



## BANDIT RAIDS IN THE BIG BEND COUNTRY

By W. D. SMITHERS

Before describing Border raids in the Big Bend area and relating the heinous acts committed by some of the bandits, the writer would like to caution you against concluding that these bandits were typical of the Mexican people. It is regrettable that some writers have led their readers to believe that Mexicans are an untrustworthy race. Many books about the Texas-Mexican War and about the revolutions in Mexico leave this unfortunate false impression. This writer has known many Mexicans in all walks of life, and on the average has found them to be honorable and kindly. In particular, those who lived close to nature were friendly and hospitable toward strangers, unselfish toward those in need, loved their children, and were devout Christians. The bandits who participated in the Border raids described in this article were the Capones and Dillingers of Mexico, who, with their henchmen, operated up and down the Rio Grande.

Making a livelihood of ranching along the Border in the early days was difficult enough under normal conditions; but to carry on ranching activities and fight bandits at the same time, during the years 1915 to 1920, was at best a precarious situation, and life for the ranchman became miserable, if not dangerous. The vast, rough 300-mile stretch known as the Big Bend was ideal for raids by Mexican bandits, because they had good protection and cover of the high mountains and deep canyons that locked in this area from the outside world. There were very few roads leading in and out of this wild area, and the bandits were fairly safe on horseback, since they knew all the trails.

In the Big Bend area the bandits could cross the Rio Grande at many places where it was impossible for the Texas Rangers, mounted Customs officers, Immigration River Guards, and the cavalry troops to see them cross. Once they were on this side, they worked their way up the canyons and draws to the ranch they intended to raid. These bands usually numbered twenty-five to thirty-five men, and they raided ranches where there were seldom more than half a dozen defenders. Occasionally a band would consist of fifty to seventy-five bandits. Most ranches along the Border were raided at one time or another, but those in the upper western part of Presidio County, Texas, suffered the greatest losses in ranch-hands killed, and also in horses, cattle, and supplies stolen.

The Border troubles on the American side of the international boundary broke out on a wholesale scale in 1915. However, isolated Border troubles in the Big Bend had been recorded earlier. For instance, a Mexican named Chico Cano was probably the most notorious and worst-hated bandit in the upper part of the Big Bend during early days. He was a bandit leader, and operated with his men for at least seven years, from 1913 to 1920.

Mounted Customs Officer Joe Sitters, and a cattle inspector, Eugene Hulen, were slain by Cano's band. On January 23, 1913, Chico and two of his men were captured by Customs Officers Sitters, Jack Howard and an officer named Harvis, in the mountains on the Texas side, miles away from the border. As the prisoners were being taken to headquarters, the main

# KILLING IN BIG BEND DESCRIBED BY A RANGER

Hulen and Sitters Lost Lives Because They Were Surrounded on a Hill Top.

COULD NOT AID THEM

Comrades Made Several Attempts to Dislodge Outlaws But Failed.

AUSTIN, Tex., June 3.—Full details of the killing of Rangers Hulen and Sitters near Marfa, a short time ago, supposedly by a band of Mexican outlaws, are given in a letter just received by Leslie Fox, a member of the local police force, from his father, Captain J. M. Fox, of the ranger force, the two men killed having been members of his company. This is the text of the letter.

**They Sought Smuggled Horses.**  
"On May 21, Rangers Hulen, Trollinger and Cummings left with Customs Inspectors Sitters and Craighead for the river near Pilares, where the inspectors had heard of smuggled horses being.

"On the evening of May 23 they trailed three Mexicans whom they thought had horses which were smuggled, but when night came on them they had to stop.

"Flicking the trail up early in the morning of May 24, they followed it to a box canyon in the Bogel pasture. Looking through field glasses they could see a bunch of horses, which were tied. Some of the boys did not want to enter the canyon, saying it was a trap, but Inspector Sitters said he could not see anyone there and was going in, which he did, the rest following.

"After entering the canyon they divided, Inspector Sitters and Ranger Hulen turning to the right and Inspector Craighead and Rangers Trollinger and Cummings turning to the left and going up a ravine which runs through the canyon.

**Retreat Under Fire.**  
After riding up this ravine a little ways they decided to turn out of it. As they rode out upon the bank, Ranger Cummings being in the lead, they were fired upon by Mexicans who were not over 40 yards away.

"They dismounted and under a heavy shower of bullets retreated back into the ravine. Seeing a large rock near, they made a dash for it, but were met by a heavy fire from behind it. They could then see Inspector Sitters and Ranger Hulen, who had rode out on a very small hill, motion to them to get back and go back down the ravine the way they had come.

"Being cut off from their horses they went down the ravine under heavy fire while Sitters and Hulen

RELIABILITY  AND SERVICE  
**WASHER BROS. CO.**

**Mohair Suits \$12.50**

Economical and Practical

The most practical suit for hot weather wear. A suit that is economical—doesn't have to go to the cleaners every few days.

**A Wonder Value for \$12.50**

**Genuine Goodall Palm Beach Suits**

Positively the best in the city—Can not be duplicated at the price we ask **\$5.75**

**1000 EXTRA VOTES**

with every dollar purchase in the Boys' Department. This offer good all week.

IN

**Boys' Auto Contest**

Contest ends June 30. Now is the time for a "Garrison finish" for some hustling boy. It's not too late. Watch the Blackboard in the Boys' Department.

**CUSTOMERS MUST DO THEIR OWN VOTING**



opened up on the Mexicans to cover their retreat.

"After circling several times trying to get to Sitters and Hulen, and finding it impossible, they gained the top of the canyon and started to where they had left their pack train that morning, a distance of about eight miles. As they went out of the canyon they could still hear Sitters and Hulen shooting. They thought they were getting away, as they still had their horses.

"After walking all day, Craighead, Trollinger and Cummings found a Mexican who carried a note to Pool's ranch asking for help.

**Posses Sent to Aid.**

"Mr. Pool telephoned to Marfa and Valentine, where other inspectors and rangers formed posses to go to their aid.

"They found Craighead, Trollinger and Cummings at Bill McGee's ranch, and as Sitters and Hulen had not shown up, they started a search for them. Proceeding to the canyon where they were left, they found the bodies close to where they had

last been seen by Craighead, Trollinger and Cummings.

"Inspector Sitters had been shot about ten times and his head beaten with rocks. His horse was found shot and his guns had been taken.

"Ranger Hulen was found about ten feet from Sitters. He had been shot about eight times and his head was beaten into a pulp with rocks. They had taken his guns, searched his pockets and had taken his boots off his feet. His horse and saddle were also missing.

"As there is no possible chance to get a hack or wagon through that country, the bodies were put on a pack mule and brought 15 miles to Bill McGee's ranch. By the time they reached there the bodies were in such a condition they could not be brought further, so were buried.

"Rangers Trollinger and Cummings lost their horses and saddles and the Mexicans are supposed to have taken the horses and saddles across the river into Mexico.

"CAPT. J. M. FOX,  
"Stationed at Marfa."

part of Cano's band waylaid the officers, and in the fighting Jack Howard was killed; Sitters and Harvis were wounded and Chico Cano escaped.

On the night of May 23, 1915, Sitters, with rangers Sug Cummings, Eugene Hulen and another ranger named Tollinger, and Customs Officer Charlie Craighead were camped in the bandit area near Pilares, Presidio County, Texas. During the night, some bandits rode near their camp and made unnecessary noises that could be heard. At daylight, their trail was plain, and, to make it plainer, the bandits had let their ropes drag as they rode past the gringos' camp.

The trail led into a rough canyon that headed out of the mountains. The officers' pack mules were concealed near the mouth of the canyon. Craighead, Cummings, and Tollinger were told by Sitters to follow the trail while he and Hulen worked their way above to try to locate the bandits. But all were led into a well-laid trap. The three officers in the canyon had their horses killed, and they retreated afoot back to the mules. Sitters and Hulen were killed.

The three who escaped the trap rode the pack mules bareback to the McGee ranch, from which a note was sent to the John Pool ranch, who phoned Custom Inspector R. M. Wadsworth at Marfa. He, with a posse, found the terribly mutilated naked bodies of Sitters and Hulen.

The small American settlements, the ranches, and the mines on the Texas side of the Rio Grande were the hardest hit. By 1915, revolutions had been going on in Mexico for five years, but during those years the bandits generally confined their raids to ranches and mines in Mexico. Many of these were owned or controlled by Americans, who suffered heavy losses in life and property.

With little left in Mexico to steal, and with an arrogant contempt for the "gringo," bands of revolutionists began making regular raids by 1915 on the American side. These bands of outlaws caused much trouble along the entire Border from Brownsville, Texas, to the Pacific coast. Pancho Villa's successful raid on Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9, 1916, was made in revenge for the help that the United States had given the Carranza forces that Villa was fighting. Also, Villa needed supplies for his army. This raid gave other bandit leaders ideas that they, too, could make raids on isolated settlements, ranches, and mines on the American side.

The Big Bend District of Texas was hardest hit by both Villa's men and by some of the Carranza outlaw soldiers. Many were motley renegade bands that had no political affiliation. About the best description that can be made of a Mexican is that he was pretty much like outlaws of any nationality—he was a heartless criminal who joined the leader that promised the greatest reward; and he was far from being the Robin Hood type—he was nothing but a thief and murderer at heart.

The raids were well planned in advance. Most often, a few Mexicans who lived in the settlements on the Texas side furnished the raiders information on the layout of the ranch or the trading posts, and the best way to get there. For instance, three days before the Brite Ranch raid, which will be described later in this chapter, a young Mexican came to the ranch and said that he was to meet a friend from Pecos who was to



Patrolling the rough lands of the Big Bend during the pre-twenties.



Travel by automobile is almost impossible in much of the roughlands of the Big Bend.

arrive on the mail stage. He stayed at the bunk house two days, then disappeared. The night before the raid, a fire was seen between the ranch and the Candelaria Rim toward the Rio Grande.

Although everything possible was done by the U. S. Cavalry and the Texas Rangers to protect ranches from the raiders, the bigness and roughness of the country made it favorable for the raiders to operate in. Even if there had been twice as many soldiers and Rangers in the Big Bend, the raiders still would have slipped across the Border to make their raids. Late in 1918, when the Army began patrolling the Rio Grande from the air in some of the DeHavilland planes that had been used in France during World War I, the raids occurred less frequently. This patrolling stopped all the big raids on ranch headquarters, but the bandits continued to steal a few head of cattle or saddle horses on the open range.

There were four cavalry troops, one company of Texas Rangers of fifteen experienced men, and a number of U. S. Mounted Customs and Immigration River Guards, making constant patrols up and down the Big Bend area of the Rio Grande, day and night. One cavalry troop was at Indio, above Presidio, one at Ruidosa, one at Candelaria, and one at the Evertt's Ranch in the upper corner of the Big Bend District. All four of these troops had several encounters with the bandit raiders, and often after a raid the bandits were followed into Mexico; some of the cattle, saddle horses, and some of the loot was returned to the ranches.

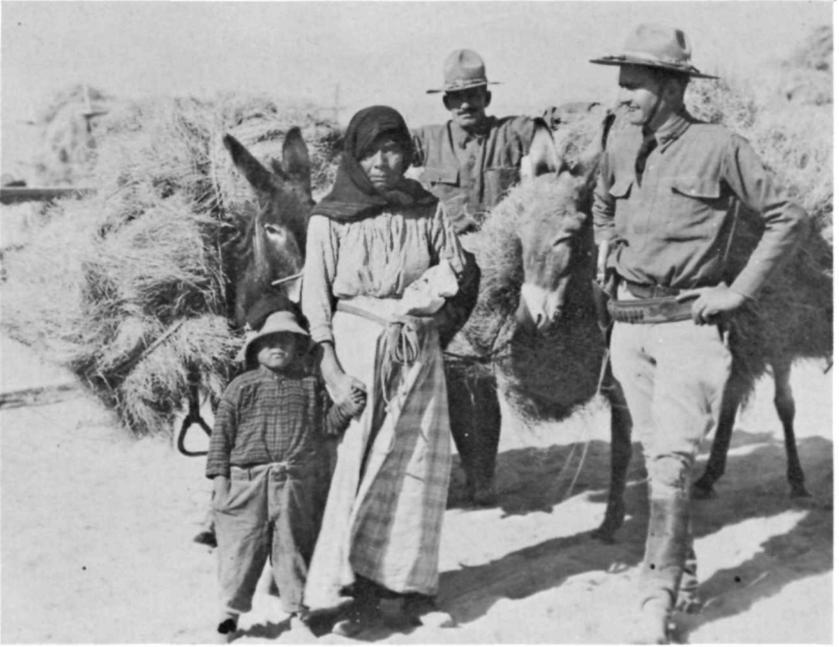
This period made good frontier-type soldiers of the ranchmen, and it made good cowboys of the cavalry soldiers. There were about twenty big ranches strung out over a 250-mile area of the Big Bend where the bandits might raid at any time, and there were many small farms and ranches that had to be protected.

The Rangers, Customs officers, and River Guards quickly developed methods of working with the ranchmen and learning their brands and earmarks. Many of those men were cowboys before they joined the forces. It was not long until the cavalry troopers also learned most of the brands, and were rounding up bunches of battle in Mexico and driving them back into Texas.

Because of the condition of the roads, it was a tremendous problem to keep the troops supplied in the Big Bend area. There were about 500 big cavalry horses, 200 mules, and around 1000 soldiers that had to be kept in supplies. That many horses and mules can eat a lot of hay and oats, and all their feed had to be brought in by pack trains and wagon trains.

The ranchmen did everything in their power to help. For instance, on the old W. H. Cleveland Ranch, established before 1894, there were two large dirt tanks built in the center of a large flat about three miles from the mouth of the Pinto canyon. These tanks became well known to the thousands of cavalymen, packers, and teamsters of the old mule transportation outfits, of which this writer was a member. These tanks were an oasis in the desert, and were used as watering and rest stop-overs by the cavalry.

The thirty-five mile trip from Marfa to Cleveland's took about ten hours of traveling. About twenty miles out of Marfa, the supply train



Cavalry officers bought Chino grass for their horses.



Their load of Chino grass sold to cavalrymen, *Zacateros* return to Mexico.

passed the W. P. Fisher ranch, and here, so that we could water the horses or mules, Mr. Fisher had provided a large trough that was always full of clear water. From Fisher's we could make it to the tanks at Cleveland's ranch, where we made camp for the night. (See map, page 74.) On the return trip to Marfa, two days later, we would camp there again. Another route from Marfa to the Rio Grande was over the Candelaria Rim. Mr. L. C. Brite, another fine ranchman, provided a large tank of good water and a place for all the wagons and pack trains to camp for the night, when they were traveling this route.

Mexican bandit raids on the ranches would have been bad enough had the bandits planned to steal only horses and cattle. They not only wanted the livestock, but they particularly wanted the merchandise that the ranchmen stocked in the commissaries. Getting supplies to a ranch in the Big Bend area, during those times, was a problem. The fact that the raids usually took place after a new stock of merchandise had arrived at the ranch-commissaries convinced everyone that the bandits had informers on the Texas side. The bandits killed anyone who interfered with them or recognized any of them.

There were many livestock thefts up and down the Border during this period, and hardly a ranch was spared the loss of horses and cattle. However, only a few of the big raids will be related in this chapter.

#### BOQUILLAS RAID

During the night of May 5, 1916, about one hundred fifteen Mexican raiders crossed the Rio Grande in the San Vicente area, about ten miles from Glenn Springs. They divided into two groups, about fifty-five going down the Rio Grande five and a half miles to raid Deemer's store at Boquillas. The remainder went to Glenn Springs, where Captain C. D. Wood was operating a large candelilla wax factory. About 250 Mexicans, a few white families, and a detachment of nine cavalrymen were living at Glenn Springs at the time of the raid. (In another section of this Bulletin the details of the Glenn Springs raid are covered in an article by Captain Wood.)

About twelve miles down the river from Glenn Springs were two villages, each named Boquillas. The older Boquillas is in Mexico; the other, in Texas. Another village, La Noria, Texas, was about twelve miles north of the Rio Grande in this same vicinity. (See map on page 64.) All these villages depended for their livelihood on a silver mine in Mexico, about three miles from Boquillas. The ore was carried across the Rio Grande into Texas, on a cable tramway six miles long, remnants of which can still be seen in the Boquillas, Texas, area. La Noria was the terminal where the ore was loaded onto pack mules and carried about seventy miles to Marathon, Texas, to be shipped to its destination by rail.

As stated before, when the bandits entered Texas on the night of May 5, 1916, seventy-five bandits went down the Rio Grande and attacked the store of Jessie Deemer at Boquillas, Texas, which carried merchandise needed by the residents of the two villages of Boquillas. With Deemer at the store was Monroe Payne, a Seminole who worked as a clerk. Since

Deemer carried many items in stock that could not be purchased in Mexico, this was the merchandise the raiders wanted.

It was daybreak of May 6, 1916, when the raid began. Deemer and Monroe wisely offered no resistance, but gave the bandits all the money, and allowed them to select the merchandise they wanted, and pack it on their horses and mules. The bandits were in no hurry, as they felt safe in such an out-of-the-way place. About 10 a.m., forty of the raiders that had taken part in the Glenn Springs incident joined them. With their loot, the 115 raiders re-crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico, taking with them as hostages both Deemer and Monroe. They threatened to kill Deemer, but Monroe, who was well liked by the Mexicans all up and down this area of the Rio Grande, was able to persuade them not to kill Deemer.

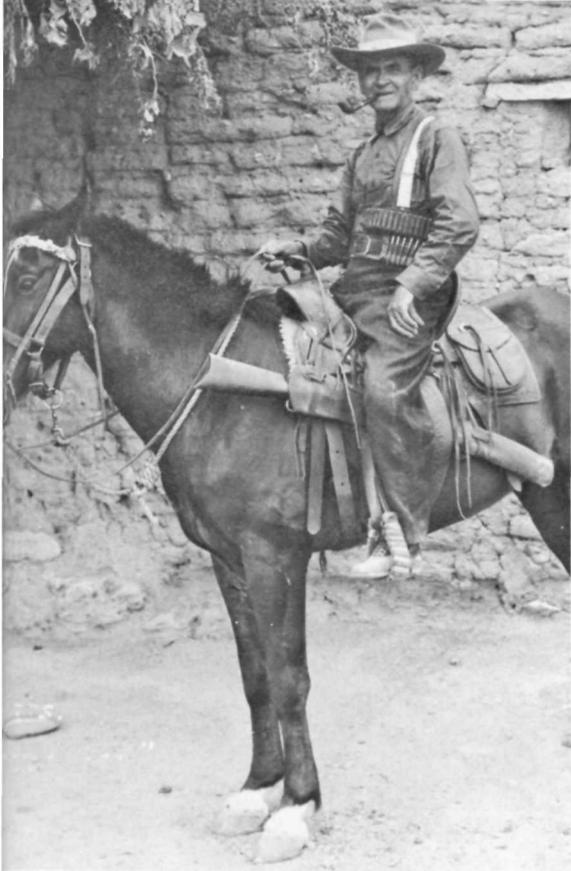
At the mine in Mexico was another store. Here, they looted the store of all its cash, including the mine payroll. Having no more pack animals available, the bandits confiscated a mine truck, and forced Dr. Homer Powers and three American mining men to accompany them, one to drive the truck. The mounted bandits, taking Deemer and Monroe with them, rode ahead. Meanwhile, the driver of the truck drove as slowly as he could, to let the mounted raiders get a head start. Then he stalled the truck in a dry creekbed, pretending that the truck was too hot and would have to cool off.

While the truck was "cooling off," the driver and the other three Americans arranged a plan to capture the four raiders. They told the *bandidos* to get out of the truck and help push, to get it started. The signal for the Americans was that the driver, at the signal "Push," was to put the truck in reverse rather than forward gear. The plan worked; the raiders were thrown off guard, overpowered, disarmed, and made prisoners. The driver headed the truck back to Boquillas, with the prisoners walking ahead. At Boquillas the bandits were then turned over to Sheriff Walton of Brewster County, who had arrived with a civilian posse.

The first of the trials of these four bandits did not take place until September 21, 1916, in Alpine. One of the men, Natividad Alvaréz, was a colonel of Villa's army. He had been the leader of both raiding parties. Despite the intense feeling against Mexican bandits during those days, the jury spared Alvaréz' life, sentencing him to life imprisonment, and the other bandits to fifty years each.

Meanwhile, Colonel George T. Langhorne, in command of Troops "A" and "B" of the 8th Cavalry, brought his troops by rail from Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas, to Marathon; they traveled overland from Marathon to Boquillas and on May 9, 1916, they crossed into Mexico in pursuit of the raiders. Langhorne had two trails to follow: that of the larger group of raiders who had crossed at San Vicente, and that of the group who had crossed from Deemer's store. The first group headed south toward El Pino and on to Sierra Mojada, about one hundred eighty miles from Boquillas by the mountain route. This was very mountainous country and sparsely settled, being in the southwest corner of the State of Coahuila, near the Chihuahua line. The bandits had a three-day start on the cavalry, having also the advantage of being in familiar territory.

However, Langhorne's men traveled hard and fast, day and night, until



Jim Watt, U. S. Cavalry Scout with  
Troop M—8th Cavalry



Miles Scannel, Cavalry Scout and Border  
Patrolman, who was killed September 9,  
1929, by Mexican outlaw near Polvo (Redford),  
Texas. Scannel was reputed to be one of the  
best marksmen and scouts of the Big Bend  
area.

they reached El Pino, eighty miles south of Boquillas, where they found Deemer and Monroe. The bandits had heard that the soldiers were on their trail and had split up into small groups. They had left their prisoners behind, having no desire to be caught with Deemer and Monroe in their possession.

Langhorne's men traveled a total of 550 miles during their sixteen days in Mexico, and although they did not make contact with any large group of bandits, they had skirmishes with small bands, and killed a number of the raiders. There were no U. S. casualties.

Later, in 1917 and 1918, Colonel Langhorne stationed his 8th Cavalry all through the Big Bend country. During those two years, the troops crossed into Mexico several times to settle accounts with the troublemakers. The "Eighth" was a hard-hitting outfit.

After the raids, Boquillas and Glenn Springs communities carried on just as before, but the cavalry was greatly strengthened. Two troops of the 6th Cavalry were placed at Glenn Springs on May 21, 1916, to patrol all that part of the Border. By June 8, 1916, the National Guard of all the States was called out, and many of these units were sent to the Big Bend district.

#### THE BRITE RANCH RAID

About sun-up on Christmas Day, 1917, the Brite Ranch was raided. It was a shock to the entire area to realize that the bandits would travel so far inland from the Border. The Brite ranch was thirty miles from the Rio Grande, and almost inaccessible from that area. It was protected on its western boundary by the Candelaria Rim, a natural barrier more than thirty miles long, with an escarpment approximately 2000 feet high, an almost sheer drop toward the Rio Grande. Two trails, the Knight Trail and the Candelaria Rim trail, were the only access through this rough country to the Brite ranch, traversable with great difficulty by horse or wagon.

The Brite Ranch headquarters, thirty-five miles in a westerly direction from Marfa and twenty miles south of Valentine, is located on a high, rolling plateau extending westward to the Candelaria Rim. Ten large ranch buildings, which made up the headquarters, were visible from the Marfa or Valentine approach roads. The ranch is often called the "Capote Ranch," taking its name from Capote Mountain, a distinctive landmark near the ranch headquarters, that can be seen for many miles in any direction. The word is Spanish for "bullfighter's cape," and the mountain formations resemble the ruffles and folds of a bullfighter's cape that has been thrown to the ground.

Because of the boldness and ruthlessness of the Brite Ranch raid, and perhaps because it happened on Christmas Day, news of the raid was flashed across the front pages of leading newspapers of the country. The entire nation was shocked.

Mr. and Mrs. Brite were at their home in Marfa on that Christmas morning. At the ranch were T. T. "Van" Neill, who had been foreman of the ranch for fourteen years, his wife, and their three children. Van

Neill's mother and his father, Sam, a former mounted U. S. Customs officer, were also there, having come to spend the Christmas holidays.

There were others on the ranch; but they were not in the Neill home that was attacked. One of these was Oscar Wells, now (1963) manager-foreman of the Brite Ranch. At that time he was a young ranch hand, who, in addition to his ranch work, was the truck driver and kept the ranch store in supplies. The school teacher, Mabel Crawford, lived at the ranch; but early that morning, before the bandits arrived, she had gone with her friend, Fred Garlick, to gather mistletoe to decorate the house. When they were returning and saw what was happening, they dared not approach the house.

The Neill house was about 250 feet from the store. Beyond the store, about 300 yards, lived Pierre Guyon, a Frenchman who was postmaster and storekeeper. With him in the house were his wife and son, Arthur. He had a rifle with plenty of ammunition, and was ready to fight it out with the bandits, and he held his gun ready. His home was so located that he was able to see the bandits at the store, and at the same time watch the roads above and below the ranch. However, the bandits did not attack his home. They had singled out the Neill home because it was from there that Sam Neill fired the first shot that started the bandits shooting.

The bandits had planned their raid carefully. Telephone lines had been cut. Christmas Day had probably been selected as a day when there would be fewer people coming to the ranch early. Their purpose was not to steal cattle, but to steal the remuda of good saddle horses belonging to the ranch, and the supplies in the store. They approached the ranch before daylight.

Sam Neill was up early that Christmas morning, being by habit an early riser. He went to the kitchen to build a fire in the stove and make a pot of coffee. While at the woodpile getting kindling and chips for the fire, he had noticed nothing unusual. However, while Sam was enjoying his cup of coffee, he happened to glance out of the window, and saw a large group of Mexican horsemen riding hard toward the ranch house. As they approached, he could see they were armed, and were beginning to spread out and encircle the house. Sam ran to his son's room, and told Van the house was surrounded by bandits. Sam grabbed a rifle. From a window he saw the bandit who appeared to be the leader, heading toward the house. Sam shot that bandit off his horse.

Then the shooting began in earnest. The women and children took shelter in one room, while Sam and Van kept up a steady fire at the bandits for about an hour. Van was never hit. His father got a flesh wound in one leg, and one bullet skinned his nose; but he continued to shoot at any Mexican that showed his head.

When the bandits had ridden up to the ranch, they found two of the ranch hands, José Sanchez and another boy, at the corral milking. The boys were taken prisoners but not harmed. After an hour of shooting from the house, the bandits realized that the ranchmen were determined to fight; so they let José go to the house, demanding surrender. The bandits threatened to kill the other boy if José did not return. Sam and Van told José to tell the bandits to go to hell; that they would never

surrender. But, the women of the house begged them to let the bandits have the keys to the store, if they would take what they wanted and leave. The ladies impressed upon the two men that it was foolish for them to try to hold out against forty-odd bandits. Finally, this offer was made to the bandits, and accepted by them.

The bandits now had unmolested freedom of the store and the post office. They then put José under armed guard, forcing him to lead a few of the Mexican bandits to the pasture where Mr. Brite kept his best saddle horses—about as good as could be found anywhere in Texas. The bandits seemed in no hurry, for they evidently had full confidence in the success of their plans. Besides, they had sentries guarding the roads leading to the ranch, and these men were only a mile away.

Meanwhile, on the road from Candelaria, over the Rim, came Mickey Welch who had the mail contract from Valentine to Candelaria. He was due that morning from Candelaria, and was on schedule. In the hack, drawn by two horses, were two Texas Mexican passengers. Welch was stopped by the sentries, who shot the two passengers and took Mickey prisoner to the store. There they hanged him by his feet to the rafters, and cut his throat. It is presumed that Mickey and the two passengers were killed because they recognized some of the band. Mickey was part Mexican, and knew all the Mexicans in the Candelaria area; so he was sure to have known some of the bandits. No one in the Neill house knew of the brutal murders, of course, until the bandits had gone.

There was great anxiety at the Neill house. The Neills knew that the preacher, the Reverend H. M. Bandy, with Mrs. Bandy and two young ladies, were due to drive up to the ranch at any time now. Van Neill sent Crescencia Natividad, the cook, out to the bandits to tell them of the expected arrival of the preacher and his party, and begged the bandits not to harm them. The bandits returned a message that if the preacher and his party would go to the house and remain there, they would be unharmed.

The bandits looted the store of the best merchandise, such as shoes, clothes, and other more costly items. They emptied full bags of beans and corn on the ground, in order to fill the bags with the merchandise they wanted to take with them. They dressed themselves in new clothes and shoes, and attempted to break into the safe that had \$65 in it, but failed. They destroyed much of the merchandise they could not take with them.

While this was going on, the Reverend H. M. Bandy and his party arrived. Plans had been made weeks previously that this little group would have a joyous Christmas together. In the party were Mrs. Bandy, Miss Lovie Neill of Marfa, and Miss Lela Weatherby of Fort Davis. The bandits sized-up the Ford and its passengers, then allowed them to go on to the house. Once inside, all those imprisoned in the house knelt, and Brother Bandy led them in prayer. They were still afraid the bandits would attack the house again before leaving; so the two Neills picked up their rifles and took positions at the windows. The preacher asked for a rifle, and also took a position at one of the windows. (Circuit preachers in those days were practical men.)

Most of the plans of the bandits had worked out fine thus far; but

there was one early visitor who had not been seen by the bandits, and who was able to get word to Mr. Brite in Marfa. This visitor was James L. Cobb, who lived with his family about a mile and a half from the ranch. Hearing shots, Cobb had driven his old Ford within sight of the ranch, and saw what was going on. He rushed back to his house, put his family in the car, and drove to the nearest telephone—at D. C. ("Doc") Gourley's place (the Kennersley ranch), twelve miles to the east. Soon telegraph wires all over the area were carrying news of the raid.

When Mr. Brite at Marfa received word of the trouble, he immediately called Colonel Langhorne, the Commander of the Cavalry troops. He also called the Texas Rangers and the Customs officers, as well as the Presidio County Sheriff, Ira Cline. Ranchmen all over the area were called upon to assist with the transportation of troops. Cars were loaded with cavalry troops, ranchmen, and officers; saddles were piled on the hoods and fenders of cars heading for the Brite ranch. They could not know that all the Brite horses had been stolen by the bandits.

At Valentine, where a detachment of Troop "G" of the 8th Cavalry was stationed, similar activity took place. Some of the soldiers were transported with their equipment in private cars; others started out with all the horses. These horses were the first mounts to reach the ranch, and they joined the rest of their troop—those from the Evertt ranch. A troop had also been sent from Ruidosa to join Troop "G" from Evertt's ranch, and the troop from Indio followed with the pack train and more supplies. Poses from Sierra Blanca and Van Horn, made up of ranchmen and townspeople, were soon heading for the Brite ranch.

At all the Army camps, the soldiers were about to enjoy a good Christmas dinner when orders were received to mount up and pursue the raiders. At once, the soldiers were on the trail of the bandits, and they were a mad bunch of troopers, having been cheated out of a Christmas dinner.

Among the first to reach the ranch from Marfa, besides Mr. Brite and Colonel Langhorne and his soldiers, were U. S. Customs Officer Grover Webb, Rangers Clint Holden, A. H. Woelber, Boone Oliphant, Sheriff Ira Cline, and several prominent Marfa area ranchmen who furnished their cars. It was noon when the cars, loaded with officers and soldiers, arrived. The bandits were about to go off the Candelaria Rim, eight miles away, when the Americans arrived. This was the upper trail, known as the Knight trail. The road from the ranch to this trail was not as good as that which led to the town of Candelaria, but the cars went over the rough roads and reached the Rim while some of the bandits with the stolen loot on their horses were still in sight. The soldiers and officers with rifles were able to get many shots at the bandits, wounding some and causing them to drop some of their loot. However, the road down the Rim Rock was not passable for cars, and the ranchers and soldiers were unable to follow the bandits in their cars.

The next day, a large mounted posse of ranchmen, rangers and soldiers was made up at the Fitzgerald ranch. The names and exact number of this revenge army were never listed, but from the report of Bud Weaver to his Captain Fox, there were seven rangers with him. Four of the ranchmen who lived in this bandit-infested area were also along. These



Aerial view of the Candelaria Rim trail, where the mesa on Brite Ranch breaks away west toward the roughlands of the Rio Grande.



Going down the old Knight Trail westward from the mesa of the Brite Ranch toward the roughlands of the Rio Grande.

were Raymond Fitzgerald, Buck Pool, John Pool, and Tom Snider. With them were some of the soldiers of the two troops. They left the Fitzgerald ranch about dark of December 26, 1917, and by two o'clock in the morning, on the 27th, they were in Pilares, Mexico, where the bandits had gone with their loot. When the posse surrounded the village of Pilares where the raiders slept, they showed the bandits no mercy for the brutal murders committed at the Brite ranch.

It was this invasion that the Adjutant General's office in Austin later investigated, resulting in the disbanding of Captain Fox's Ranger Company. There was criticism voiced about the killings at Pilares, opinion being that some innocent people had been killed. These complaints were made by the Carranza Government. It reported that the Mayor of Candelaria was among the victims. If Candelaria had a mayor or a leader, he was undoubtedly a member of the bandit gang, and as treacherous as a cross between a polecat and a coyote. Anyone living in that particular area, and those who were familiar with it, were aware that no innocent Mexicans lived in Candelaria and Pilares, Mexico. Some of those killed may not have taken active part in the Brite raid, but they had unquestionably been party to other raids. Much of the loot taken from the Brite store was found in their homes.

The posse also recovered some of the horses stolen from the Brite ranch. Among the stolen goods was also found a saddle belonging to Joe Sitter, a mounted Customs Officer who had been brutally slain by Mexicans on May 23, 1915.

Had these bandits not been cleaned out, they would have carried on further plundering of other border ranches. The exact number of Mexicans killed in the Pilares invasion was never recorded—estimates ran from eighteen to fifty; however, on good authority, it seems there were about thirty-five. The Americans had no loss of life and only a few were wounded.

This invasion was intended to impress upon the inhabitants of Pilares and other border camps in that area that they could not expect mercy if they continued to use these communities as hideouts for thieves and murderers. But it did not. The Nevill ranch raid took place in 1918. Following the Nevill ranch raid, which raid will be reported later in this article, two troops of the 8th Cavalry invaded Pilares again. The Mexicans apparently believed that after the investigation of the first Pilares incident, the Rangers and Cavalry troops would not dare enter Mexico again to avenge the ranchers.

#### THE NEVILL RANCH RAID

The last big raid in the Big Bend took place on the Ed Nevill ranch March 25, 1918. Ed (E. W.) Nevill probably knew the entire Big Bend better than any other man. He was one of the famous Texas Ranger Nevills of early days. He was a half-brother to Captain C. L. and Bob Nevill, who also were early ranchmen of the Big Bend. His wife, three daughters and a younger son lived in Van Horn; but Ed and his eighteen-year-old son, Glenn, spent most of the time at the ranches on the Border.

He had lived near the Rio Grande in the Fort Hancock area during the



Capote Falls on the Brite ranch, estimated to be 170 feet high. This spring has never weakened, even during the 1950-54 drought.



A short stop for noon rest, while moving a herd on the Brite Capote Ranch. The greater portion of this large ranch is a level plateau (mesa), which breaks off sharply to the Rim toward Rio Grande badlands. The Candelaria Trail and the old Knight Trail are the only two passages from the mesa to the Rio Grande.

early years of the Border troubles. Later, he lived down the Rio Grande in the Chisos Mountains country in the lower part of the Big Bend. He knew the language and ways of the Mexicans well. His relations with them had always been congenial up until the time of the raid on his ranch and the resulting murder of his son.

In 1918, Nevill and his partner, John Wyatt, took over the old Prude Ranch in Hudspeth County, in the upper western section of the Big Bend. This place was just west of Green Draw, where it empties into the Rio Grande. A good well was there, and even today a large irrigation farm is in operation there. Tom Bell was Nevill's nearest neighbor, about twelve miles to the west. To the east, about fifteen miles away, was the Evertt ranch.

Nevill and Wyatt also leased a place six miles down the river in Presidio County. At this place Nevill had a small herd of cows and calves. It was the only part of his ranch that was fenced, and the only place where he could separate the calves from the cows at the time of weaning. This was the place raided on the night of March 25, 1918.

It must be noted that only a few ranches had telephones in those days. The lower ranch had none. The telephone at the upper ranch had been connected with military headquarters at Marfa by the Signal Corps, since the cavalymen were stationed in the vicinity of this upper ranch.

On March 25, 1918, Captain Matlack, Troop K, 8th Cavalry, at Caldelaria, received a report from one of his informers across the river in Mexico, that bandits were planning a raid in the vicinity of the Bell ranch. Captain Matlack relayed this information to Colonel Langhorne, District Commander, at Marfa. Colonel Langhorne ordered Captain Anderson, Troop G, 8th Cavalry, at Evertt's ranch, to investigate. A patrol, under command of Lieutenant Gaines, set out immediately for the Bell ranch in the Bosque Bonito area. They found no trace of bandits, and turned back toward the Evertt ranch.

The detachment at Van Horn was also alerted. Ed Nevill was in Van Horn at the time, and learned of the report from members of the cavalry unit there. Nevill started for his ranch immediately. In those days, the only way you could travel in that rough country was by horseback. He left Van Horn about 10:30 that morning, and reached the lower ranch at sundown, making the 35-mile trip in about eight hours, averaging better than four miles an hour.

At the ranch with Glenn was the Mexican caretaker and his wife and three small children. They had Ed's supper ready for him, since they were expecting him that evening. Glenn had not heard the report that bandits were in the area.

After supper, Ed and Glenn were in the front room talking over what was to be done the next day. Suddenly they heard a loud commotion of horses. They thought it might be the soldiers returning from the Bell ranch, on their way to Evertt's ranch.

Nevill looked out the door when he heard the horsemen, and saw they were Mexicans, not the cavalymen. As Ed and Glenn were getting their rifles, the bandits started shooting at them through the door. Some shots

# Van Horn Advocate

Vol. 8.

Van Horn, Texas, Saturday, March 30, 1918

No. 29

## Mexican Bandits Murdered Glenn Nevill

### In a Raid on the Nevill Ranch, on This Side of the Rio Grande, South of Here, 32 Miles, Monday night.—A Mexican Woman Cook was also Killed, 1 American Soldier and 10 Bandits were Killed and 10 Bandits Wounded in Running Fight Near Pilares.

The Nevill ranch, situated 32 miles south of Van Horn, Texas, was raided by about 50 Mexican bandits, Monday evening just after sun down.

Two persons belonging at the ranch were killed.

The dead are: Glenn Nevill, American. Senora Adrian Castillo, Mexican woman.

Glenn Nevill was about 18 years old. He was one of the best boys in this country, a small but strong, manly boy who for some years had been able to do more work on the ranch than most men could do and he was a willing worker. He was fearless, but always treated the Mexicans in that vicinity friendly, as did his father who was one of the owners and the manager of the ranch.

Those present and belonging on the ranch at the time of the raid were:

E. W. Nevill and son Glenn, Americans.

Adrian Castillo, his wife and three little boys (the boys were between the ages of three and eight years)—Mexicans.

E. W. Nevill gives the following account of his escape:

"The ranch is located a hundred yards or so from the river. Soon after sun down and just after the supper dishes were cleaned, my son Glenn and myself were in our room and Adrian Castillo (the Mexican laborer) and his family were in their room, the east one. A hail separated the two rooms.

"I heard the train of the raiders and went to the hall door and about 50 steps away and estimated them to be about fifty in number. The raiders took refuge behind the chicken house and began firing at our house. Bullets passed through that old log house just like hail. I stepped through the hall to the other door and saw several raiders at the south-east corner of the house, with their rifles in their hands waiting for us to come out. Knowing that it was impossible to stay in the house, I got my Winchester and shot till that buck backed behind the house.

"I shot one of the raiders in the stomach, but do not know whether I killed any of them or not."

"As soon as they disappeared I said to my boy, 'Come on,' and I started to run, my rifle in hand. I either fell or was knocked down twice—I do not know which. However, I kept running in a hail of bullets. I was holding the gun in both hands and a bullet struck the barrel and knocked it from my grasp. I left the rifle for it was practically empty for I had fired it some at the raiders before I left the house—and I had no cartridges in my pockets. The

**Start Right.**

**BY** opening a savings account with this bank. A dollar saved is far better than a dollar earned. One reason is that you don't have to work so hard to collect it and it will soon be working for you. ❖ ❖ ❖

VAN HORN STATE BANK

bullets were still coming. I ran into an arroyo or ditch turned down and went through a fence where I paused to look back to see about my boy and found that he was not with me. I knew then that he was dead. Being unarmed I hid in the brush. The raiders came to look for me and once came within twenty feet of me. I stayed in the brush until one o'clock in the morning, when the soldiers from G troop 8th Cavalry arrived. I went back to the house and found that my boy had been shot all to pieces and the Mexican woman was also dead. The raiders took both mine and my boys rifles, the boots from his feet, everything in and out of the house, grocery supplies, clothes, (even the children's clothes), bedding, horse-shoes, horse-shoals, nine, head of horses and one mule, that were in the corral, in fact, everything that they could carry of."

Adrian Castillo, the husband of the dead Mexican woman, says: "When Mr. Nevill told us to 'come on' Glenn Nevill started to follow his father, then turned toward the corner of the house away from the raiders. I was trying to get my wife to hide down behind some things in the room and wife, when a bullet struck her in the breast and she said, 'I am wounded, I am going to die.' I then ran out of the door. Glenn was coming back to the door. I saw him fall. I ran straight out from the door. They were shooting at me. I had nothing to shoot with. They kept shooting at me, or where they thought I was, till I ran about a mile. I then got a mare and rode eight miles to no-

tify the soldiers. I thought that all at the ranch would be dead. But Mr. Nevill was alive and the raiders, who were gone when the soldiers got there, had not hurt my three little boys."

A hand grenade of dynamite and dynamite caps in a bag of rawhide was found at the ranch where the raiders hid it. They evidently intended to blow the house to pieces.

The soldier at the adobe ranch, where the Mexican first notified them, telephoned the news to Van Horn, and messages to their commanding officer at Valverde and Col. Langworthy at Marfa. Mrs. Watson at the telephone central here gave splendid service from the moment the first call arrived at 11:15 p. m. Monday, all through the exciting time, which lasted until late in the afternoon Tuesday, when the raiders were brought here.

When the first telephoned news of the raid was received at 11:15 p. m. Monday, the sheriff here, E. M. Daugherty, was notified immediately and left for the scene with two armed men in cars. The raiders at Valverde also went to the scene as soon as notified. Outlaw gangs which could do good work in handling the messages. For at first it was thought that the boy had a chance to live, but he was dead, before the doctor arrived, having been shot across the throat, mostly in the head and his head lacerated with the barrels of the raiders' rifles. Mrs. Nevill, who was here, controlled her emotions bravely through the entire ordeal.

A phone message received yesterday morning from the upper Nevill ranch stated that G Troop

of the 8th Cavalry, who were in hot pursuit of the bandits, had killed 20 of the raiders and found Mr. Nevill's baggage on the body of one of the dead Mexicans.

Glenn Nevill's boots on another dead Mexican, some of the horses and other property belonging to the raided ranch, in a fight with the raiders near Pilares. One American soldier was killed in the fight.

Sheriff D. M. Daugherty received a telegram yesterday which practically confirmed the above phone message.

LATER, The American soldier killed was Private Theodore K. Albrite. Ten raiders were killed and ten hurt. Two U. S. Cavalry horses were killed. The troop of Americans found quantities of dynamite and ammunition at Pilares, also some loads similar to the one found at the Nevill ranch.

The Nevill Castle, Co. owned by John M. Wyatt, of El Paso, and E. W. Nevill, will send up their names, show them away and absolve the raided ranch."

The relatives of Glenn Nevill who were in attendance at the funeral, Wednesday, were: His wife Mrs. Mary Traylor, his sister Mrs. E. A. Ake and wife, Mr. and Mrs. E. E. Nix, of El Paso, his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Nevill, his brother and three sisters. Mr. Ake and Mrs. Traylor are brother and sister of Mrs. Nevill and Mrs. Nix is Mrs. Nevill's aunt. John M. Wyatt, the partner of Mr. Nevill in the ranch left El Paso, in the early hours of the morning following the raid, bringing Dr. Cruise, and remained to attend the funeral.

Printed notes cannot express the deep sympathy that friends

feel for the bereaved loved ones of this splendid boy.

The funeral of Senora Adrian Castillo, was held immediately following that of Glenn Nevill, and was attended by all the Mexican population and many Americans.

House Bill No. 15  
AN ACT

Be it Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas: SECTION 1. If any person shall, at any time or place within the State, during the time the United States of America is at war with any other nation, use any language in the presence and hearing of another person, or concerning the United States of America, the entry, or the continuance, of the United States of America in the war, or of and concerning the army, navy, or marine corps of the United States of America, or of and concerning any flag, standard, color, or ensign of the United States of America, or any imitation thereof, or the uniform of any officer of the United States of America, which language is disloyal to the United States of America, or abusive in character, and calculated to bring into disrepute the United States of America, the entry, or continuance, of the United States of America in the war, the army, navy, marine corps of the United States of America, or of any flag, standard, color or ensign, or of the uniform of any officer of the United States of America, or of and concerning the army, navy, or marine corps of the United States of America, or of and concerning any flag, standard, color or ensign, or of the uniform of any officer of the United States of America, shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and shall be punished by confinement in the State penitentiary for any period of time not less than two years, nor more than twenty five years.

SEC. 2. Any person who shall, at any time and place within this State during the time the United States is at war with any other nation, or nation, or in any manner, or in any language, anything of and concerning the United States, the entry or continuance of the United States, in the war, or of and concerning the army, navy, or marine corps of the United States, any flag, standard, color, or ensign of the United States, or any imitation thereof, or uniform of any of its officers, which is abusive in character, (Continued on fourth page.)

hit very close. The bandits had taken their positions near several small buildings close to the ranch house. Ed saw five of them around the chicken house. He waited until they emptied their rifles, then fired back. He believed he hit two of them.

Seeing it was hopeless for them to stay in the house, surrounded by bandits, Ed and Glenn made a dash for a ditch about 250 yards from the house. Ed led the way. He told Glenn to keep to the right of the ditch, and he went ahead, thinking he would draw all the fire from the bandits at the chicken house. They fired on him, knocking the rifle from his hand, and knocking his hat off; but Ed made it to the ditch. He rose up to look over the top of the ditch, trying to locate Glenn. He could not see the boy, so went down the ditch and across an open stretch to the edge of the brush, still searching for Glenn. He stayed in the brush a long time, but moved a lot to cover up his tracks, so the bandits could not locate him. He heard the bandits several times as they tried to find him. It seemed like a couple of hours to Ed. The raid took place about 9 p.m., and it was after midnight when the raiders left. He continued searching the brush for Glenn until he heard the cavalry coming. Meanwhile, the Mexican ranch hand had escaped and gone about six miles when he met the cavalry patrol in command of Lieutenant Gaines, returning from the Bell ranch.

They found Glenn about four feet from the house. He had been shot in the head, and his face and head had been beaten and bruised, either with clubs or butts of the bandits' rifles. Many bandits from that section of Mexico were heavy smokers of marihuana, and in this particular area were known for their fiendish brutalities with wounded and helpless victims.

Besides killing Glenn, the bandits also murdered the Mexican ranch hand's wife, probably because she had recognized some members of the band. They did not harm the three small children. Eleven of Nevill's saddle horses and all the ranch supplies, clothes, and bedding were taken by the raiders.

When the cavalry patrol got the report of the raid from the Mexican ranch hand, the message was sent to Marfa, where Colonel Langhorne received it at 12 midnight. He ordered Captain Anderson to take Troop G from Evertt's ranch and get on the bandits' trail. The troop arrived at Nevill's at 3:30 a.m. Troop A, in command of Captain Tate at Marfa, loaded onto a freight train, was taken to Valentine, unloaded, and made an overnight march of about twenty-five miles, over the Candelaria Rim on the Old Knight Trail, to the Hester Ranch (old Knight Ranch). Then they went about twenty-five miles toward the Rio Grande, where they joined Troop G, that was now hot on the trail of the bandits.

The bandits did not cross the river at Nevill's, but took a roundabout way among the mountains on the Texas side, attempting to throw the soldiers off their trail. Troop G had a good scout and a couple of ranchmen who were experts at following trails. The bandits crossed the river near Pilares, and the two U. S. troops followed them into Mexico. A fifty-mule pack train, loaded with supplies, in charge of an expert crew of fourteen men had been sent up the river from the base at Candelaria to meet the troops and go with them into Mexico.

Revenge for the brutal slaying of Glenn Nevill was uppermost in the minds of the troopers as they crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico. With the loaded pack trains and the rations each soldier carried on his horse, the troopers were prepared and determined to stay on the bandits' trail until they overtook them. The soldiers did not have far to ride, for the bandits had planned an ambush. Reinforced by men from nearby Pilares, the bandits were also backed up Carranzistas soldiers who were stationed down the river.

The worst and largest number of bandits on the Border were located in the Pilares area, three miles from the Rio Grande and across from Candelaria. Nearly every one of the many brutal murders and other crimes was traced to this area. The inhabitants of these settlements harbored the bandits, helped them plan the raids, and it was to their houses the bandits returned with the loot stolen from the Texas ranches.

A furious battle took place. The official report stated that thirty-three Mexicans were killed, and one American soldier, Private Albert of Troop A. How many Mexicans were wounded and escaped was not known. Much of the fighting by the Mexicans was done from the houses in the Pilares area, but our soldiers went after them there, killing bandits and destroying houses. This was now the second time the settlement was invaded by our soldiers. Some of the Nevill horses and part of the loot were found after the battle. It was believed that twenty-nine of the Nevill raiders were among the thirty-three killed by the soldiers.

The invasion by the troops did much to show the murderous outlaws of Pilares that they would not be safe even on the Mexico side of the Rio Grande after they raided Texas ranches. The Nevill raid ended the big raids on the ranches, although small numbers of cattle and horses were later stolen and taken into Mexico.

There were some opinions that the Army and other enforcement officers could have done more than they did; but those who knew the facts realized that everything possible was done. After the Nevill raid, it was said that if the soldiers had been at the ranch, the raid would not have occurred. The soldiers could not be at every ranch at all times. During the early evening of the Nevill ranch raid, they were in the vicinity, checking the report of a raid that would be attempted on Tom Bell's ranch.

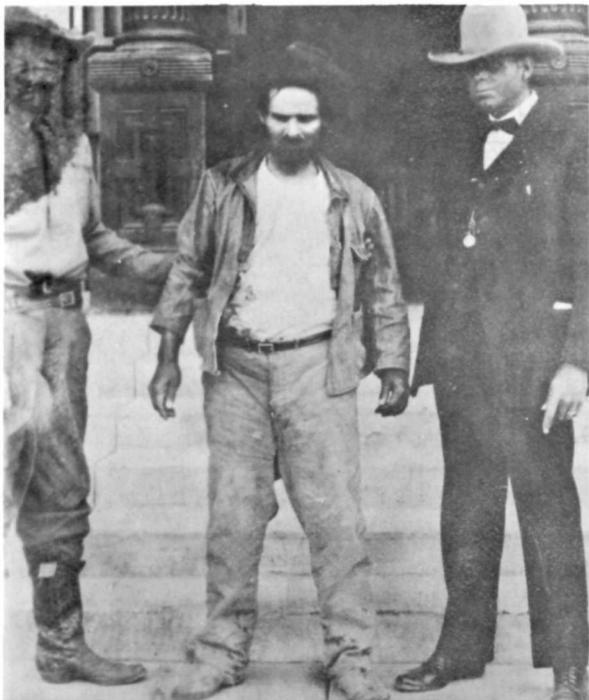
The writer knew Ed Nevill for many years after the raid, and does not think that he ever felt that negligence of the Cavalry was responsible for his son's death. He was so discouraged with conditions along the Border that he sold his ranching interests and moved to Marfa. He opened a restaurant in Marfa, called the Longhorn Cafe, and most of his customers were soldiers. Later, he moved to Alpine where he operated the Alpine Cafe. Legend has it that every time Ed Nevill heard of a bandit raid in the Big Bend area, he would close his cafe for a few days and take to the mountains on horseback with his 30-30 carbine, hoping to collect a bandit scalp or two in reprisal for his son's death.

#### MISCELLANEOUS RAIDS

Only those ranchmen, rangers, border patrolmen, and soldiers who were



Ed Nevill on the bank of the Rio Grande.



Government Scout named Kerr, Mexican Bandit M. Dominguez, and Texas Ranger, Capt. Jerry Grey.

in this country during the five years (1915-20) that the bandits were on their worst rampage knew exactly what conditions were. In addition to ranches in this dangerous zone were two large mines, several small ones, and several candelilla wax plants. There were a number of farms along the river, operated by Americans; but most of the farmers pulled out when the bandits began giving them serious trouble.

One farmer who stayed was Mr. J. J. Kilpatrick, at Candelaria, who had a large cotton farm and trading post. He mounted a machinegun on the roof of his store, and let the people across the river know that he did not intend to be raided. His threat evidently worked, for he was never troubled. Incidentally, Kilpatrick raised the first cotton in this part of the State, in 1910, and in 1913 he had the first gin, and hauled the first bale of cotton over that famous Candelaria Rim to Marfa.

The root of all troubles the Texans had in this area can be traced to renegade Carranza and Villa soldiers who were on the loose most of the time these raids were going on. It is fortunate that such a man as Colonel George T. Langhorne was in command of the Big Bend District during this time. He sent his troops into Mexico without waiting for authority from headquarters at Fort Sam Houston. He believed in getting on the bandits' trail while it was still hot. He wanted to work in harmony with all Mexican officials in an endeavor to stop the raids, and tried to; but many Carranza officials had no intention of cooperating. In fact, many of the Carranza soldiers took part in the raids. When stolen cattle and horses were traced to the Carranza army, Colonel Langhorne forced the Carranza Government to pay for the stolen animals. Some of the Texas ranchmen received \$50 to \$60 a head for cows or steers that had been butchered by a Carranza garrison. Colonel Langhorne had an ace card that he used to force payment for the stolen property, as I shall explain.

There being no railroad in that part of Mexico, it was difficult for the Mexican Government to keep their federal soldiers in necessary supplies while they were stationed near Ojinaga, Mexico, across from Presidio, Texas. Therefore, Mexican troops were allowed to cross the river and purchase supplies at Presidio. When Colonel Langhorne had a just claim against bandits of the Carranza forces, he would cut off their supplies until the Mexican Government paid the ranchmen for the stock.

The writer does not know whether Colonel Langhorne, Captain Matlack, or other officers always had permission from their headquarters to take such drastic action as pursuing the bandits and killing them; but their immediate actions surely slowed down the Border raids on Big Bend ranches and trading posts. There were many other incidents along the Border of the Big Bend in those days, and by now the reader should realize something of what the ranchers in that area were up against.

There is no question of the invaluable services the Army rendered in protecting the Border area. Even though the detachments of Infantry or Cavalry at the various ranches were small, their presence could not be ignored by the bandits, and surely served to discourage many raids that might have taken place. Of mutual help were the ranchers, who became as good fighters as the troopers became good cowpunchers! The ranchmen were particularly grateful to Colonel Langhorne, who was also well



Col. George T. Langhorne, 8th Cavalry Commander, who pursued the Glenn Springs raiders into Mexico with two troops of his regiment.



Rugged terrain along the Rio Grande

liked by the officers and men in his command. He handled a tough job well, and made many friends among the ranchmen and soldiers. After a full military life, including many years of foreign service, Colonel Langhorne retired. It should be mentioned here that while this article was being written, the writer received his copy of the Winter 1962 issue of *Saber News*, a journal printed by and for the veterans of the cavalry. This issue carried an article about the passing of Colonel George T. Langhorne, 94, of 1120 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois. I pause to salute a brave and wonderful military officer.

There were other miscellaneous raids along the Border country that might be mentioned. On March 24, 1919, twenty-five head of cattle were stolen from the Nunez ranch at the foot of the Chinati Mountains, above Ruidosa. The cattle were pastured about eight miles from the Rio Grande. The theft was reported to Captain Klepfer, Commander of Troop M, 8th Cavalry, stationed at Ruidosa, who received orders from Colonel Langhorne to go after the cattle. The trail led to the river and across into Mexico. The troop overtook the bandits with the cattle after dark. There was a brief skirmish, and six of those bandits never stole cattle again. The cavalry troopers now had to show their abilities as cowpunchers in order to get the herd back to Texas. There were only twenty-four of the herd left, one having been butchered; but they brought the meat of that one animal back on a pack mule. On their way, the soldiers encountered

**FORTY YEARS AGO**  
**(Wednesday)**  
**February 12, 1919**

Thirty words were required by the Eighth U. S. Cavalry commander at Candelaria, Texas, to tell a vivid story. The message reads: "Jan. 22 Louis Munoz entered the United States one and one-half miles south of Candelaria and stole two pigs. Feb. 10 Luis Munoz was hanged by Romero Madrid."

a terrific rain and hailstorm; however, they held the herd, and had them safely across the river before daylight the next day.

On February 10, 1919, Romero Madrid, who had a *ranchito* in the same area, caught a lone bandit who had stolen two of his pigs. The bandit from Mexico was identified as Luis Munoz. Madrid hanged him from a cottonwood tree near the creek, one and a half miles from Candelaria. The Captain sent in the report to the Colonel, who thought it was such a good story he gave it to the press. It was widely published at that time. Forty years later, February 10, 1959, in the column "Forty Years Ago" in the *El Paso Times*, it was published again. (See insert.)

About sixty miles down the river from the Nevill country (shown on the map), J. F. Tigner had a ranch up San Antonio Canyon near the lower end of the Chinati Mountains. He was only about six miles from the Rio Grande. It is shown on a troop commander's report, while the cavalry was at Indio, that on December 1, 1917, bandits raided Tigner's ranch, stole cattle, and took the ranch foreman, Justo Gonzales, into Mexico. Lieutenant Matlack (who later became famous as "Captain" Matlack) with twenty-one of his troopers, accompanied by Mr. Tigner, followed the bandits' fresh trail which went to Buena Vista in Mexico.

The American patrol was ambushed when they got on the Mexican side. Five of the soldiers' horses were shot from under them, one soldier was killed, and one wounded; but the cavalry troops whipped the Mexicans out of the village. Later, they found the body of Tigner's murdered foreman. They also found carcasses of some of the stolen cattle that had been butchered. During the battle, Mr. Tigner was separated from the soldiers, and hid himself in a cave. The soldiers searched for Tigner until dark, then returned to their troop without him. The following morning, Matlack and his troop returned to the deserted village, where they found Tigner. Matlack reported that he had seen eighteen dead Mexicans during the day of the fight; but from his informers he learned, a few days later, that there were thirty-five killed and wounded.

Two days later, this patrol was riding up the river on the American side, just above Buena Vista, opposite Las Mimbres, when they were fired upon by Mexicans from the Mexican side of the river. The soldiers went across the river, killed twelve of the attackers, and destroyed all the horses. The soldiers had no casualties. The towns of Buena Vista and Las Mimbres had the same reputation as the bandit hideout of Pilaes. The 8th Cavalry had been warned about these hideouts by the 6th Cavalry, which they relieved, so Lieutenant Matlack proceeded to destroy those villages.

On December 17, 1917, Matlack and his patrol were again riding up the river, near San Jose. Across the river was a patrol of Mexican soldiers riding down the river. They were Carranza soldiers, and one of them took a shot at Lieutenant Matlack. Matlack, an expert shot, picked that Carranza soldier off his horse, and the horse came across the river to the Texas side. The horse turned out to be the one belonging to the murdered ranch foreman of the Tigner ranch. About this time Mr. Tigner abandoned ranching near the Rio Grande, and moved what cattle he had left to his other ranch near Marfa.



Sutherland Ranch in the Chinati Mountains, 25 miles south of Marfa, in Pinto Canyon.



Early-day round-up in the Big Bend, when night herding was the order. Picture made on the Kokernot 06 Ranch

During August 1919, on one of their daily plane patrols of the Border, Lieutenants H. G. Peterson and Paul H. Davis were forced to land in Mexico, because of motor trouble. They were captured by Mexican bandits and held for \$15,000 ransom. This group of bandits was under the leadership of Jesus Renteria, known along the Border as "Gaucho," meaning a "hook," because he wore a steel hook replacing his left hand.

At that time the Bloys Encampment was being held near Fort Davis, and since a large group of ranchmen were assembled there, the \$15,000 was hurriedly raised. The ransom money was turned over to Captain Leonard F. Matlack, now Commander of Troop K, 8th Cavalry. Under arrangements made between the bandits and Captain Matlack, \$7500 was to be paid when each aviator was delivered into the custody of Captain Matlack. On August 18, 1919, Lieutenant Peterson was delivered, and the \$7500 ransom paid.

On the following day, Lt. Davis was to be released to Captain Matlack and a similar sum was to be paid. At the appointed time and place, Captain Matlack overheard the bandits talking, and from their conversation he learned that they had been instructed by their leader, Jesus Renteria, to murder Captain Matlack and Lieutenant Davis, rather than permit them to return to the United States. Captain Matlack pulled a gun on the bandit who had Davis in his custody, and forced him to return to the band, with instructions that "Gaucho" be advised that no more ransom money would be paid, and that he (Matlack) was returning to Mexico the following day with his soldiers, to pursue Renteria and his gang. The \$7500 was not paid to the bandits, but was returned to the Marfa ranchmen.

While Matlack was in Mexico, pursuing the bandits, General Dickman, Commanding General of the Southern Division at Fort Sam Houston, issued a statement to the effect that the \$7500 ransom should be paid to the bandits. General Dickman was under the impression that the ransom money was federal funds.

Later, in February, 1920, U. S. Senator Albert B. Fall, of New Mexico, held an investigation in El Paso. Here again it was implied that the ransom money was federal funds. Captain Matlack emphatically denied this, and explained that the money had been raised by Marfa area ranchmen. The entire hearing at El Paso was a cheap publicity scheme of Senator Fall's; the Senator at that time was seeking the post of Secretary of the Interior. Readers will recall the "Teapot Dome Scandal" that developed during Fall's tenure as Secretary of Interior.

Unfortunately, Captain Matlack became the victim of Albert Fall's cheap publicity scheme. The Captain held a two-year war commission, and when this expired in 1920, it was not renewed by the Army. To get back into the cavalry, Matlack re-enlisted as a private, and by 1927, when he retired, he had only attained the rank of Master Sergeant.

Even today, stealing of livestock, particularly horses, takes place along the Rio Grande. During Christmas week, 1958, Mr. Caven Woodward, manager of the Lykes Steamship Company's 0-2 Ranch in southern Brewster County, accompanied his family to South Texas for a short vacation. When he returned to the ranch a week later, he discovered that four of



Ransom money to be paid Mexican bandits for release of two American aviators captured in Mexico. Left to right: unidentified officer of Marfa bank; H. M. Fenneli, officer of Marfa bank; Lt. Henry Coffield.



World War I DeHavilland plane used in patrolling the Rio Grande. This picture taken in the Pilares area where aviators made forced landing in Mexico and were captured.

his prize saddle horses were missing. A heavy snow had fallen during that week, and Mr. Woodward was able to trail the horses to the Rio Grande, where they were crossed between Castelon and St. Helena Canyon (in the Big Bend National Park). Mr. Woodward learned from some of his ranch hands (natives of the northern section of the State of Coahuilla, Mexico) that Sr. Vacunda Cabellera, who ranched close to the Rio Grande in Mexico, had also lost some of his horses. Sr. Cabellera knew of two Mexicans who were reputed horse thieves who lived in the small village of Salada, about twenty miles southwest of the town of San Carlos, which is across the river from Castelon.

Mr. Woodward contacted Texas Ranger Jim Nance at Sierra Blanca, Texas. He also had Sr. Caballera to contact Ranger Captain Lupe Gonzales of the state of Coahuilla. Capt. Gonzales and two of his rangers, with Mr. Woodward, Ranger Nance, and Sr. Cabellera, timed their arrival at the village of Salado at night when the moon was full. There were only a dozen houses in this small village. Mr. Woodward and one of the Mexican rangers took sentry positions on the hillside overlooking the village, and Capt. Gonzales and the other Mexican ranger, Ranger Nance, and Sr. Cabellera went from house to house in search of the two known horse thieves. Typical of Mexicans in Mexico when strangers and officers question them about a particular individual, all of the families in the homes pretended that they knew nothing about these two thieves. At the last house visited no answer was received from the knocks on the door. Enough noise was heard inside to convince the officers that someone was in hiding. Commands by the officers did not get a response from the individuals inside. Fortunately, Mr. Woodward's sentry position was directly behind this house. The officers finally decided to break down the door; and surely enough, the sought-after thieves were inside. It took a day and a half of border-style questioning and fifth degree patience and techniques to finally get the two men to admit that they had stolen the horses from the O-2 Ranch and the Cabellera ranch. And it took further "convincing" by the officers to make them tell where the horses were hidden.

A very interesting and typical Mexican behavior developed on the morning following the capture of the thieves. A half dozen women and children came to where the thieves were shackled, and pleaded their innocence and begged for their release. Mr. Woodward said that the Mexican officers reminded the women that they did not know anything about these men the night before, nor had they ever heard of them. Mr. Woodward stated that the Mexican officers exhibited the finest knowledge of how to analyze a problem of this kind. He, Woodward, had served one time as deputy and sheriff of Frio County in South Texas, and had much law enforcement background himself. He stated that Ranger Jim Nance was equally familiar with and proficient in knowing how to handle Mexican thieves. The horses were recovered and returned to their owners.

Many other border raids have occurred in the Big Bend area during the past forty years, but space will not permit writing about all of these.

The Rangers and other Texas law-enforcement officers, the members of the U. S. Border Patrol and U. S. Revenue Officers, and local law enforce-



Texas Ranger Jim Nance



Cavin Woodward, Manager of Lykes Steamship Co., 02 Ranch

(In 1959 these two men followed horse thieves into Mexico and recovered horses stolen from the 02 Ranch.)



Liquor smugglers captured near Mexican border.

ment officers have probably faced their worst problems with smuggling during prohibition days and during recent years, with narcotics smuggling.

In the cases of bandit raids on mining towns, villages and ranches along the Rio Grande during the early days, the law enforcement officers had one hundred per cent cooperation from ranchmen and citizens of this area. A different psychology developed in connection with the smuggling of liquor. As in other parts of the United States, many citizens of the border country were not in favor of the Volstead Act, and many liquor smugglers from Mexico passed through the ranch areas of the Big Bend without being molested by the ranchmen, except for a toll of a few bottles of liquor. Likewise, each village and city along the border had American bootleggers who were receiving the Mexican liquor, and they usually knew where the law enforcement officers might be when a delivery was to be made. The only time that some of the ranchmen became irked with the liquor smugglers was when the smugglers would steal a few ranch horses on their return to Mexico. When the smugglers were overtaken with stolen horses, usually a few were buried after the skirmish. Narcotics smuggling across the Rio Grande today is one of the most exasperating "headaches" that has ever faced the law-enforcement officers of the United States. The mountains and the canyons of the Big Bend continue to provide excellent protection to the smuggler.