

Interview Essay: Tommy Head

By Dakota Busby



Dakota Busby and Tommy Head

On March 25th, I had the privilege of interviewing Charles Tommy Head, a generous and sincere man whom I have gotten to know over the past four years. During our interview, I heard a captivating history of his life and of Mills County.

In the 1880s, Tommy's great-great-grandfather worked as a doctor in Waco. His son, Tommy's great-grandfather, decided to move to Mills County and become a rancher. They bought a tract of land near Center City, paying with gold that the Queen of England had given Tommy's great-great-grandfather as a reward for his service as a surgeon in the Crimean War.

Tommy's great-grandfather raised cattle on his ranch, selling them for profit at local settlements like William's Ranch and to roaming teams of cattle-drivers. After Tommy's great-grandfather became firmly established, his father decided to leave the medical field, pack his belongings, and move from Waco to his son's ranch. These events marked the beginning of Tommy's family history in Mills County.

In 1948, Charles Tommy Head was born on a ranch about eight miles south of Goldthwaite, where Tommy's family primarily raised meat cattle and angora goats. Yet, as Tommy said of Mills County, "it's a great place to live, but it's hard to make a living." In that time, many families, including Tommy's, did not make enough from working the land to support themselves. Because of that, both of Tommy's parents also held jobs in town. Specifically, they

were teachers in Lometa, where Tommy went to school during the first four grades. In his fifth-grade year, his father got a job in the Goldthwaite school system, and Tommy went to school there until the twelfth grade.

While growing up in Mills County, Tommy remembers going to Goldthwaite on Sunday afternoons to see a movie with his friends while his parents shopped for groceries. Tommy remembers more businesses in that time than there are today. For example, Goldthwaite had a movie theater, two hardware stores, two clothing stores, and three grocery stores. He also recalls that there was once more friendly service. For example, grocers would hold cold items until his family was ready to leave, clothiers would help them choose outfits, and gas station employees would pump their fuel.

After graduating high school, Tommy attended Texas A&M University, where he obtained his master's degree. As part of the curriculum, Tommy worked for a time as an intern of the Federal Land Bank in Brownwood before returning to Mills County and becoming a loan officer and vice president of Mills County State Bank. Later, when Glynn Collier retired in 1988, Tommy took his place as president of the bank.

During the twenty-seven years of Tommy's career as president, he led the way in modernizing Mills County State Bank and opening four new branches in Brownwood, Early, Hamilton, and Hico. However, on December 31st, 2015, Tommy retired from his position at the bank in order to spend more time with his family and to work on projects he is passionate about, like the building of Legacy Plaza. To this day, Tommy remains an active and influential citizen of Mills County.

Throughout the years, Tommy has witnessed a great number of changes in Mills County. He is glad that some things changed the way they did, such as how the average standard-of-living has improved and how the conveniences of modern technology have reached rural areas. Despite that, Tommy has also seen some disappointing changes. For example, he regrets the proliferation of red tape and regulations and the fact that people aren't as respectful, especially toward older people, as they were when he grew up. But most of all, Tommy misses the times when "people could operate on a handshake and a person's word was their bond."

At the close of our time together, I asked Tommy if he had any advice for young people growing up today. He responded with a statement which I think perfectly describes his life: "Focus on being honest, trustworthy, and patient, and trust in the Lord in all things."