



Shelby Wigley

70 Years in the Making

By Shelby Wigley

My parents and I have lived in Mills County our whole lives and all four of my grandparents have lived here for over 70 years of their lives. It's awesome to listen to all of them tell stories of when they were young and hear about the many things that have changed here in Mills County. My grandma, Judith Theown Dalton Wigley, has worked hard to keep the history of this county alive and she teaches me new things every time we are together. She has a long family history and has also devoted time to rebuilding a cemetery where some of her family, who were early settlers in the county, is buried; this cemetery was also recognized with a state historical marker. I've learned from her that Mills County, like the rest of the world, has changed in many ways and my grandmother has been here to witness most of the major changes of the last 70 years. Not only has the ideals of people changed, so has technology and the county in general.

My grandmother grew up in a time where parents did not have to worry about their kids playing in the yard because everyone in town would take care of each other. It was also a time when children were expected to help with the family business and do what they were told when they were told to do it. Modesty was also very important, girls wore dresses to school

that had many layers and they also had to wear flat shoes. These ideals are so different than the ones we hold today because it is harder to trust the people around us every day and the expectations that they had for young people are no longer respected like they used to be.

Technology has also change this county. My grandmother grew up with-out a television and when they did get one when she was older it was tiny and played shows in black and white; eventually they did get one that played in color. Back then, televisions were so extravagant that neighbors would even get together and watch boxing and other events together. Telephones have also transformed since my grandmother's time as a young adult. In her time, people would have to call an operator and then tell them whom they wanted to talk to so they could be connected. Eventually though, phones began to have a rotary dial so she could dial the correct number herself. Nowadays, almost everyone has a cell phone, including all of my grandparents. My grand-mother has a cell phone of her own and has also figured out how to text, she recently got a Facebook account too. Technology did not just change the way people communicate with one another but, as it has become more advanced, it has helped to raise the amount people were paid and the cost of everyday things. Decades ago, when Goldthwaite had the Melba Theater my grandmother said that she remembers that it cost nine cents to watch one movie and that if they paid with a dime then they could use the change to buy some candy. Places like the Melba Theater were cheaper back then because movies and other technologies were not as advanced or fancy as they are today. Even though everything seemed "cheap" back then, consider that pay was lower compared to to-day. Life seemed to be less hectic as there were more opportunities in this little county. It was a big deal to travel to places like Brownwood because families spent more time together and not every-one had cars.

Throughout time Mills County has also had a few changes of its own, like the theater going out of business. Other changes that my grandmother remembers would be the time before the Goldthwaite city park was built when there was no pool and the dam was still standing. It's so interesting hearing her talk about having swimming lessons in Lake Merritt and then years later being able to swim in the brand new city pool. Another change that my grandmother witnessed was the Baptist church fire that lit the town up with the bright light of the fire. Her family had gone to that church for years and when it burned down it devastated the town, so the re-opening of the church was a very big event. Finally, one more thing that has changed about this community is that there are no longer passenger trains that run through town. My grandmother remembers the time when they did run and also once when my grandfather, Jimmy Wig-ley, rode the train back from Houston after a big livestock show. This train was also convenient to carry mail to the large cities but nowadays it is more efficient to just send them by truck.

A big thing that I have learned is that time changes everything. Many of the things we take for granted today were a luxury when my grandmother was a child. All of our families have made sacrifices to build this county and make decisions that would affect future generations, so it is our duty to do the same. We must take the responsibility of contributing to our society by developing new technologies and building infrastructure that will support future generations; just like the elder people of our county have done for us. I am fortunate to have been raised in this community and to have family that I can learn from.