



Garrett Schwartz and his grandfather Lewis Watson

Lewis Watson

By Garrett Schwartz

There are many wonderful and interesting people living in Mills County. So much history can be learned from so many individuals if a person takes time to listen. The person I chose to interview for this scholarship is such an interesting and educated man. Not because he has a college degree, but from the knowledge he gained while growing up and becoming the man I know today, my Papa, Lewis Watson.

When I asked Papa if he would help me with this interview, I saw a twinkle in his eye. He is a very proud man and enjoys telling of his life and talking of Mills County. His family moved from the Bertram area to a place near Center City in 1942. He soon got married and then received his draft orders to serve in the Army during World War II. After returning from the war, he purchased land on North Bennett Creek in Mills County through the GB Bill of Rights.

During war times, all manufacturing companies had to make Army supplies, and when the war ended, they were allowed to start manufacturing their original products. People had to sign a wait list to get an automobile or refrigerator. I asked, "What if you did not like the type of automobile that became available?" He told me he was not sure, because they had gone without transportation for so long, so he took what was offered. At that time, there were two automobile dealers in Mills County, just as there are now.

Jobs were very scarce. There were not as many businesses as there are now. He laughed as he said, "We shopped at Goldthwaite, and now people drive to Walmart." When he married, he had \$300 cash. He worked Auction Sales for \$5 a day, and the day was from dawn until all the cattle were sold. He explained how cattle prices have changed over the years. Papa bought his first cattle for \$125 for a cow and calf pair. Now, a choice pair would run \$1,200 to \$1,500 of the same type.

Not a lot of people had indoor plumbing. They did not have indoor plumbing until they built their house in 1960. Most people grew and hunted what they ate. Trips to town were few and only when necessary. You sure did not run home just because you forgot something. Papa was proud to show me his prize John Deere tractor. He purchased the first John Deere tractor that came into Mills County and still has it.

Papa was County Commissioner for 16 years. During these years, an elevator was installed in the Courthouse, and the lawn was landscaped with Garden Club supervision. A civic center was built for public use, and a new jail facility was built.

I asked him to make a statement on one thing that has changed the most throughout the years. He remarked, "Neighbors would help neighbors, and a man honored a handshake."