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No Shortage of Egos



as told to Robert Nieman by
Capt. David Byrnes, Ret.

As is the case with any profession, large egos are not unknown to some Rangers.



Capt. Jay Banks

When Captain Jay Banks died, friends and colleagues from all over the state and country attended his funeral. Jay was one of the best-known Rangers in history. He had gained national exposure and a bit of celebrity in 1956 when he appeared on national television on *The Today Show*, *Name That Tune*, and *What's My Line*.

Fame he may have had, but he was also a fine Ranger. In 1957, along with fellow Rangers Johnny Klevenhagen and Jim Ray, he had personally brought an end to the murderous career of the mad-dog killer Gene Paul Norris and his partner Bill Mumphy. The battle was a blaze of gunfire that would have done a Hollywood writer proud.

Captain David Byrnes, Company "B"'s sergeant at the time (a rank that would now be a lieutenant), relates the following story:

During Jay's funeral, the preacher went on and on as to how Jay was the greatest Texas Ranger who had ever lived. Jay was known to have had a pretty good ego, and he was probably enjoying—and agreeing with—the preacher.

All of us Rangers just smiled to ourselves and took the preacher's adoration for what it was—hero worship. Jay Banks was a good man, and in his day, he had been one of the best Rangers anyone had ever seen.

Maybe I shouldn't say all of us Rangers were smiling. This unending praise was mortifying to one particular Ranger, who was noted for an ego that could hardly fit into the state of Texas. For you see, ---- considered himself-not Jay Banks, or anyone else for that matter-to be the greatest Texas Ranger of all time.

After what seemed like forever, the service was finally completed and we filed out of the church. I was standing on the church steps with retired Company B Captain G. W. Burks. He turned to me and said, "David, have you seen ---- ?"

I told him that I hadn't since the end of the service.

"David, you better go check on him. Hearing that preacher going on and on that Jay was the greatest Ranger of all time probably caused him to have a heart attack!"



David Byrnes served the Rangers for many years, ending his career as captain of Company "B" in Dallas. Retiring from the Rangers did not mean the end of law enforcement for David. Today he is the sheriff of Kaufman County.

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