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20th Century Shining Star:

Capt. Jim Riddles

Few Rangers have been held in higher esteem by his peers than was Jim Riddles. On September 27, 1910, in the tiny community of Windom in Fannin County, this future Hall of Fame Ranger came into the world. After graduating from nearby Honey Grove High School, Riddles attended Austin College in Sherman, Texas. There he earned his bachelor of science degree in business administration in 1936 and returned to Windom to teach math and coach the high school baseball team.

Future Texas Ranger Glenn Elliott, also a Windom native, was one of Riddles's players. In his book *Glenn Elliott: A Ranger's Ranger*, Elliott tells of Riddles's demand for executing the fundamentals—for himself and his players. This applied to both baseball and, later, the Rangers. According to Elliott, Riddles would not tolerate big swingers, and he hated strikeouts—unless, of course, they were his pitchers striking out adversaries. If his batter swung at a ball during practice and missed, Riddles insured that his hitters made future contact with the ball with his ever-present paddle, which would not miss that player's back end!

Unfortunately for the Texas school system but fortunately for the Texas Rangers, teaching school did not pay as well as the Texas Department of Public Safety. Riddles became a Highway Patrolman in 1941, but he did not remain there long. As most men were doing after America's entry into World War II, he joined the Army and was assigned to the Military Police. His

leadership abilities were soon apparent, and he was placed in Officer Candidate School. By the end of the war in Europe, Riddles had risen in rank to captain and was a veteran of both the Battle of the Bulge and Remagen Bridge. After the end of the war, he became the first provost marshal of Berlin. By 1946, he was out of the Army and back in the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Riddles entered the Texas Rangers on December 1, 1952. During the next fifteen years, he honed his skills as an investigator and interrogator. In 1967, he became the captain of Midland's Company E.

During his years as captain of that company, Riddles earned enormous respect from his men. He stated, "My Rangers don't need supervision in the field. If they needed field supervision, they wouldn't be Rangers." That kind of faith in his men inspired incredible loyalty from Riddles' Rangers, as they called themselves. One of these men summed it up best when he said, "I would have rather shot myself in the foot than have disappointed my captain."

Riddles never passed up an opportunity to impart his vast knowledge of law enforcement techniques throughout Texas and the country. Tragically, his great contributions were cut short by a fatal heart attack in 1975. Every Ranger in Company E attended the funeral of Jim Riddles in Honey Grove, Texas, many traveling from two hundred to seven hundred miles to do so. It was a final tribute to their fallen leader.



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