

Interview Essay: Ramona Schwartz

By Kaley Dowell



Ramona Schwartz and Kaley Dowell

As I pulled up to Mrs. Schwartz's house I did not know what to expect. I had never interviewed anyone before, so I was very nervous. Though there was nothing to be nervous about. Mrs. Schwartz is one of the nicest ladies I have had the pleasure of meeting. She welcomed me into her home like I was family. Her daughter Carolyn was also with us, along with my grandmother who accompanied me because she is the one who recommended Mrs. Schwartz for the interview. We started talking about everything from when she was a child growing up on a farm to present day. She told many stories about her life and answered the questions I had prepared for her.

Mrs. Ramona Schwartz has been a resident in Mills County for eighty-three years. She lived on a farm in Priddy, Texas with her father, mother, and older brother. During her school years she had to walk half a mile to the bus stop and arrived at school one hour later. She graduated from high school at the age of sixteen as Valedictorian and excelled in all of her extracurricular activities. She attended church regularly which helped shape her into to godly woman she is today.

Asking the question of, "How has Mills County changed in the past fifty years?" Ramona's answer was that as child there was no electricity, so they used kerosene lamps to provide the lighting. They also had to sew their own clothes by hand. Ramona said that, "The flour sacks were colored and you would buy your flour in sacks that matched. It took three sacks to have

enough material to make your dress.” She mentioned next that they did indeed have running water, but no hot water. Heating the water on a wood stove was the only way to get hot water for cooking, bathing, and washing their clothes. A washer and dryer is something else they did not have. It was a very long process to get all their clothes washed and dried.

After Ramona graduated she attended Daniel Baker College, now known as Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, for two years majoring in home economics with a minor in music. She recalls, “I wrote out a check for one hundred dollars for my tuition.” She then went to Brantley Draughon Business School in Fort Worth, Texas where she studied accounting. Shortly after starting school in Fort Worth, Ramona married her high school sweetheart Milton Schwartz. They then spent over a year in Alaska because Milton was in the Army. After he was discharged they moved back to Fort Worth where Milton received a degree in Accounting at Brantley Draughon Business College. About a year after he obtained his degree Milton and Ramona moved to Goldthwaite, Texas.

After living in Goldthwaite for almost two years and running Schwartz’s Gulf station with his brother, “Milton purchased a grocery store from E and M Foods that became known as Schwartz Food Store. Ramona worked as Secretary and Bookkeeper along with stocking the shelves, hand painting window signs, and carrying out groceries.” (Schwartz, Ramona. *Ramona’s Cookbook*. 2005). At the time there were five other grocery stores, so they had some trouble getting theirs started. Mrs. Schwartz worked there for forty-eight years before retiring in 2004. She recalled still stocking the aisles and keeping up with the books after retiring. She laughs, “There was really no retirement”. Schwartz Food Store is still a very common place for the people of Goldthwaite to get their groceries.

Coming to the end of the interview I asked Mrs. Schwartz what major principles she lives by and her answer I wholeheartedly agree with. She said, “You need to be in touch with the Lord”. She also taught Sunday school to the little kids, which I can relate to because I teach the middle school girls small group at the First Baptist Church. Mrs. Schwartz is someone I can look up to because of the way she respects people, treats everyone as she wants to be treated, and strives to grow spiritually with the Lord. I enjoyed and will cherish our conversation.