

## Hard Work Makes a Man Lucky



Mitchel Hopper with Nathan Carothers

Nathan W. Carothers was born May 6, 1941. Franklin Roosevelt was beginning his unprecedented third term as president, and World War II was raging on as more countries joined either by choice or by invasion. *The Goldthwaite Eagle* newspaper advertised *Pure Cane* sugar twenty-five pounds in a cloth sack for one dollar and fifteen cents at the local Piggly Wiggly grocery store and *Gone With The Wind* showing at The Melba Theatre for a Saturday matinee admission price of seventy-five cents.<sup>1</sup> Nathan was the only child of Oran and Ruth Carothers who made their home twelve miles southeast of Goldthwaite—just two hundred yards from where Nathan and his wife Jeanette raised their family and still live today.

Nathan recalls life happened at a much slower pace when he was a kid. His home like other nearby homes did not have electricity or propane. There was no television. They did not go into town (Goldthwaite) often. He told me with a grin, “we had to make our own excitement.” Much of his youth was spent doing chores on the family farm. By the time he was ten years old he was adept at driving a tractor.

Growing up he remembers the Piggly Wiggly grocery store in Goldthwaite where the Mills County Museum is located today, Weatherby Ford Auto Company one building north of where the Subway sandwich shop is today, Littles Department Store on Fisher Street across from where the Mills County General Store is located today, and full-service gas stations on every corner of town where attendants would fill your tank with gas, check the tires, and wash the windshield! He also remembers the Melba Theatre downtown—“where it cost a nickel for popcorn,” and the Saylor Chevrolet dealership where the Botanical Gardens are located today. He also vividly recalls the details of a shooting he witnessed when he was eight years old in Goldthwaite. It was May 3, 1950, and he was riding home after school with his third-grade teacher, Mrs. Berry, who first needed to make a stop at the Mills County Locker Company on Parker Street. At the same time, a man with a double-barreled shotgun opened fire wounding Luther Booker who was coming out of the Locker Company building. Nathan ducked for cover. The gunman crossed the street and entered the Fairman Company Inc. hardware/implement

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<sup>1</sup> The Goldthwaite Eagle; Vol. 46; No. 37; Ed1, Friday, May 3, 1941

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store and shot across the showroom injuring a local farmer, and the store's owner E.T. Fairman (who folks referred to as "Mr. Mills County") before Sheriff's Deputy Clyde Cockrum arrived and shot him in the forearm putting an end to the incident. The man was later identified as Tommy Fuller who was angry over receiving a notice that he had not paid his school taxes.

In 1961 Nathan married Jeanette Belt. They had two children Beverly and Nathan W. Jr (Bill). They made a living raising hogs until prices dropped more than forty percent in one year forcing Nathan to sell out and seek another means of providing for his family. He credits his banker, Charles Conradt who worked for the Production Credit Association (PCA), for allowing him to extend his payments and work his way out of debt. In 1970 Nathan was able to purchase a Gulf franchise license for a distributorship to sell bulk fuel to farmers and ranchers. In 1973 he opened Carothers Gulf Service Station and Gulf Farm Service located on Fisher Street where the Goldthwaite Welcome Center is located today. In 1977 he purchased the Chevron Service Station on the south end of town, where the Major Auto Parts store is located today, from owner/operator J.D. Knight and leased it to LeRoy "Hawkeye" Miller.

I asked Nathan what it takes to be a successful business owner. He told me, "You have to be careful not to take on more risk than you can handle, you have to make responsible decisions, you need a good banker that will stick with you and let you work through the rough patches, and mostly you need a lot of luck!"<sup>2</sup> Thomas Jefferson once said, "I'm a great believer in luck—I find the harder I work the more I have of it." If it is true that a lifetime of hard work yields luck, I think Nathan Carothers might be the luckiest man I know.

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<sup>2</sup> Nathan W. Carothers—lifetime Mills County resident