percent cripple.

Rusty Bloxom (01:17:39):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:17:40):

Hadn't heard from him in years. Don't know what his status is. And, uh, we finally got a medic. Rodriguez. He was special forces guy, too. Good guy. Sergeant first class. There was another boy named Danny Runkle. And Danny had a job building weapons. Specialized weapons. There was him, a navy guy, a marine, and an air force guy. 4 guys. They were assigned into a building that had an alarm system. Never heard of such a thing. And, they built weapons for people. He wanted to come go with us because he had built a weapon for me and he wanted to see how it worked.

(01:18:27):

So, talked to the Major. He did. I did. Major approved it. We picked a day. It was gonna be a milk run. I mean, we'd been to this place so many times and nothing ever happened. It was going to be okay. We knew it all like the back of our hand. I guess we were probably too lax, and we got ambushed.

Byron Johnson (01:18:52):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:18:53):

And Runkle and I were in a hole, pond. Our knees were in the water, and we're sticking our head above it, and I was talking to aircraft on the radio trying to get us some support. Everything was coming from the other side of a canal, which was about as wide as this room. Bout, pretty deep. Water was. And everything was hitting us from the other side. So, it was pretty easy to strafing run. You just get on the other side of the canal and go. And, I'm talking on the radio, and Danny, I saw Danny, he's looking around, and all of a sudden he zeroed in on a tree and picked his rifle up. And, just as he got that rifle right here, a sniper fired, and hit his guard on his rifle and tumbled right down into his chest.

Byron Johnson (01:19:48):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:19:49):

Out his kidney and into his calf. Well, he's hit. And, I kinda saw where it came from and I put a grenade in that tree. Think it worked. I'm still trying to talk on the radio. He's hurt. Ain't nobody coming to help me. I gotta do it myself. And, when I told that forward air controller, I said, "One of us is hurt." He said, "Who is it?" And, I said... I told him the name. Not supposed to, but I did.

Byron Johnson (01:20:17):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:20:18):

And, he knew it. He said, "I'll get a medevac." I said, "Okay." I said, "I'll be with you." Dropped it, went to him. Bandaged him. He was still bubbling. Rolled him over, bandaged him on his back. That's when I saw that wound in his calf where the bullet was. He's able to breathe now, and he's looking at me, and I said, "I'm gonna get you out of here. The medevac's coming for you. And you're gonna be okay, I think." And, I carried him across that pond, and all the way across that pond I'm talking to the Vietnamese, and I made them open up across that canal with 30-caliber machine gun, and strafe it. Give me some cover.

(01:21:03):

... machine guns, and strafed to give me some cover to get him. And I promised him, I said, "I will be back to you. I'll come back." Okay. So, they- they were shooting. I got him out of there, and about halfway, well, we, they got across the tank, I think, nearly across it. And he went stiff, and looked at me, and said, "Tell my mother I love her," and died.

(01:21:29):

And I went ahead and carried him back to where the medevac was gonna be, and I don't know why I did it, to this day I ain't got no, shouldn't have, I rammed his rifle in the ground and put his helmet on it, and I turned around and headed back to where I came from. And we had a new captain then named Savotini, and he grabbed me from behind a tree, "Where you going?" And I said, "Right back from where I come from." He said, "You don't have to do that," and I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "Sergeant, I'm telling you, you don't have to do that," and I said, "Captain, get the fuck away from me, I'm telling you I do."

(01:22:07):

He turned me loose, and I went on back to the Vietnamese. And directly, we had air support, and I- I- I think that's the time I called an air strike in on us, if I remember right, and I believe it was helicopters, I think. It's in writing somewhere, y'all got it, but-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:21:04]

Byron Johnson (01:22:26):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:26):

... I can't remember exactly. But, anyway. So, when Lathrop. Could have been me, it wasn't. It was Runkle. Should have been me, it wasn't. We looked at, later on we looked at what happened with Danny, and that sniper, his, had he not raised his rifle, that sniper would have hit me right here.

Rusty Bloxom (01:22:51):

Hmm, yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:22:52):

And that's what he was looking at was my head. 'Cause the radio. And- and I had a reputation not only with those Vietnamese, but I had a reputation with a lot of people, I found out later, that don't mess with this guy. Either kill him or go around him, but don't mess with him. And I didn't know any of that, and Major didn't neither. The SEALs did, they heard it.

Rusty Bloxom (01:23:21):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:22):

They told us. You know, you know you're successful when they put a price on you.

Byron Johnson (01:23:28):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:29):

And they put a price on all of us, not only me but everybody, Major, me-

Rusty Bloxom (01:23:35):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:36):

... the SEAL guy. And so... So, I mean, there's that. Uh... Why?

Rusty Bloxom (01:23:45):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:47):

God, that's the only answer.

Byron Johnson (01:23:49):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:23:49):

He had something in purpose for me, I know He did, I just didn't know it at the time.

Rusty Bloxom (01:23:57):

Everything that has come since then.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:01):

So, when I got into the highway patrol, every time I got out of the car, I was looking for some place to duck, a tree to get behind or a fender.

Byron Johnson (01:24:15):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:16):

Every time.

Byron Johnson (01:24:18):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:19):

So I got the reputation of being paranoid.

Rusty Bloxom (01:24:21):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:21):

And I was.

Eric Richard (01:24:21):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:21):

But I had good reason to be.

Rusty Bloxom (01:24:21):

And still [inaudible 01:24:28].

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:21):

But I never explained it to them.

Rusty Bloxom (01:24:21):

Yeah.

Byron Johnson (01:24:30):

I don't know if it's paranoid or looking for backup plans all the time.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:32):

Backup plans.

Byron Johnson (01:24:34):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:35):

So, anyway, that's some of the stories, and the rest of 'em are not worth telling. But, um, that's life. Go ahead with your stuff. I've got all day, don't worry about m- m- me.

Rusty Bloxom (01:24:50):

Yeah, I think that has covered just about all the things that- that I had down for, to ask about to your army time and-

Johnnie Aycock (01:24:58):

Mm-hmm.

Rusty Bloxom (01:24:58):

... your time in the, in country, so.

Johnnie Aycock (01:25:01):

We run a search warrant in Axtell one time, and DPS narcotics, it wasn't my warrant, it was John Bennett's warrant, and when we were leaving the office, I reached out in my back to get some extra clips for my .45 magazine, got the wrong bag, wrong ammo. And I told the driver, it was Jody Ford, Auto Theft, still alive today. He said, "Well, that's, uh, we're not that... Let's go back to the office," and I said, "Nah. No, no, no, we've got a whole convoy, let's just go. Nothing's gonna happen."

(01:25:48):

We get to Axtell, we run that search warrant, and I step in the doorway and announce DPS narcotics, and the guy sitting on the floor shoots me in the head. The bullet goes between that ear and that head, and blew my hair, I had hair, blew it out like that. Jody Ford is behind me, he thinks I've been brain shot. I go

down, I'm still shooting, and I'm trying to get- get away from this fellow. My return fire hit him, twice, with the wrong- wrong ammo.

(01:26:25):

So, you know, I keep bumping into this wall. I'd just come down that hall, and I knew there was another wall, and it kept on confusing me, I don't know where I'm at really. And I looked up, and it was Jody Ford.

Byron Johnson (01:26:40):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:26:40):

And he said, "If you'd be still, I'll get you out of this hall" I said, "If you move, I'll get my own self out of this hall."

Rusty Bloxom, Byron Johnson, Eric Richard (01:26:47):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:26:49):

He thought I was shot in the brain.

Rusty Bloxom (01:26:50):

Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:26:54):

And I did, too. And all it did was it burned my scalp and burnt my hair. Later, it got infected and I had it treated, but... Well, who's to blame for that?

Rusty Bloxom (01:27:09):

(laughs). Yeah.

Johnnie Aycock (01:27:09):

I mean, a sixteenth of an inch-

Byron Johnson (01:27:09):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:27:13):

... it would have been in my skull. Yeah. I've been blessed.

Rusty Bloxom (01:27:22):

Many times.

Johnnie Aycock (01:27:23):

Yep.

Eric Richard (01:27:23):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:27:26):

So, well, God's been with me the whole time, I think. You haven't seen these, but this is tho- these are those, uh... I don't think you've seen 'em. These are those Piscelli pictures the FBI gave me. And I've got the negatives to those, also. You've got questions?

Eric Richard (01:28:07):

Yes. So, I contacted Lieutenant Peña from Company F-

Johnnie Aycock (01:28:09):

Mm-hmm.

Eric Richard (01:28:10):

... and asked him for some questions from Rangers.

Johnnie Aycock (01:28:12):

Mm-hmm.

Eric Richard (01:28:13):

'Cause these are all questions Rangers sent us-

Johnnie Aycock (01:28:15):

Mm-hmm.

Eric Richard (01:28:15):

... I was gonna ask you. It's probably stuff you've already said before, but just- just say it again, it's fine. Okay?

Johnnie Aycock (01:28:21):

Mm-hmm.

Eric Richard (01:28:21):

Uh, so I'll just word, I'll just read it word for word, um, what would be some suggestions you would tell a brand new Ranger recently promoted into the division that you wish you'd known when you were promoted?

Johnnie Aycock (01:28:34):

Hmm. Don't lose the Ranger dress, the Western-style dress, keep it. Learn the history, and take it, take to note what others have done before you, and try to uphold the same standards. But don't lose the dress. 'Cause people can talk about Rangers all day, and people back East think it's a park ranger until they see a Texas Ranger with the light-colored shirt and the round badge and the cowboy hat and boots, then they know that, I know what that is. So, don't lose the dress.

Eric Richard (01:29:25):

Uh, what inspired you to become a Texas Ranger?

Johnnie Aycock (01:29:28):

I always wanted to be one. Um-

Byron Johnson (01:29:28):

Uh, what- what do you base the I always wanted to be one, when was the first time you heard about 'em?

Johnnie Aycock (01:29:41):

Well, I heard the history of Bonnie and Clyde, and I heard the history of Hamer, and some others that worked with him, and that im- im- that- that impressed me. You know, a guy that can do that kind of tracking and come to that end after being turned around and put down by others-

Byron Johnson (01:30:07):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:30:07):

... is, uh, stands out in my mind. So he was kind of an early day hero. Lone Wolf Gonzalez was also, and, you know, the man wasn't from here, and he formed the DPS laboratory, and, you know, how'd he do that? How do you start a laboratory-

Rusty Bloxom, Byron Johnson, Eric Richard (01:30:27):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:30:28):

... when you're not a chemist-

Byron Johnson (01:30:28):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:30:30):

... and you're not from here? So, I mean, just things like that that always impressed me. Uh, my neighbor was a city policeman, and a friend of his was a highway patrolman that I'd met several times, and they were always nice to me even though I was young and full of baloney. And, uh, I always thought to myself, "You know, that ain't a bad job."

Byron Johnson (01:30:56):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:30:59):

But I really wanted to be was a Ranger. I put it down on my application, and Officer Sykes said, "You can't do that, if you do that, you're not gonna get interviewed." Why not? He said, "You just don't go into DPS being a Ranger, it don't happen." He said, "You may never make it." I said, I don't like that too much, and he said-

Rusty Bloxom, Byron Johnson, Eric Richard (01:31:21):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:31:21):

... "Well, trust me." He said, "From now on out, we're gonna do this application in pencil." There's a lesson there. DPS also did do things in pencil. There's a lesson there, make a mistake, you erase it and go on.

Eric Richard (01:31:41):

In his three volume series, Darren Ivey describes those in the Ranger Hall of Fame as having the Ranger ideal. What does having the Ranger ideal mean to you?

Johnnie Aycock (01:31:51):

Hmm. Wow, what a question. Do the right thing, do what's in your heart, what's in your gut, and just keep doing it.

Eric Richard (01:32:14):

Uh, what evolution did you witness with the Ranger division over the course of your career?

Johnnie Aycock (01:32:19):

What- what- what?

Eric Richard (01:32:20):

What evolution, what changes?

Johnnie Aycock (01:32:24):

Hmm. Hmm, computers came along, we never had 'em before. Drove me nuts.

Byron Johnson (01:32:31):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:32:31):

Um...

Byron Johnson (01:32:33):

Still do.

Johnnie Aycock (01:32:33):

They still do.

Byron Johnson (01:32:33):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:32:37):

You know, back in the day when I worked, and before when I worked, those Ranger captains, they'd turn you loose and they'd say, "Go, do your job." And Mitchell was that way, he told me one time, he said, "If you need me, call me. If you don't, don't. I get your reports, I know what you're doing." He said, "Don't bother yourself worrying about what I'm thinking, go do your job."

(01:33:11):

And so, that's the way it was before. Now, it's kinda micromanaged the way I'm hearing things, and you've gotta be in almost direct contact with somebody at all times, and on a computer. And I don't see how a guy does his job-

Byron Johnson (01:33:25):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:33:27):

... by doing that. So, anyway, I think that some of that needs to go back to like it used to be.

Eric Richard (01:33:34):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:33:34):

My opinion, n- not worth much, but-

(01:33:38):

... that's my opinion.

Eric Richard (01:33:38):

Uh, how did your family adapt to you being a Texas Ranger, and any suggestions how to prepare immediate family on being a person promoted to Texas Ranger?

Johnnie Aycock (01:33:50):

There wasn't much difference. Uh, my wife was used to me not being home, and being a Ranger actually gave her some relief, 'cause at least at a certain time normally I was at home. And narcotics, and I was at home. And, you know, I don't know, th- there's some things that she never knew that, uh...

(01:34:14):

You know, when, uh, when they, uh, when the Whitehead kidnapping happened. Hmm. Captain Mitchell was sold on the idea to use a two-door Porsche for the drop car, 'cause it was a family car, and I went and looked at it because I'm paranoid, and the only way I could fight out of that car I had to get in the wheel well where the spare tire was kept, and I couldn't really fight out of there. So I called a friend of mine back in Bell County, and I told him, I said, "I don't think I'm coming home, and I want you to talk to my wife when it happens because it's gonna happen." And he told me, he said, "Don't do it." And I said, "I ain't got a choice, I've gotta do it. But I don't think I'm gonna make it home."

(01:35:15):

And so, I talked to Captain Mitchell, and I said, "Cap, this is not a good idea." He said, "Why? Tell me why." I said, "I'd rather show you. Take a look." I showed him that car, and he shook his head and scratched himself, and he said, "We ain't using that car (laughing), that's nuts." I said, "Well, who come up with that idea?" "That ain't important, we ain't using it."

Byron Johnson (01:35:40):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:35:41):

I said, "Okay." Next thing you know, we had the DA's car, which was a Lincoln, a four-door Lincoln. But, you know, little things like that that... I mean, who you- who you get to go talk to your wife. Later on, I come up with Joe Wiley, but at that time I didn't have anybody like that. I know Captain Mitchel, but he ain't gonna be able to go talk to Estelle, and somebody needs to go talk to her pretty quick before it hits

the newspaper, and he's not gonna be able to do it, he's helping me. So, you know, I- I don't... I made it. Again, how'd I do that? I don't know how I did. (laughs).

Rusty Bloxom (01:36:24):

That's...

Johnnie Aycock (01:36:33):

Hmm. You know, I got cut with glass that night, and I didn't even know it.

Byron Johnson (01:36:37):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:36:39):

I cut my hand and my face. And, uh, h- honestly, I didn't know it. And it was a week, and my hand got sore, and I got to looking at it, there's little red dots. And I went- went back to that same guy that treated me for my ear, uh, he pulled all that glass out of me, and he said, "You know, glass is different than other things. Glass goes in, it doesn't come out."

Byron Johnson (01:37:09):

Yep.

Johnnie Aycock (01:37:10):

And he said, "I'm glad you came here, 'cause the ones in your face would have ended up somewhere in a bone." He pulled all that out and treated it, I went home. It was s- starting to get infected, and, man, but I never even knew it.

Eric Richard (01:37:25):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:37:25):

I mean, on- on that jacket in there, that green jacket, there's a spot of blood on it somewhere, that's probably mine.

Eric Richard (01:37:32):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:37:32):

I don't think it's Stan's. So, I- I don't know. Yeah.

Byron Johnson (01:37:34):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:37:43):

How do you make it through something like that and not have belief in God?

Eric Richard (01:37:47):

Mm-hmm. What do you feel was the hardest part about your job?

Johnnie Aycock (01:37:54):

Hardest?

Eric Richard (01:37:55):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:37:58):

Contacting those victims and telling 'em I was either not able to do much for 'em or... You know, anytime you try to do something and you just can't get it done, you've gotta go back to those victims and tell 'em, "Look, I tried, it ain't gonna work." Uh, you keep u, how you do that, that's hard to do. So, victims.

Eric Richard (01:38:24):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:38:26):

Yeah, victims. Dealing with politics. God, I hate politics. I would not interview with n- nobody, ever. I made one interview, and I had an order to do that, and it didn't turn out well.

Byron Johnson (01:38:39):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:38:39):

You know, I've never interviewed before. If this hadn't have come up, I never would have. (laughs).

Eric Richard (01:38:50):

Uh-

Byron Johnson (01:38:51):

Well, it took a while to convince you to do this.

Johnnie Aycock (01:38:53):

(laughs).

Byron Johnson (01:38:53):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:38:55):

Well, I gave you my word. Yeah.

Byron Johnson (01:38:56):

How many years have we been talking about this? (laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:38:59):

A long time. I gave you my word, and I-

Byron Johnson (01:39:02):

That you did.

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:02):

Damn, I can't remember where I used that son of a bitch (pointing at pistol).

Eric Richard (01:39:10):

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:12):

What did I enjoy most?

Eric Richard (01:39:14):

Mm-hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:17):

Well, helping people.

Byron Johnson (01:39:18):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:18):

Helping people. Most of 'em were, a lot of 'em were poor people, they- they- they couldn't go hire, they couldn't go hire somebody to help 'em, they didn't have the money.

Byron Johnson (01:39:31):

Yes.

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:31):

So.

Eric Richard (01:39:36):

Um... With your service record, award history, and all your record deeds, you're obviously a man many look up to and consider-

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:44):

Hmm.

Eric Richard (01:39:45):

... a hero-

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:45):

Hmm.

Eric Richard (01:39:45):

... but who do you look up to as a hero?

Johnnie Aycock (01:39:47):

Hmm, God, absolutely. Mm-hmm.

Eric Richard (01:39:57):

How has being a Texas Ranger affected your faith with your religion?

Johnnie Aycock (01:40:01):

Oh, well, it's made it stronger.

Eric Richard (01:40:03):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:40:04):

It's made it a little stronger. I'm not a guy that goes into church every time they open the door, and I'm not a guy that sits in the front pew, you know, but when I look up at the sky and talk to God, I'm really talking to God, I'm not talking to something else.

Eric Richard (01:40:21):

How would you recommend modern Rangers simultaneously adapt to rapid changes in society while remaining grounded in traditions?

Johnnie Aycock (01:40:29):

Hold on to what you've got, 'cause it'll change pretty quick. Just hang on, keep your mouth shut, and your head low, and go on. The best thing.

Eric Richard (01:40:42):

Uh, what kind of hobbies did you have outside of work to get away from the stress of being a Ranger?

Johnnie Aycock (01:40:47):

Hmm. Back in the day, I explained to you, I did security for bands and, uh, did bloodstains. I worked cattle, and raised hay for 'em and stuff, and that took a lot off of me. Sure did. Cattle, the cattle helped a lot, they don't sue you, they don't really argue with you a lot.

Byron Johnson (01:41:06):

(laughs).

Eric Richard (01:41:06):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:41:10):

(laughs). Yep.

Eric Richard (01:41:12):

Is there anything you miss about being a Ranger?

Johnnie Aycock (01:41:16):

Yeah, probably all of it. But I think the camaraderie was- was one of the things I kinda miss. But, you know, there's a lot of changes, times change. Time to move on. Anytime you become more of a liability than an asset, it's time to find something else, and I was- I was kinda getting there. I wasn't there yet, but I was getting there, so.

Eric Richard (01:41:45):

For all you've accomplished over your career, what stands out to you as some of your crowning achievements?

Johnnie Aycock (01:41:55):

Hmm. My whole career, all of it. You can't really pick on thing over another, right? I can't. I mean, I've enjoyed it all, I've had a- I've had a blessed career, I really have. Enjoyed it all, the good and the bad. Mm-hmm.

Eric Richard (01:42:27):

Well, that's all the questions.

Byron Johnson (01:42:28):

John, is there anything you'd like to add, or is there anything that you-

Johnnie Aycock (01:42:34):

Nah.

Byron Johnson (01:42:34):

... you know, if you- if you say, if you get a chance to say anything in posterity, because this is an archive, what would you... What we've-

(01:42:40):

... done today here is gonna be around longer than any of us here.

Johnnie Aycock (01:42:44):

Yeah, probably so.

Byron Johnson (01:42:45):

Um, is there anything you'd like to leave as a parting comment-

Johnnie Aycock (01:42:51):

You know, yeah-

Byron Johnson (01:42:51):

... for us?

Johnnie Aycock (01:42:51):

... I think so, thank you for asking that. You know, DPS offered me a family when I had just come out of Vietnam and needed one, and they have been a family to me. Not only me, but to my wife, and even to

my mother back in the day. And, uh, I mean, H- Howard Truman would go by my mother's house and check on her every once in a while, not to see if sh- she needed... If something broke, the oven or something, they'd fix it, or see that it was fixed. I mean, that was nice.

(01:43:32):

And, uh, they offered me a family. And there are some in there that are hard to work with and hard to work for, but on the large part, all the ones I worked with and ones I worked for, I mean, how can you beat Herbert Weeks? How can you beat Wilbar Horstmann? You can't. How can you beat Richard Harlan, Bill Pruitt, Benny Boyd? You can't. They were the best. Where they came from, I don't know, but they were on the same path I was on. And Bob Mitchell, you can't, there's... I mean, Bob Mitchell was a hero to everybody that every worked with him.

(01:44:29):

And all the captains were. I mean, they were all good people. Joe Wiley was the most feeling person I think I've ever seen, you know, he felt, deep thought a lot of things. Bobby Prince was outgoing and could get along with the devil with wings.

Byron Johnson (01:44:50):

(laughs).

Johnnie Aycock (01:44:50):

The dev- devil with burning wings. Um, I mean, I- I just had awfully good people to work with, you know, the analyst, the photography people, the, all of 'em. They were... The chemist, oh my. We learned bloodstains together, myself and this lab in Waco, we learned it together. We learned how to find blood, and how to take it the correct way, and how to get it analyzed where you could prove something. We learned it together. They weren't used to coming to crime scenes, they weren't used to doing that minute bloodstain. I taught them, they taught me, we learned from each other.

(01:45:41):

Um, Waldrip had the same experience with the Austin lab that I've had with Waco, so they were good people. Man, oh, man, they were wonderful people to work with. I'm blessed.

Byron Johnson (01:45:57):

Hmm.

Johnnie Aycock (01:45:57):

Absolutely blessed.

Byron Johnson (01:46:00):

Well, thank you very much for spending the time with us to do this. I think it's gonna be very valuable.

Johnnie Aycock (01:46:05):

You betcha. You bet.

PART 2 of 2 ENDS [01:46:08]