

AUSPL PEOPLE

B. Thomas Miller:

A Journey from Post Office Custodian to Landlord

In the years between working as a custodian at the Franklin, Georgia Post Office and becoming its landlord, a lot happened to B. Thomas Miller. He spent two years in Iran as a Peace Corps volunteer, four years back in Georgia as a high school teacher, and 30 years as an Assistant School Superintendent. He married and started a family that grew to include three children and seven grandchildren.



Post Office Custodian & Peace Corps Volunteer

Thomas grew up in Franklin, GA, a rural community 60 miles southwest of Atlanta. At age 16 he found “a job open for a few hours a week at the Franklin post office,” Mr. Miller said “It was a high school job, and it would be nice to have the income, even though it was only a few dollars a week. But, I worked every day, one hour before school and one hour after school.”

“I fed the chickens on our family’s poultry farm before heading to work and then to school,” he explained. “I worked at the Post Office from November 1959 until the fall of 1961. I emptied the trash, swept the floor and burned trash behind the building. I always thought I’d like to continue to work for the post office.”

“After high school I joined the Peace Corps. I went to Iran for two years.” At age 18, Thomas was the youngest in his group of 40 Peace Corps volunteers. “We were the first group ever to go to Iran, which was then under the Shah’s rule,” Thomas said. “I taught English as a Second Language (ESL). I also studied Farsi, but I was more comfortable teaching English.” Thomas also served as an observer/consultant for agricultural high school students in the villages around Shiraz, Iran. “The Peace Corps matched my skills as a farm boy to the Iranian students who were studying animal husbandry,” Thomas told us. “We raised baby chicks.”

The Peace Corps was “a life-changing experience,” Thomas revealed. “I’d never been on a plane before, and I had never been overseas.” He was in Iran when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. “The Iranian kids cried when they learned that our President was shot,” he said.

College & A Career in Education

After returning home, Thomas attended Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and later transferred to West Georgia College (now University of West Georgia). After graduation, Thomas said, “I taught 10th, 11th and 12th graders for four years. Then, I served as an assistant school superintendent for the next 30 years for a school system comprised of less than 3,000 students.”

The Franklin Post Office

During those years the Franklin Post Office had several “lives” of its own. In 1959, the post office outgrew its space and was moved to a new facility. The teenaged Thomas continued his duties at the new building, with increased work

hours. Working at the original Franklin post office was a bit of a “family affair.” Thomas’ brother, J. Wayne Miller also did custodial work there. In earlier years their grandfather was a rural mail carrier for the facility.

The small post office served the Franklin community well from 1959 to 1990. By 1990, the Postal Service wanted to build a newer, more modern building and advertised for a site. Thomas owned 1.5 acres of vacant land in the community.

His brother, J. Wayne Miller, was a commercial builder. The new 4,500 square foot Franklin post office would become his biggest project. “I bought the property as an investment. I didn’t have any specific plans for it,” Thomas said. “Building a post office just sounded so exciting to us. We didn’t build any other post offices or have any interest in building or owning any other ones anywhere else. We owned the post office together as a joint venture. Later J. Wayne decided to sell his interest and I became the sole owner of the post office.”

Post Office Lessor & Family Man

Both B. Thomas and J. Wayne still reside in Franklin. “It’s nice to live in a small town where you know everyone,” Thomas told us. He is married to Judy Pipes Miller and has one daughter, two stepdaughters and seven grandchildren. It’s a good life. Thomas retired from education but still operates a small real estate office where he manages and rents houses. “It’s just me. I don’t have any real estate agents or an assistant,” Thomas explained. “It gives me something to do in retirement.”

New AUSPL Member

Thomas joined AUSPL six months ago. “The best investment for me as a member is the insurance program,” Thomas said. “The newsletter is always very informative.” The articles in the newsletter and on the AUSPL website helped Thomas prepare for his recent lease negotiations with CBRE. “I was in the dark before,” he said. “I didn’t know about CBRE.”

Thomas tells us he is looking forward to attending an AUSPL Conference – as soon as he finds someone to care for his 95 year-old Mother and his “just turned 100” year-old aunt. We’re looking forward to meeting Thomas, Judy and J. Wayne.

Share Your Story with Us

Members are sharing stories about their post office with fellow members and visitors to our website. Please call Barbara Barrett at 800-572-9483 for more details.