



# All Roads Lead to Mills County

By Steven Bridges

When I graduated Goldthwaite High School in 1989, I never thought I'd be back for more than Thanksgiving and Christmas.

I was raised in Goldthwaite, Mills County. I tell people I grew up just like Opie Taylor from Mayberry, except my dad ran the newspaper instead of the sheriff's office.

In fact, most everyone in Goldthwaite still calls me "Stevie" instead of Steven. And that's fine with me. I earned that nickname fair and square.

When I was young, my friends and I used to ride our bikes all around Goldthwaite in the summer waiting for the Goldthwaite Swimming Pool to open up.

Usually, we had fishing poles strapped to our handle bars and a can of worms in one hand. Little ladies poked their heads out of doorways to say "hello" and offered us lemonade and iced tea when we rode by their houses.

Merlene Stacy even had a candy drawer in her kitchen. We never went by her house without stopping. These ladies called my mom and dad to keep them updated on where we were and how we

were doing.

Time flew, and before I knew it, I'd graduated from Goldthwaite High School. Then I went off to college at the University of Illinois. The University of Illinois is a large campus with more than 50,000 students enrolled. It was a far cry from GHS and my graduating class of 30. I was no longer Stevie. I was social security number 423... etc.

After college, I took a job trading commodities on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. I yelled and screamed for a living for seven years. I lived in a building where I didn't even know my next door neighbors. Then, I came back home to Goldthwaite.

I have never regretted my move out of the city. I am happier here than I ever was there. I am not the only one either. More and more young families are relocating back to Mills County.

It is not for the money that families move here. You can always make a little more money in the city. Chasing dollars may be a rule for some, but not the select few who make Mills County their home.

This community and the

very special way of life we have here does not come with a price tag. It comes with a value some may never appreciate.

I married my former girlfriend on March 5, 2005. She had broken up with me at the Goldthwaite Rodeo in the summer after our fourth-grade year at Goldthwaite Elementary. I spent the next 25 years getting her back.

We had our first child, Amber Lee Bridges, in February of 2008. We had our second child, Flint Thomas Bridges, in April of 2011.

New and old faces are popping up in Mills County every day. Some are retiring back in Mills County, others are making the move while they can still raise their children here in a good community.

Fall used to be the big tourist season in Mills County. Hunters come from all over to chase the abundant deer, turkey, and dove of the area.

Now, Spring and Summer bring visitors in numbers almost rivaling the hunters in the fall. Shoppers, flower admirers, bikers and relaxers come to enjoy the scenery or simply enjoy the people of Mills County.

Yes, things have changed

some since I was a kid. Mills County now has all the amenities that anyone might need, but there is still none of the hassle of traffic, long lines or stress of the city.

Austin, Waco, Abilene and San Angelo are all roughly 90 miles away. I often tell people, "If you want to get all stressed out, just drive an hour and a half in any direction."

The truth is, people drive an hour and a half from those cities to get to Mills County, where they can get un-stressed.

So if you haven't been to Mills County, come see what the rest of us already know. There is no place on Earth quite like Goldthwaite, America.

*Steven Bridges owns and operates The Goldthwaite Eagle in downtown Goldthwaite. The award-winning newspaper is published every Wednesday morning in print and on the Internet. Pick up an Eagle at one of the many retailers in Mills County or subscribe Online at [www.GoldthwaiteEagle.com](http://www.GoldthwaiteEagle.com) or by calling 325-648-2244.*