God Bless Lee Ruth Campbell

By Steve Bridges Goldtwaite Eagle

When I first moved back to Goldthwaite to run the newspaper with my parents, it didn't take long to reconnect with my childhood friend, Bradlev Shelton.

We were both young and single, so we had a lot of outdoor adventures in those days. We would go bowhunting in Colorado and whitetail hunting here in Mills County, and of course, we also liked to dove hunt.

We didn't have a lot of time because we were both working a lot but it seemed we could always at least squirrel away a couple hours a week to dove hunt. Now, neither of us had access to a place to dove hunt back then, but ... we did know Lee Ruth Campbell, who even back then, was well into her 80s. We had both known

her all our lives. Lee Ruth was a sweet little old lady about town and to her, we were a couple of little boys — Stevie and Bradley.

Lee Ruth lived on the edge of Goldthwaite and her house happened to have about 10 acres of grassland in the back where they kept their horses and a beautiful 1/4 acre stock pond, along with the luxury of a few big oak trees around that pond.

There was a rural power line right beside the stock pond, and as you can imagine, this spot was a dove magnet. They would feed in the feeders in town during the day, and then in the evenings, would come to sit on the line, drink from the pond, and roost in those trees.

Now, this wasn't a spot you could hunt every week, but every few weeks the dove would reaccumulate and come back, slowly building up in numbers. I'd see Bradley in town and would ask him, "Hey, how's the power line?"

"I saw four yesterday," he'd say. "It's too early."

A few days later, he might ask me the same question, and I'd say something like, "I saw eight. Give it a few more days." Eventually there would be agree it was time to call Lee Ruth.

One of us would call Lee Ruth and ask to come come say hi and dove hunt, and she would always say, "Sure, come on over!"

Going to see Lee Ruth was a bit of a production. We couldn't show up and start hunting immediately. We'd show up a bit after 5 p.m. and knock on the door politely. She'd invite us in and would always have little finger sandwiches, cookies and sweet tea waiting for us.

Lee Ruth was a bit of a professional funeral sandwich maker for Goldthwaite, and it was always sandwiches cut into little triangles with the crust cut off — peanut butter and jelly for Bradley, ham & cheese for me, with cookies and sweet tea.

We knew we were going to be 15 or 20 lined up out there and we'd there for a little bit, and she had a big picture window where we could see all the trees and the power line, and we could watch the doves coming in for the evening.

> But after a while, Bradley and I would settle down into her pink and white floral couch and forget all about shotgun shells and doves.

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