

Interview Essay: Olene Johnson

By Gwendolyn Johnson

My grandmother, Olene Johnson, has lived in Goldthwaite, TX since 1947; that means she has lived in Goldthwaite for sixty nine years. My grandmother has lived through World War II, Vietnam, the Kennedy Assassination, Watergate, and many other significant historical events. I could not think of a better person to interview for this scholarship.

My grandmother and grandfather moved to Goldthwaite in 1947 after my grandfather, Y.B. Johnson, graduated from Texas A&M University. My grandfather taught Ag at Goldthwaite High School, and he was the pitcher for Goldthwaite's semi-pro baseball team, the Red Sox. The baseball team played in a league with teams in Fredericksburg and San Antonio. All the games were played on Sunday afternoons since Goldthwaite did not have a field with lights at the time.



In the interview I conducted, my grandmother talked about how different life was back in the 50's in Goldthwaite. Goldthwaite used to have a train station, two hotels, a movie theatre, and a drive-in movie theatre. She said that you could ride the train all the way from Goldthwaite to California! She also mentioned that the movie theatre was located on the courthouse square where the Briar Patch store used to be. My grandmother said that tickets cost a dime and all the kids would go on Saturday afternoons to watch a kid movie or a western movie. During the 50's and 60's the drive in theatre was "big entertainment" for all of the high school students.

During my grandmother's interview it was hard for me to understand the lack of technology back then. When my grandmother first moved to Goldthwaite, my grandmother and grandfather had a party line with other families. She also said that her and my grandfather were some of the first people in Goldthwaite to get a television and central heat and AC in the 1950's. They did not even have cable until the 1960's.

The past fifty years my grandmother has lived through a lot. She has lived through some of the most significant historical events that the United States has ever seen. It is absolutely amazing how much Goldthwaite has changed in just sixty-nine years.