

Number of law enforcers reflects need of services

"No man in the wrong can stand up against a man in the right who keeps on a-comin'." — Bill McDonald, a legendary Texas Ranger.

By FRANK K. VASOVSKI

The members of Texas law enforcement agencies "keep on a-comin'" at a steady pace, and have never since their inception. In 1823, Stephen F. Austin employed at his own expense a small force of mounted guards to protect his colony against Indians and marauders.

The strength of these "range riders" increased to 60 men on Oct. 17, 1835, on order of the Permanent Council of Texas Revolution, establishing the Ranger force as an agency of the young republic.

Further expansion brought the strength of the force to three companies of 56 Rangers each. This was a relatively small number to insure the safety of a territory as large as Texas. During that time a phrase was born that "One riot-one Ranger" ratio was adequate to keep order in a rioting community.

On Aug. 10, 1935, with the creation of the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS), Texas Rangers, who until then served under the command of the U.S. Army, formed the nucleus of the new department.

The rapid growth of the organization from 147 men in 1935, to 2,170 uniformed personnel in 1977, shows the need for its existence. It represents the Traffic Law Enforcement Division of the TDPS. Total employment, including supervisory and support personnel, is over 3,000.

The legislative appropriation of \$455,346 in 1935-1936 fiscal year rose to \$79,227,353 in 1977.

"Some residents in this area are not familiar with our responsibilities," said Sam M. Saxon, a communications supervising operator with the TDPS unit in Bryan. Each operating location is oriented toward three major areas of interest: traffic law enforcement, criminal law enforcement, and disaster emergency services.

"The State of Texas is divided into six operational regions, each of them further divided into two districts, A and B," Saxon said. Brazos County, together with 22 counties, belongs to District 6-B in Austin.

The Bryan unit, in addition to highway patrol personnel, includes a member of the narcotics service, a Ranger, a communications section, a driver license service and a motor vehicle inspection service.

Saxon explained that the communications unit in Bryan maintains an uninterrupted liaison with other units of the TDPS located within a 75-mile radius. The same network is used to transmit emergency messages alerting the local population in case of man-made or natural disasters.

Bob Connell, a Texas Ranger assigned to the Bryan unit, is one of the 94 Rangers on duty in Texas.

"It is fairly correct to compare our duties for the State of Texas with the mission of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on behalf of the federal government," Connell said.

The Rangers cooperate closely with the criminal intelligence service, narcotics service and motor vehicle theft branch of the criminal law enforcement division of the TDPS.

"Our primary responsibility is to conduct investigations of major felony offenses such as murder, burglary and robbery," Connell said.

Connell reports his activities to a Ranger captain in Waco, who in turn is responsible to a senior cap-

tain in Austin. The latter reports to the chief of the criminal law enforcement division of the TDPS.

The expansion of the force is relatively slow. The number of Rangers increased from 56 members in 1956 to the current 94. Texas Rangers are on duty at all times, Connell said.

The main function of the Sheriff's

"Our primary responsibility is to conduct investigations of major felony offenses such as murder, burglary and robbery."

Department in Brazos County is the support of the 85th District Court and the County Court of Law.

In addition to county sheriff, there are five criminal and three civil deputies, one matron, one reserve deputy sheriff, five jailers and one secretary. All are on the county payroll.

"The main function of deputies is to serve subpoenas, to execute court orders, to escort prisoners and to perform functions in support of the courts," said Cecile Howard, a reserve deputy sheriff and chief clerk.

The sheriff's personnel work in close cooperation with the precinct commissioners to insure prompt response to emergency situations, Howard explained. All deputies are in constant radio contact with the Sheriff's Department and are available for duty at all times.

Deputy Sheriff Adams, a Texas A&M University graduate, finds his job with Sheriff's Department completely compatible with his professional preference.

There are seven justice of the peace positions within the Brazos County area: one rural, one in Bryan, two in College Station, and three currently vacant. They rely on the support of four elected constables, each in charge of a county precinct comparable in area to a commissioner's precinct. Together they form the "People's Court," as the justice of the peace courts are often called.

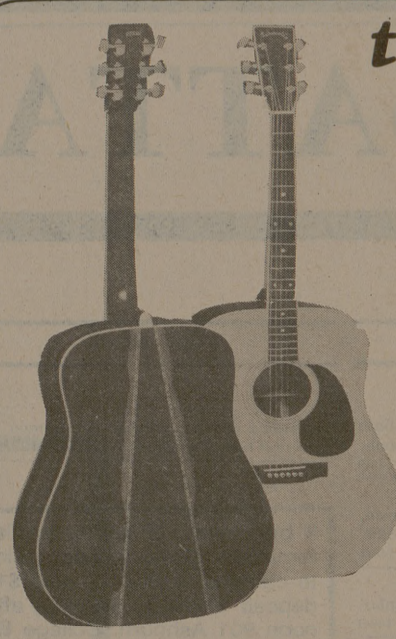
Justice Dewey presides over the Small Claims Court for settlement of cases involving claims of less than \$150.00. In a dispute over wages the limit is \$200.00.

Additionally, he tries traffic cases with maximum fines of \$200, for which no jail sentence may be assessed. Both types of trials can be presided over by the justice of the peace alone. At the option of either party to the dispute they can be tried by jury.

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The statistical data contained in the following tables are indicative of the need for more courtrooms.

THE ANNUAL SUMMARY OF THE 85TH DISTRICT COURT FOR THE YEAR 1977

	Criminal	Civil	Juvenile
Cases on hand Jan. 1, 1977	302	1093	28
No. of cases added	321	967	9
No. of cases disposed	294	938	36
Cases on hand Dec. 31, 1977	329	1122	1

Two randomly selected tabulations, one of civil and the other of criminal character, are shown in the following table:

EXCERPT FROM THE ANNUAL SUMMARY OF THE COUNTY COURT OF LAW BRAZOS COUNTY FOR THE YEAR 1977

	Civil Docket Auto damages Personal injury	Criminal Docket marijuana
Cases on hand Jan. 1, 1977	126	22
No. of cases added	23	139
No. of cases disposed	71	98
Dec. 31, 1977	78	63

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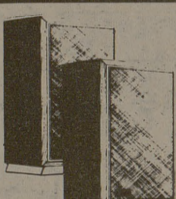
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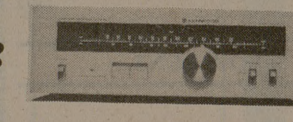
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