

Tales of the Texas Rangers Patrick Andre

From July 8, 1950 until September 14, 1952, *Tales of the Texas Rangers* was a western radio drama which ran on the NBC radio network. The show was modeled after the very successful *Dragnet* program of the time. Although setup as a western, the show was actually a police drama which used sophisticated scientific techniques to track down and apprehend the guilty party. Also, instead of setting the time frame in the 1800's that was common for westerns at the time, the show dealt with modern crimes which occurred in Texas between 1928 to 1948. The Rangers were originally organized in 1823 by Stephen Austin to protect colonists living in the Spanish province. Now called The Texas Ranger Division and a part of the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Rangers have maintained the same operational structure since 1935. Today, there are 150 commissioned officers and other employees that make up the division.

The series was produced and directed by Stacy Keach Sr. He hired real life Texas Ranger Captain Manuel "Lone Wolf" Gonzallas as the show's advisor. Gonzallas was able to provide realism and accuracy to the stories.

Ninety-five episodes and one audition episode were created for the radio series. The audition episode starred Frank Martin, but the run featured the very popular actor Joel McCrea as Texas Ranger Jace Pearson. Each show followed the same format – an announcer would describe the situation. When the problem was discovered, the Texas Rangers were called in and Jace Pearson was assigned. He would take over the story until its resolution, when the announcer would give the disposition of the case, following close to the *Dragnet* formula.

After the run on radio, the show moved to television from 1955 to 1958, again with Keach as producer and Captain Gonzallas as consultant. Willard Parker took over the role of Jace Pearson and was supported by Harry Lauter as Clay Morgan. The TV version was not limited to a contemporary time frame, as the radio show was, and jumped from the 1840's to the 1950's from week to week. In addition, 22 comic books about the Texas Rangers were published quarterly from 1952 until 1959. They had McCrea on the cover of the first ten and then Parker on the remainder.

Information for this synopsis was obtained from John Dunning's *The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, Classic TV Archives, the Internet Movie Database, The Old Time Radio Catalog website, the Western Clippings website, and from the Texas Department of Public Safety.