



# THE GOOD GUYS

BY GUICH KOOCK

Texas has long been famous for its lawmen. The Texas Rangers are known throughout the world as first class crime fighters but I think the local sheriff had a much more intimate influence on the outcome of how people felt about breaking the law in their own communities.

Two Texas sheriffs who became well known for their style of doing business were Fayette County's Sheriff T.J. Flournoy and Gillespie county's Sheriff Hugo Klaerner. They were both tough as hand cut nails. They said what they meant and meant what they said. Sheriff Flournoy gained notoriety during the "Chicken Ranch" craze, which made into a play and movie called, "The Best Little Whore House in Texas". A pretty cute show but Burt Reynolds is no T.J. Flournoy. I heard once that Sheriff Flournoy sent word by the cousin of a man suspected of murder that he wanted that man to come in to the sheriff's office. When the man didn't show up, Flournoy found him and shot him. I suspect there is more to that story, if its true. The county sheriff was not the man to trifle with.

My late friend, Bill Walding from Hunt, was a great story teller. He said on one of his first trips to Fredericksburg, he was looking for me and for some reason decided that Sheriff Klaerner would know my whereabouts. He stopped by the old two-story rock jail across the street from the courthouse. When he entered the jail he saw no one on the ground floor but heard some talking upstairs where the cells were. He went up stairs and saw all the cells open and four men playing dominoes at a small table. Bill said, "I'm looking for Sheriff Klaerner. Is he here?" "No, sir" came a response form one of the players, "He's taking a prisoner over to Del Rio". Bill said, "Oh, do you work here at the jail?" "No, sir, we're prisoners" came the answer. Bill was a little shocked by the response. "But if the sheriff's gone and all the cells are open

couldn't you just run away?" he wanted to know. All of the players looked at him incredulously and one said, "Oh, no. Hugo wouldn't like that". Hugo had the respect of the folks on both sides of the law.

Sheriff Klaerner told me when he was a kid he attended the Catholic school in Fredericksburg. "We had some pretty tough nuns for teachers and I didn't like school, anyway. Every time I had a chance to miss going to school, I took it."

One day it was time for us to have our Jersey cow bred, so I took off from school to walk her over to the neighbor who had a good Jersey bull. The next day when I went back to school, sure enough, that nun was fussing at me for missing class. When I told her why I had been absent she said, "Couldn't your father have done that?" I said, "I suppose he could have but we always had better luck with the neighbor's bull". Thanks for checking in and keep your trigger happy.

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