

*In 1969, when my mom had her first decade under her belt and my grandfather, George Cathey, was in his prime, family trips to Mexico were a common occurrence, and the average souvenir became the beginning of the family business.*

*At first, small advertisements were placed in the back of magazines, showing a young, slender girl with an over-sized, floppy hat on and a gun holster draped over her shoulder, which were two of the prized trinkets brought back in bulk from Mexico and sold for a small profit. Eventually, fashions changed from floppy hats to beaded vests, but the one money-maker that stayed constant was the gun holsters, thus making it perfectly clear to my grandfather what he needed to spend his time, energy, and money on.*

*He spent half a month in Mexico, learning the technique it took to make these holsters and recruiting workers to come to America as entrepreneurs to aid him in starting the quaint Cathey Empire.*

*My grandfather was successful in California, but stronger forces brought him to Austin, Texas, where he set up a factory, and then he eventually settled Cathey Enterprises in Brownwood where he opened two shops.*

*My grandfather has retired now, and my mom carries on the family business.*

Cathey Enterprises was founded by George Cathey in the early 1970's. President George Cathey, Vice-president Lila Cathey, and head adviser Reyes Lopez moved the small business to Austin, Texas, from Chulavista, California where it prospered. In the early 1990's, Cathey Enterprises was moved for the third and final time to Brownwood, Texas, where two shops were opened, each averaging 20 workers. In the mid to late 90's a poor business decision led to the closing of Cathey Enterprises and the opening of Hill Country Leather, which is currently owned by Lila Cathey and run by her daughter, Laurie Perkins. Gun holsters are still the product made and sold by the Cathey family.

When I was a young girl, we would fly from Detroit to Brownwood to visit my grandparents. I would always end up at the main shop next to Dr. Pepper Bottling. There was this massive room assigned to storing leather scraps not used, and boxes five times the size of me held soft leather, while flattened boxes stacked to the ceiling overshadowed them. My sister and I would take turns playing queen of the boxes until one of us would "accidentally" fall into the plush leather below. Needless to say, neither one of us wanted to be the queen.