

# General Store changes hands

By Tammarrah Pledger  
Goldthwaite Eagle

After 18 years owned by Rodney and Ginger Sterling Spies, the Mills County General Store recently changed hands.

Rodney and Ginger Spies bought the store from Pac & Vickie Hamblen in October of 2000. Rodney said he and Ginger “scraped up every nickel (they) had in life,” and decided to buy the store. “We had to make it our livelihood,” Rodney said, “so we didn’t pay ourselves for a long time, and put every penny back into the store and its inventory.”

When talking about the changes they made at the store over the years, they said technology has certainly changed how they do business. After about three years, they invested some \$25,000 into a computer system for ordering new products, billing, inventory, etc.

When the store became an ACE store about seven years ago, they had to invest a comparable amount into a new system that would interface both with ACE’s network, and with their existing system.

Through the years the General Store

focused mainly on hunting supplies, hardware and housewares.

In their 18 years owning and running the store, they have seen many changes in products and trends, but what remained the same was the importance of the relationship they have with their customers.

Rodney said one man they have done business with for many years recently contacted him to buy a deer rifle, saying he wanted his son to buy his first rifle from them.

“Our customers have become our family,” he said.

As such, the decision to sell the store was not made lightly, but they agreed it was time. Rodney and Ginger listed the store with a broker and had many inquiries that didn’t pan out. With the holiday and hunting seasons in full swing, their busiest time of the year, they carried on in their normal harried fashion.

Amidst the fray, the potential buyers visited the store “incognito,” Rodney said. Afterward, they were contacted by the broker, who told them about the visit, and in January they had a conference call with the couple

who had said they were very interested in buying the store. A couple of weeks later they met in person, and a deal was forged. The employees and others in the community were made aware starting around this past summer that the store would change hands around the turn of the year.

Wayne Gierke and Michale Frogge — a married couple from Azle — signed papers purchasing the business as of October 1, 2018. They had actually passed through town last December on their way to San Saba trying to find a store they saw listed for sale. When they arrived at the San Saba business, they realized it didn’t fit the description for the one they were seeking, and they came back through Goldthwaite where they decided to stop at the General Store.

Wayne and Michale are very interested in becoming a part of the community, and see potential in growing downtown business. They want long-time customers to know that they do not intend to completely change the General Store, but rather keep much of what’s there and hopefully enhance and improve where they can.

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