

# Interview Essay: Steve Jones

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By Liberty Watson

Mills County has drastically changed in the last 50 years. Countless things in the world have evolved and modernized. Some have changed for the better, others for the worst. The good and bad impact everyone. My grandfather Steve Jones, son of Goodie and Robbie Kirby, explained to me in an interview that 50 years ago he and his family lived a simple life in good ol' Mills County.

Steve and his family lived on a 500 acre farm in Mills County that he still currently owns. Imagine growing up in a town where everyone know everyone and nobody is considered a stranger. My grandfather tells me those were the days of a simple life. Steve remembers buying his first gun at Head's Hardware in Center City while on his way home from school one afternoon. The school bus

stopped and waited on him while he paid \$112 for a lever action .22 that he assembled on th bus, he was only 14 years old. Steve recalls working on the farm every single day before and after school. Their farm consisted of goats, sheep, chickens, cattle and a garden, 50% of their food came from the farm. Steven told me "working the farm was far from easy, you see life and death everyday, nothing came easy, you just got it done."

I asked Steve what town life was like 50 years ago and he responded with "the town was so full of life. Goldthwaite had 8 or 9 full service gas stations where they would pump your gas for 25-30 cents a gallon, clean your windows, check under your hood and even change your flat. You did not even have to get out to pay, they did it all." My grandfather told me that Goldthwaite also had a little department store, Little's Department Store, two dime stores, two car dealerships and the best ice cream was sold at the drugstore with the marble countertops. McClains cafe served the best donuts in town. Goldthwaite also had a movie theater, a drive-in, a pool hall and a skating rink. He recalls Saturdays being the day that everyone came to town and that you could buy a coke for a dime as well as a candy bar. He also said that Sundays were family day for most of Mills County because back then everyone went to church. Steven and his family attended The First Baptist Church, or as he called it "Red Brick Baptist Church" with Pastor Paul Woods. Steve can recall that his mother, Robbie, never missed a day of church for seven years.



Steve did not start school until first grade. They expected you to listen to your teacher or they would paddle you and every kid knew it. I asked him what Goldthwaite High School was like 50 years ago and he said "There wasn't any air conditioning, they had radiator heaters that would burn the hide off of you if you stood too close." Steve remembers riding the same bus as Tom Duren when he was younger and Mr. Duren was a high schooler. Although Steve did not have much to say about his school years, he does remember the day John F. Kennedy was killed. He was in the 4th grade and said it was all over the black and white television. He remembers it like it was yesterday. Steve told me that 50 years ago land in Mills County sold for about \$75-\$100 an acre and that there were not any real estate agencies. When people wanted to sell their land, they would go around and ask their neighbors and hang up posters on the bulletin board inside the courthouse. He went on to say "Droughts were a big problem in the area of Mills County because the droughts would last about 5-7 years and land would not sell. It was a vicious cycle."

Our younger generations will never know the real Golden years and its struggles. A time when life was not all about cell phones, internet and technology but about family and values. The real things in life are slowly slipping away.