

A Life in Mills County

By Brennan Michael Medina

To say it was an honor to interview my great-grandmother, Velda Black Sanders, would be an understatement. I have known and been close to her my entire life, but during this interview, I learned so many new and interesting facts about her life.

Velda Violet Black was born on January 10, 1933 at her family's home in Mount Olive, and she was the youngest of four girls. Her parents were Bob & Sudie Violet Huckabee Black. Shortly after her birth, they moved to eastern Mills County, near Star, where Velda has lived ever since. Velda told me that her and her sisters' middle names came from family names. Ogie Oregon was named after their grandmother, Lois Louise was named after another grandmother, Cleta Cleo was named after a cousin, and Velda Violet was named after their mother.



Velda Sanders and Brennan Medina

When I asked her about transportation in the mid 1900's, she said her family had a car and that she rode to school on a school bus. Her family didn't have electricity or a refrigerator in their house until she was about five years old. Their home phone line was shared by several families, and they had no air conditioning then.

Velda went to school in Star. She played baseball and basketball and said that high school girls' basketball was played much differently then. "We played half-court basketball. I was a defensive player and I would guard the offensive players from the other team to stop them from scoring on our side of the court. My only position was a guard; the offensive players on my team scored points on the other end of the court." She told me that she thinks women's basketball wasn't extended to full court until 1977.

While in school, Velda remembers many close friendships. Freda Soules, Vernell Doss, and Floy Woodard were just a few of her close friends. When asked what they liked to do for fun, her answer matched what you would expect from a high school student in a small town: parties and sports. Their parties sometimes involved gathering together to build a barn or some other type of building that was needed. She dated Bill Sanders, a Mullin High School student, and was often asked if she couldn't find anybody better to "go with," since Star and Mullin had a rivalry much like the one between Goldthwaite and San Saba. Nevertheless, Velda married Bill in 1950 and had two children: Edward Sanders (my grandfather) and Glendon Sanders.

Because Velda grew up during such a crucial time period in American history, the war had an impact on her family. She said, "I had several family members that were drafted into World War II. My cousin, Norman Black, was drafted into war and was killed while fighting for his country. I also had two brother-in-laws that served in the military as well: J. D. Hunt and Hershel Williams." She also told me that my great-grandfather was almost drafted. "Bill missed the draft only by a few days. We married on July 29th. Three months later, the draft was modified to include anyone married after August 1st. We had already prepared ourselves for the fact that he would be going, but he missed it by a few days."

When asked about her jobs, Velda said, "I was a bookkeeper for many, many years at Barnes and McCullough in Goldthwaite. I also worked as a bookkeeper for Star School. I retired from that job, but was then asked to come back and fill in as a lunchroom supervisor which I did for several years." After retirement, she traveled a lot with the Texas Travelers, which she enjoyed thoroughly. Nowadays, she spends her time on the farm and has been known to go on the occasional gambling trip with her friends.

My great-grandmother has had a major impact on the lives of her family. She has five grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren who call her "Meme". She's been there for many of my events throughout school, and at 86 years old, she has many good stories to tell. I am thankful for this opportunity to have interviewed her, because I was able to learn more about her early life in Mills County.