

# Interview Essay: Wynona Winters

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By Coleton Watson

When your roots are planted in Mills County you always know where you came from.

Wynona Barnett Winters was born on December 15, 1935 in Brownwood, Texas after her mother was in a car accident that started her labor prematurely. Old Doc. Campbell from Mills County delivered her. Wynona's parents were Joe Barnett and Vallie Pearl. The Barnett family and Hale family came to Goldthwaite from Arizona because of the Range War. Wynona's grandfather's business partner Mr. Hale was killed in the Range War and after that they sold the ranch and loaded both families into their Model T and came to Goldthwaite in 1915. Mr. Barnett bought a ranch and worked till he got old and moved to town.

Wynona has one sibling, a brother Billy Bob Barnett. Wynona's parents both worked in Mills County, her mother worked at the laundry and made 10 cents a day. Her father worked for Mr. McKenzie in the 30's doing dirt work with mules and a scoop. Every day they would go to town to pick out a few men to work for the day. Mrs. Barnett bought her first refrigerator for 25 dollars, she was so proud that she would get up in the middle of the night, sit in a chair and just look at it. Wynona remembers people would gather at the courthouse to hear the names of the men who died in the war. She said it was a sad time around Mills County during the Death March. At 14 years of age, Wynona and her father both went to the courthouse to get a license. Both of them had to take a test. Wynona passed her father didn't. Wynona recalls having to take her driving test with a policeman. At one point he stated that she had to go a certain speed and then apply the brakes when asked - well she had been practicing that and was real good at it and when he asked her to stop, she threw him into the windshield. Wynona's friend Bobby Wilcox would tell her she drove too fast and needed an anchor to slow her down, that saying still rings true for Wynona. Wynona started school in Goldthwaite and graduated from Goldthwaite in 1955. She did attend a few other schools in Arizona and Gatesville. She played



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basketball during high school but had to quit playing because she did barrel racing and won money and you were not allowed to take money and play sports. Wynona said that Halloween was always a fun time at school she recalls a few pranks. Some kids decided to hide a Model T in the third story of the schoolhouse. "The boys" as she called them did it and left it running when the superintendent came in and he was "mad-mad." "The boys" also put a snake in a teacher's desk and she screamed and ran out and didn't come back until they removed the dead snake. "The boys" put a outdoor potty at the redlight.

After high school Wynona attended college in Lampasas at Jackson's Business School. Wynona meet her husband Thomas Earl Winters at Storms in Lampasas. She married him in December of 1955. They moved to the Goodwrench Ranch where they managed that ranch for about four years. At that point she and her husband decided to buy a ranch in 1959. They bought 3,000 acres from Mrs. Hughes, that ranch is now known as the C Bar Ranch. Wynona would work the ranch while her husband ran the auction barn in Lampasas. The C Bar Ranch ran steers for many years then after the market broke when Nixon was in office they started raising mother cows. Wynona and Thomas Earl had three children, Tommy Joe, Molly and Maggie. All of which attended Goldthwaite school's. To get to the bus there were four gates her son would have to open. Thomas Earl had been to West Texas and had seen bump gates and was amazed. He built some so they didn't have to open gates. Wynona said "Wire gates will eat your lunch sometimes."

Wynona knows her roots and knows that after her passing her family will have the C Bar Ranch for generations to come and her legacy with live on.