

DUNCAN, W. S.

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Interviewer
John F. Daugherty
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Interview with W. S. Duncan
Hickory, Oklahoma

My father was Daniel B. Duncan, born July 18, 1829, in Virginia. He was a farmer. Mother was Nancy Lox Duncan and she was born in Tennessee.

I was born in Tennessee, May 6, 1866. I came from Texas to the Indian Territory in 1891 and settled between Hickory and Roff in the Chickasaw Nation. I was appointed United States Marshal in 1904 under Theodore Roosevelt, with headquarters at Roff. Bob Wester and I rode together on many of our trips.

One of my first arrests was Malcolm Brown for robbing the post office at Roff. He was carrying explosives and recipes for making explosives when I caught him at Sulphur. The jail at Roff was a picket building with one room and Malcolm was put in the jail and later sentenced to six years in jail.

One of my worst experiences was with some Indians in the Seminole country. These boys were stealing cattle near Allen. One day I was passing through here and a friend asked me to catch them. This was out of my territory and I hesitated about making the arrests but he in-

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sisted and I went to look for them. I located them near Sasakwa. When I rode up their father, Tom, was sitting in the front yard. He was drinking and I anticipated trouble with him. I said, "I want to see the boys". He took a gun from under a large hat and said, "You'd better see me first." I jumped from my horse and covered him with my gun, taking his gun from him. He started running for a tree. About this time a large Indian appeared and grabbed Tom and said, "Don't run. He kills you." Tom stopped and some Lighthorsemen rode up about that time. When Tom saw so many officers he told us where the boys were, and we arrested them and took them to Ada for trial. They were sentenced for several years to Leavenworth, Kansas. These boys wore large hats with rattlesnake skins around the crown for bands.

One day I received a card offering a reward of one hundred dollars for a man who had robbed a bank in Wichita, Kansas, of thirteen thousand dollars. His brother was one of the best friends I ever had, and I decided to quit before

I had to arrest this man. One day a detective from Wichita came to Roff. He said, "Duncan, you must help me

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catch this fellow. I trailed him to Wynnewood, and he came to Roff on the mail hack. I've looked here for him a week, but I can't locate him." I told him I wouldn't serve the papers for his arrest but I would get a man who would. The detective told this man he must deputize me to go along. We located the person wanted in a grove near his brother's store.

The new marshal found him lying near a tree and said, "Get up, we're after you." The man replied: "You're not going to get me," and started to run. The detective shot him in the leg and he fell. We loaded him in a wagon and took him to Roff, where he was given medical aid. The detective started to Wichita with him, but he died on the road.

Scar-Faced Jim was a noted whiskey peddler and very hard to catch. I got a tip that he was at a certain place, so I sent a man to locate him. I was to be at the Dolberg school house and he was to meet me there with any information he had. He found Scar-Faced Jim at a well. He rode up and asked for a drink. Scar-Faced Jim said, "I got a tip that Duncan wants me and he

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sent you to locate me". My man said: "Oh, no, I'm not looking for you. I can prove it at that house over there." When they got to the house there was nobody home. His father lived near there, and he told Scar-Faced Jim so. "All right," said Scar-Faced Jim, "We'll go to your father's home, and if it isn't your father, you know what will happen to you. I want to do the talking over there."

They rode to the home of the father, and when he appeared, Scar-Faced Jim, said: "Do you know this man?" The father replied: "I ought to, he's my boy." Scar-Faced Jim turned to the boy and said: "Boy, you get to, Roff and I'm going to follow you. Don't you look back or I'll kill you." He got on his pony and went to Roff. By the time he got word to me, Scar-Faced Jim and his wife were on their way to McAlester with a wagon load of whiskey. Lou Bowers went with them. Before long the wife returned to their home because she was sick. I watched their home constantly. One day a fellow came in a cart, and she got in the cart with him and rode away. I started after them, but they outran me

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and hid. When I got back to Roff, word had come that Scar-Faced Jim had been killed near McAlester. Lou Bowers had decided she wanted his wagon, team and money. She went to a marshal at McAlester and told him that she was being held a captive by Scar-Faced Jim, and that they were going to leave the next day. She gave him the time of departure and route they would travel. Crocket Lee killed him at the designated spot and this left Lou in possession of everything Scar-Faced Jim had, and she departed for parts unknown.

One day Bob Nester and I were coming from Allen, when a negro boy rode up to us. As we rode along he looked at our guns, I said: "How you like them?" He replied: "Don't like them, they kill you," I then asked him if he knew anybody we should kill. He answered that two men just passed who should be killed. He showed us their tracks in a watermelon patch and we started trailing them. At some houses we were told they had passed about fifteen minutes before, and at others they would say we were three hours behind them. We trailed them for several hours.

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We stopped at a house and I asked the woman if she had seen two men pass that way, and she said she had given a young man some meat a few minutes before. I was sure we would find them cooking the meat near a creek. But they had cut the wires to a pasture fence, and gone across a prairie, before coming into the road again. They were headed for Coalgate. Finally we met a wagon and they hadn't seen our men. We retraced our steps and found where they had gone through a rail fence and so we were on their trail again. We followed them around through brush, over hills and across creeks for several hours, at last encountering them in a creek bed. Bob took charge of the boy and left the man for me. He began to whip the pony with two guns, one on each side of his shoulders, and away we went. My horse fell with me, and that gave the man a chance to get out of sight. I got my horse up and we started again. After crossing a hill I saw his pony at the edge of some timber. He was completely exhausted. I took charge of him, and went into the timber in search of my man. I felt sure I had shot him when we first

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started our chase. I came up on a cabin and asked the man if he had seen a man. He replied that the man had been there only a few minutes before and asked for a drink. After drinking he took a handful of leaves from the front of his overalls, wet them and replaced them. I was sure that this was my man, but I lost his trail.

As we were returning with the pony and the boy, we met a white woman and an Indian man in a wagon. As soon as she saw us she began crying, and asked if we killed him. I asked her what she meant. She replied that her brother rode that pony, and when she saw the condition of the pony she felt sure that we had killed her brother. We found out then that we were after a couple of horse thieves by the names of Cripps and McDonald. The man left the country and we never heard of him again.

When a horse thief was caught he usually had the price of the last stolen horse on him. They often mortgaged these horses for guns and ammunition.

Those were hard days for officers. There was no way to travel except in wagons or on horses, and there

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were only twenty marshals in the entire Chickasaw Nation. There was so much territory to be covered by each one that many criminals escaped before they could be apprehended.

I married Julia Moore at Hickory, March 30, 1896.

My parents are buried at Hickory.

