

History of Ava's Auto Dealerships — Part II (B)

# Davis Family Nears 70 Years in Auto Sales

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Based on Materials and Interviews Provided by

Dale Davis, Gene Davis and Herman Davis

The Winter 2006 Journal contained the first part of this history of new car dealers in Douglas County. When Dale Davis, President of Davis Chrysler, Inc., in Ava, read the article, he couldn't help see some contrasts between himself and old M.C. Reynolds, the county's very first new car dealer.

- Back in 1915, M.C. Reynolds was the *first* dealer (he sold Fords). Starting in 1991, Dale Davis and his family began operating the *last* new car dealership (Chrysler products) in the county, and they remain in business on Hwy. 5 in west Ava.

- In the 1890s, M.C. Reynolds helped finance and raise money for the construction of what is now the Ava General Baptist Church. One of the church pews that old M.C. purchased way back then is on display in the church now. Dale, on the other hand, has been a Trustee of that same church since 1989, and he and his family have been active in it for years.

Unlike the Davis Family who has maintained a presence in area auto sales for almost 70 years, M.C. Reynolds, and his son-in-law, Henry Wilson, kept the lucrative Ford dealership only about 10 years before selling it to Harry Martin in 1925.

Today, Dale, his sons, Greg and Jeff, and a grandson, Drew, continue to provide auto services to Douglas County and the surrounding area almost 70 years after Dale's father, Cecil Davis, opened up a little auto parts store off the Ava square in 1939. This article provides a chronology of the Davis family and their auto service businesses for that long period.

### The Davis Family Tree

Exhibit 1 at the right provides a summary of the Davis family tree. Cecil's grandfather, John T. "Whole Root" Davis, was born in northern Ozark County on 9 Oct 1854; he married Rebecca Herndon on 31 Jan 1878, and they had 12 children while they lived in the Romance and Noble areas of the Ozark County. Early in the 1900s, John T. Davis moved his large family to the Ava area.

Shortly before the family's move, John was injured by a team of young horses and was not able to do farm work; so he began his fruit tree/orchard business. He advertised his fruit trees in the Herald, and he sold and planted his trees throughout the area, as a representative for Stark Bros. Orchards, Louisiana, MO.

The seventh child of the 12 children, Elmer Lee Davis



1957—Herman (left) & Cecil Davis dressed for the Centennial with Cecil's Model T

### Exhibit 1 — Davis Family Line

- 1 John T. Davis (b. 1854 in Ozark County—  
d. 1926 in Douglas County)
- m. Rebecca Ellen Herndon (1860-1927)
- 2 Daniel Webster Davis (1878-1941)  
m. Hannah Lakey
- 2 William Stephen Davis(1880-1918)  
m. Almira Fletcher
- 2 Commodore "Coma" Davis (1882-1963)  
m. Libby Mae Stockwell  
m. Gertie Ellen Day
- 2 Malisse Anne Davis (1885-1972)  
m. George T. Durham
- 2 Minnie Ethel Davis (1887-1933)  
m. Jesse E. Reeves
- 2 Florence Edna Davis (1889-1890)
- 2 Elmer Lee Davis (1891-1967)  
m. Rosa Mae Brown (1895-1995)
- 3 Cecil Oran Davis (1915-1988)  
m. Loa Hamilton (1917-2005)
- 4 Donald Davis (1937-1999)
- 4 Dale Davis (1938-
- 3 Herman E. Davis (1919-
- 3 Fern. L. Davis (1920-1979)
- 3 Earnest E. Davis (1923-1994)
- 3 Charles Eugene Davis (1924-
- 3 M. Christine Davis (1930-1964)
- 2 Neal Segal Davis (1893-1967)  
m. Bertha F. Brown (1897-1990)
- 2 Enoch Lincoln Davis (1896-1973)  
m. Laura Annie Gunnels (1903-2002)
- 2 Troy Abner Davis (1898-1899)
- 2 George Washington Davis (1900-1978)  
m. Oma Lansdown (1900-1978)
- 2 Fred Davis (1903-1926)

(b. 1891 – d. 1967), was Cecil’s father. Elmer married Rosa Brown in 1914. She was the daughter of James Lihu Brown whose place was about a mile north of the John T. Davis farm. Elmer was a farmer and laborer, and cared not for fruit trees. His son, Gene Davis, quoted his dad as saying he hoped he’d never see another apple tree again! During the 1920s into the 1930s, Elmer and Rosie ran a dairy farm northeast of Ava on land that now holds the Ava Municipal Airport. The place was owned by Elmer’s brother-in-law, Jesse Reeves, and Elmer shared the milk check with him for the use of the land.

Although he never had much money and only owned land late in life, Elmer Davis was a good man who was well thought of in the community. Elmer and Rosie had six children – four boys and two girls. As will be described on the succeeding pages, Elmer’s good character and name helped his boys get their start; and in the end, they were able to help Elmer and Rosie in their latter years.

### Children of Elmer and Rosie

In 1915, Cecil Oran Davis, was born to Elmer and Rosie. Four and a half years later (1919), a brother, Herman E. Davis, was born. The two brothers were very close; they were lifelong associates and best friends, and many of the family stories start with “Cecil and Herman did this or that.”

The stories told by family members suggest that Cecil (and Herman as his assistant) had a strong sense of responsibility to help his parents get by and to care for the other children even up into later life. There were to be four younger siblings – Fern, Earnest, Charles “Gene”, and Christine. Cecil’s son, Dale tells a story about his father and his Uncle Herman that illustrates how they helped the family, and it also suggests that Cecil Davis was a natural when it came to the car business.

According to Dale, in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the Elmer Davis family would travel to Illinois to work on a farm during the summer and pick up some much needed cash. Now Cecil only went to his Sophomore year in Ava High School when he dropped out to work and help the family. So Dale’s story must have occurred when Cecil was either a Freshman or Sophomore, and Cecil couldn’t have been more than 15 or 16 years old.

Here’s the story in Dale’s own words.

*Did you know the family used to go up to Illinois (up near Chicago) to work every summer? The first car that Grandpa Elmer ever had – Dad and Herman built it. Dad*

### Family of Elmer and Rosa (Brown) Davis — May 21, 1944 (A Family Gathering Before Earnie Davis Ships Out to the Pacific)



**L-R: Children Arranged from Youngest to Oldest — Christine, Charles “Gene”, Earnest, Fern, Herman and Cecil. Their parents, Elmer and Rosa (Brown) Davis are on the right end.**

*used to sit in study hall with the Ford dealer’s (Harry Martin) son. And Martin had a Model T salvage yard out on Happy Home Road where Grandpa Davis and the family lived in a rent house at that time. Dad said to the Martin kid, ‘Ask your dad if we could have parts and pieces out of the salvage yard and we’ll make two cars—one for you and one for us.’ The son asked Mr. Martin and he said OK. So Herman and Dad, of a night, they would go out there after school and take pieces and parts, and they made two vehicles — one for the Davis family and one for Harry Martin.*

*So Cecil and Herman made a Model T touring car for the Davis family, and the next summer when it was time to go to Illinois, Grandpa Elmer, Rosie, and the six kids all went in that car. Dad drove because Grandpa could not drive a car very well. Dad said they didn’t even get to St. Louis, and they met a truck, and the old top of the Model T split right down the middle. They just folded it up, and they nearly got to where they were going when they burned a*



**A Young Cecil Davis and an Early Girlfriend**

rod on the Model T. Uncle Jesse Brown had a new Dodge and he was traveling along with them. He hooked up the Model T to an old rope and towed them in the rest of the way.

When they were up there, Dad and Herman (always 'him and Herman') pulled the old car under a tree, got a set of old wire stretchers, and pulled the engine out of the old Model T. Of a night, they overhauled the engine, and they went down to the Western Auto Store and got a new top and new side curtains so they could come back home. That was Elmer and Rosie's first car.

Besides showing Cecil's keen sense of responsibility to his family at a very early age, it also showed a resourcefulness to look around, weigh the possibilities and opportunities, and to carry out something positive. That old junk yard may have done more for Cecil's business career than anything else.

### The Cecil Davis Family

Once he left high school in the early 1930s, Cecil went to work at the stove mill in Ava. It was located where the Ava Elementary School is located now and very near the old Railroad Depot that was in that area of town until 1935.

In 1936, Cecil met and married 19-year-old Loa Hamilton, a girl from Goodhope who had lost her parents at the age of 10, and had spent her teenage years living with and helping her grandfather, Jesse R. Davis (near Pansy). Like Cecil, Loa was used to hard work and being responsible. Before they married, Loa had been working as a waitress at Beano's Cafe on the north side of the Ava square.

First, Cecil and Loa went into farming, and Cecil also ran a milk route. At some point, he began working at Steve Wallin's Western Auto store in Ava. Apparently, Cecil was poised to make a move on his own when the opportunity presented itself.

### Cecil's First Business

When working at Wallin's Western Auto, Cecil obtained a catalog of a supplier out of Kansas City. According to his son, Dale:

*It was 1939 -- Dad went up to the Citizens Bank to see Jim Reese (Bank President). [Note: this was about four years before Mr. Reese hired Cecil's brother, Herman, at the bank]. Grandpa (Elmer) Davis went with him, and they signed a signature note to get money to start a business. Dad told Jim Reese how he had the little building*



**Cecil Davis in His First Auto Parts Store Behind the Corner Drug Around 1943—He Opened it in 1939.**



**The Corner Drug Building Today — Cecil's store was on the right side**

*that he could rent, and how much money he needed to start his little business. Grandpa never did have much money but he had a good name, and Jim Reese knew they would do what they said.*

*You know, that makes me think -- in 1960, when I started my little surplus store on the square, Dad went up to the bank with me, and he had a little house and farm he put up for collateral for me to get my business loan. And the bank loaned me the money to start my store.*

Cecil operated the little auto parts store starting in 1939 for a few years while selling some used cars on the side, farming, and running a milk route. Dale continued:

*Dad always had a car to sell. He told me he got his first D-Tag {dealer's license} in 1939 too. I remember we were still down on the farm at Whitescreek; he always had three or four lined up in the yard there for sale.*

*And he was running a milk route -- I remember one*

really cold morning, I wasn't more than four years old, and he couldn't get his old Ford milk truck to start; he came in the house -- we had the wood stove -- and he raked out some hot coals and ashes, and he went out there and set it under the oil pan of that old Ford, waited a little bit, and it would warm it up enough for it to start.

The little parts store was in operation when World War II started. But the war years created a new need – tire repair.

### World War II and the Need for Tires

As the war started up in late 1941 and early 1942, Cecil was already doing tire repair in his little shop off the Ava square. By this time, Cecil and Loa had two small boys, Donald (born in 1937) and Dale (born in December 1938).

New tires became impossible to find, so that tire repair and recapping became a vital activity for the war effort just like farming, and Cecil never was drafted into the armed forces. His brother, Herman, could not pass the physical because of a childhood illness. But both their younger brothers served and narrowly escaped with their lives.

Cecil's brother Earnest Davis, entered the Navy in 1943 and saw action on a destroyer in the Pacific. The youngest brother, Gene, went in the Army in 1944 and saw action in Germany. About that same time, both Cecil and Ray Dilsaver had a tire shop. According to Dale:

*I have a copy of Uncle Ernie's discharge papers. Uncle Ernie's destroyer took a direct hit from a Kamikaze plane, and didn't sink, but killed nearly half of Ernie's shipmates. (Not many destroyers took a direct hit like that and stayed afloat). Ernie got the Purple Heart for it – got shrapnel (wounds).*

Also in 1943, Herman began his long career at Citizens Bank as a bank teller. As a result, when Earnest returned from the war, Herman was able to help him get a position with a bank in Mountain Grove where he had a long and successful career.

Regarding Herman's brother, Gene Davis, Dale asked the interviewer if his Uncle Gene told him about his experiences in Germany in 1944 and 1945. Well he had not, and here's Dale's recount of Uncle Gene's experiences.

*Did Uncle Gene tell you that he and another guy were out in a fox hole in the middle of the night, and their guys moved back and left them? A guy was supposed to come and tell them to pull out, and later he said he couldn't find them. The two of them woke up the next morning,, and they saw the others were gone and they could see some Germans nearby. They got down into a kind of ditch and started crawling and eventually got back to their lines. According to Gene – "That guy who was to come get us – I never did have any use for him after that!"*

*One night Gene's unit was working on a bridge. He said the Germans had more dud shells than they did live ones. An 88mm shell hit right down the creek from the bridge and exploded, and the next one was centered on the bridge, didn't go off, and just went right through the bridge, just left a hole, didn't explode.*

By the time Gene Davis was discharged from the Army



Hazel (Myers) and Gene Davis — Sept. 1944

in September 1946, his brother Cecil had spent a year in Wyoming where he provided the only tire recapping service in the town of Buffalo; but he had returned by that time and set up a full service tire, auto service, and gas station in Ava. Cecil needed Gene for the tire recapping end of the business, and that started Gene on his career in that field. According to Dale:

*Uncle Bruce (Shrum) – Aunt Lulu Brown's husband, was in Buffalo, WY. And he said, "Cease, we don't have a tire shop out here, and we need one" – it was a vital service to communities, you see. I remember Dad loaded Donnie and me in the back of a Pontiac car – I was five years old. I remember sitting on top of the things. He put that tire shop in a little one-wheeled trailer, and we went to Buffalo, WY. We were out there a year. Before we left I had already started to the first grade in Ava – I was five years old and wouldn't be six until December. Up there in Wyoming, Mom went down to put us in school (Don was in the second grade). He was just fifteen months older but he was just old enough to be in the second. But they told me that I had be six before school starts. So, I couldn't go to school in Wyoming.*

*I remembered us coming home in the summer of 1945 (we had to have gas stamps, I remember); Dad was wanting a building, and Uncle Herman said "I found the Doc Sallee building up here, and I can buy it for us." Herman*

lined it all up and we came home in the fall 1945, and the war was over.

### Doc Sallee's Machine Shop

In 1945, Cecil and Herman Davis purchased the Doc Sallee Machine Shop on Jefferson two blocks south of the Ava square. His brother, Herman, recounts that time:

*Now, Cecil was making it OK in those early years. He had that little auto shop store behind the Corner Drug Store (where Dan Bushman had his shoe shop in later years). I don't think Cecil operated it too long, and he got a chance to buy Doc Sallee's machine shop (and property was cheap). That was when I went into partners with him. I was working at the bank. (Read a full account of Herman's career at Citizens Bank in the Winter 2003 Douglas County Historical Journal). Cecil had a good credit already established. I can't remember how we handled it (the building purchase). I don't remember us borrowing any money – might have made payments to Doc...I just don't remember.*

*Cease wanted to start expanding...do more recapping for the milk trucks...because tires were scarce. Cecil was the only recapper in town. Did passenger tire recapping, flat fixing. Of course there were 150 milk trucks came into town every day. Cecil knew all those guys. Business was good. I did the book work in the evening after I got off at the bank. Now Cecil was a trader, and after awhile we started selling some used farm equipment. So we signed up and got the Case implement (dealership) and buying new machinery. And about the same time we got the Kaiser-Fraser Car dealership. We built the addition on the south end before we got Case and we had auto parts in it. We took the auto parts out when we got the Kaiser-Fraser, and we fixed it to where we could display a car inside it. We got our Kaiser-Frasers through the Green family in Springfield who had the area distributorship. We'd get them as we needed them. We had a big door at the back that we could open and drive the car into that right side.*

*On the Case implements, we'd keep maybe one new tractor in inventory – because a tractor sold for maybe \$800-\$900. We sold a lot of tractors – smaller one called the VAC. Then business kept growing, and by this time Roy Wood (my sister Fern's husband) was our mechanic. Roy joined us once we got to the Doc Sallee building. Roy was a good mechanic – if you thought it couldn't be fixed, he'd figure out a way to fix it. He did a really good job and I think we paid him well accordingly. I think we paid him on a percentage with a guaranteed base pay. The more work he turned out, the more he made.*

### Brother Gene Davis Remembers the Tire Shop

Cecil's brother, Gene Davis, was discharged from the Army in September 1946 at Fort Sheridan, IL. Gene went to work in Cecil and Herman's tire shop in the Doc Sallee building. Here are some of Gene's recollections:

*Cecil opened up a station there, and he was selling four different kinds -- sold Kerosene, Gasoline, Regular*



**Davis Bros. — circa 1946 (Located two blocks south of the Ava Square on Jefferson St.)**

*and Super and something else -- maybe just three. Cecil told Thetis Jenkins to put gas in – he told Thetis that “if I can't pay you when you unload, don't unload.” We had a string of books, we had those little cheese boxes. And these little hand cards, had “customer's” names on the tops of them. We had enough customers to fill two of those cheese boxes.*

*Of course Cecil knew all the milk haulers and school bus drivers, and he was doing a tremendous business selling gasoline. So when I came home (from the war) he was setting his tire shop over on the other side, and Uncle Coma's boy, Russell Davis, had come back from California, and he had some experience. He could do anything – good hunter, take some cows and make a good living with them. I guess in about 8 or 10 months Russell wanted to do something else. I came in and Christine's husband, Jim Irby came in there, and we were taking the training that the*



**Davis Brothers Tire Company — Around 1959**



Photo at Left: Roy and Fern (Davis) Wood — 1957

Army allowed. Jim started doing mechanics with Roy, and I took over the tire shop. Well we just kept making it bigger and bigger.

We got into that recapping business pretty big. A lot of repair work was being done, and Cecil just pushed the recapping on me. We had a good capping business — if the carcass was good, we could recap it. We had a grease pit. There was steam heat, and the rubber smells — didn't think about the fumes. The fumes from the cars was worse than the rubber tires. There was a wooden sliding door. One time, Thetis Hodges was working there -- he helped pump gas and sell cars — he was good — he knew a lot of people — down at Goodhope and that area. I was pulling a truck in and I said to Thetis "Watch that door." Well the truck hit it, and I said "Thetis I thought I told you to watch that." He said, "I was watching it." {Laugh} He didn't holler or nothin'.

Cecil was always running some kind of commercial deal and one day at Thanksgiving — he bought a whole bunch of turkeys, chickens and ducks, and we got on top of the building and we had an awful crowd, and we threw them off, and they went down the street and people would catch them. He had about six turkeys. Another time, Cecil gave away an aluminum boat and four Goodyear Double Eagle tires. He could get a crowd -- and enjoy every minute of it. I said that Cecil had rather trade than eat. If he was on a deal he didn't think about eating.



Cecil Davis standing among four new 1950 Buicks — the building was built by Cecil and his brother, Herman, in 1949. The building was located on Jefferson Street three blocks south of the Ava square on the east side of the road.

## Buick Agency

In 1949, Cecil and Herman built a new building directly south of the Tire Shop, and obtained the Buick dealership. Herman talked about the new business and his relationship with Cecil:

*Now, I let Cease run the business, and I didn't tell him anything; I just did the book work. With doing the book work I knew what was going on. Now, in 1949, we built that new building I think for around \$15,000. It was a nice building -- it was stucco over a wood frame, and about 50' by 60'.*

*The shop was in the back, and Roy Wood was the head mechanic with someone helping him. Now, they'd bring in a new car through the back door and into the showroom at the front. You could get two cars in there easily to show. At that time, cars were scarce, and we'd try to make a profit on the new car and the trade-in.*

Regarding the picture shown on page 32, however, Dale Davis adds:

*Dad though, never had four new Buicks at one time. Back then the haulers carried just four cars at once – two up and two down – not ten like now. So, the four Buicks in the pictures – he said two of them belong to the Mtn. Home dealer. Dad said they could save money by having the hauler leave them here at Dad's place – so that night, the Mtn. Home dealer came up and got his two.*

Cecil and Herman sold the Buick agency to Junior Chambers of Mountain Home, AR, in 1952. But Cecil continued to operate his used car business, tire shop, parts store and gas station.

## The Motel Investment Era

In 1957 or 1958, Cecil and Loa bought the Ava Motel which was located on north Jefferson just north of the old Highway House Cafe. A convenience store is now operated on the site. It was a time when Cecil and Herman felt that a motel was one of the best investments available. Herman traded a farm for a motel in Webb City; then his father-in-law, Ernest Whetsten, operated it for him. Brother Gene Davis and his wife, Hazel, bought another nice motel in Vinita, OK, and he left the tire shop for awhile in the 1960s to operate it.

Around 1960, the new highway from Mansfield was completed. Seeing an opportunity where others were skeptical, Cecil bought three acres from Glenn Norman on the

corner where the new Highway 5 intersected with Highway 14. He called the location "Davis Corners," and he built a new motel, a gas station, and restaurant. While Cecil and Loa operated the motel, Cecil's nephew, Jerry Wood, operated the gas station, and many people will remember the restaurant that Harold Hutchinson opened there called "Hutch's."

Over time, all three brothers sold or traded their motels, and Cecil focused full-time on car sales again. Gene and Hazel Davis returned to Ava from Oklahoma, at which time Gene and brother-in-law, Jim Irby, took over the tire business, and Cecil was not involved. By this time, brother-in-law, Roy Wood, was a mechanic at Sallee Ford Motors and eventually returned to farming. He and wife, Fern, also operated a Wards catalog store on the Ava square during some of this period.

## Davis and Son Goes Full-Time in Car Sales

Dale Davis operated a surplus store on the north side of the Ava square in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Dale, he always kept his car dealer's license and had a car to sell most of the time:

*Dad sold his farm, retired, and moved to town, he'd been retired about two weeks, and he came down to the store, and he said,*

*"Come here, I want to talk to you."*

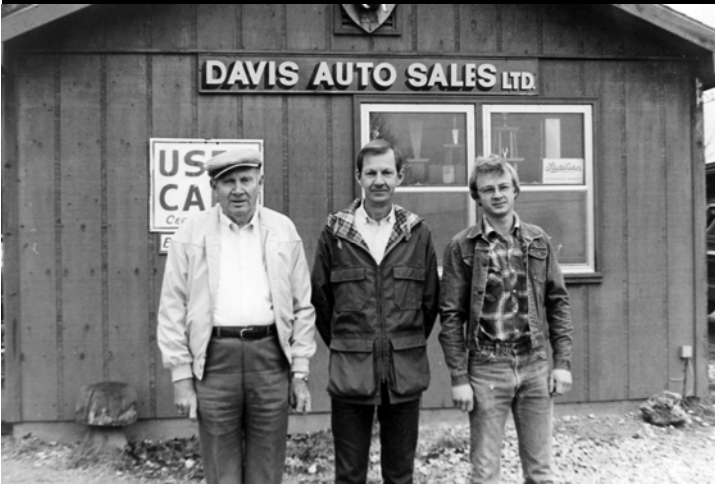
*"What's the matter, Dad?"*

*"Can't stand this – tell you what, I'll furnish the money, and I'll sell them, you already got a D-Tag (back then you only had to sell four a year to keep a D-Tag, and I always had a car in the back yard to sell and I traded --*



**Davis Corners — Ava, MO — ca 1963**

(Copied from a photo in the 1963 Annual Report of the Missouri State Highway Commission)



**1985 — Three Generations — Cecil, Dale and Jeff**

*Dad hated book work, he just wouldn't do book work, and of course Mom did it for years)...and Son, you keep the titles and wash the cars once in awhile, and every Thursday we'll go up to Melvin's 166 Auction (in Springfield), we'll buy a couple, put them over there in the yard, and I'll sell them."*

*That was the fall of 1975. So anyway, at that time Dad and I went back into the car business. One day, a man came and said "Well I bought this car over there at Haney's and I was told to come by the hardware store and get the title." Dad would call me when he sold one, and I'd make the title out.*

*In 1977, the twenty acres we are on now (on south 76 Highway), the man who owned it, his wife died or something, and they just left it, and it was sold at the Sheriff's sale, and Dad bought it. Vandals had gotten to the house so he completely rebuilt the house, and a little building there, and then in 1978, when Gregory graduated from high school, I told him he could run the store or sell it because I'm going out to be with Dad selling cars.*

*And Gregory ran the surplus store until October 1992. At that time, we closed the store out and he came out here with me. In 1988, we built the big building out there. Now we just do repairs out there on Highway 76. In October 1991, we got the Dodge agency, and we were out there entirely — new cars and repairs — until 2000.*

*Uncle Gene Davis owned this land on Highway 5 where our new cars are sold today. One day he came over and he said "The people who bought my building went bankrupt, and I had to take it back, and do you know anyone who might like to buy it?" I said, yes I do...we went over and looked at the building, and I said, Gene, I won't tell*



**Cecil & Loa (Hamilton) Davis — Spring 1988 (in the new building on Hwy 76 South)**



**L-R: Jeff Davis and his father, Dale — June 1990 in front of the building on Hwy 76 South**





**(Christmas —1992) Back: Dale and Greg; Middle: Jeff, Genie and David; Front: Melissa**

found out who to contact in Detroit, and we called. They said they were real interested and they would be down to talk to us. This was 1988 after we had built a new building out on Hwy 76 south. We didn't hear another thing out of them. Dad died in October 1988.

I was sitting out there in July 1991, and the phone rang. It was Chrysler – they said “You still want a Dodge dealership?” I said yes but before we go any further, I got to tell you, I called you guys three years ago, and you wouldn't even talk to me.”

They said “Well, when Hungerford bought the Dodge Agency in Mtn. Grove, we gave him Douglas and Wright County. Since he's closed up, you can now have it.” I said, “Well, just wish you would have told me that three years ago!” But that's how my son, Jeff, and I got the Dodge dealership in 1991.

Cecil never got to see that new car dealership open because he died in 1988 at the age of 73.

**Four Generations of Auto Services**

Dale and his wife, Genie (Wilson), have three boys and one girl. Two of his boys and a grandson are in the business. Thus, four successive generations have worked in auto services since Cecil opened his little auto parts store and got his dealer's license in 1939. Dale talked about his family:

My wife, Genie, is a Wilson – the Goodhope Wilsons. Genie's grandfather fought in the Civil War! Her grandfather was 65 when Genie's father was born. Greg is our oldest child, and he works here with me. He's the new car salesman and I'm the used car salesman. Greg and Kim have a son and a daughter. Jeff, the second boy, and Gwen have four boys; Jeff's our service manager and he runs the shop. One of his sons, Drew, works in the shop with him.

David lives in Olathe KS, and he is a computer guy, works at the world headquarters of Yellow Freight in Overland Park, KS. He and Cynthia have a boy and a girl. Melissa, our daughter, is a pilot, and she lives in Jacksonville, FL, and she and her husband, Jerry Monahan, have a little boy and a little girl. Melissa was with US Air, and right now she flies with JetBlue.

you for sure until in the morning; I want to talk to Genie and the boys.” I went home and they all said ‘go for it’ and next morning, I said “Uncle Gene, we'll take the building.” This gives us a lot more visibility (here on Hwy 5). I thought it might hurt the service out there, but it hasn't.

**New Dodge Agency**

Every time that Dad went to the auction, I went with him. I wasn't maybe 12 or 13. Later on, I wanted to sell new cars, and I would complain to Dad “Why did you sell the Buick dealership?!” He said well, we can sell whatever we want. Well, we knew we wanted to sell a pickup, so that left us the Dodge dealership because we (Ava) already had a Chevy and a Ford dealer. Dad said, we'll just build us a building and put in a Dodge. The last years of Dad's life we were together every day. We closed on Thursdays and went to the auction, and we were as close as father and son can be, and I wouldn't be a Dodge dealer if it wasn't for Dad.

Well, we built the building, and Virgil Grisham was the Dodge dealer down at Branson – he used to be the Studebaker dealer in Springfield years ago. Dad said, “I'll go down (to Branson) and find out who we need to call.” Dad



**2007 — Dale Davis, his sons Greg and Jeff, and Jeff's son, Drew**

### Auction Day for the Davis Family

For years, Thursdays were always "Auction Day" for the Davis family. They would travel to Springfield for the Melvin Reed 166 Auction on West Sunshine Street. According to brother, Gene Davis:

*They would go to the 66 Auction – Melvin Reed and Cecil got to be good friends. Cecil and Dale would go out there early before the sale started, and they could drive the cars around there and listen to them; Dale, he was precise on the looks, and Cecil would listen to the engine, and check out the transmission – and he'd say something's going wrong in the transmission. He'd say 'we don't want that one.' Because they did their homework, they would hardly ever buy anything and then turn it down.*

*Cecil could listen to a motor or a transmission, and just drive it and he'd know pretty well whether they wanted it or not. He was successful in used cars – he got out of the new car agency – he didn't want anything to do with it.*

Dale added a similar view:

*Dad, he wasn't a mechanic, and one day, I bought a little Plymouth, and it wasn't very old. We were driving it home, and Dad said, this has got a weak valve. I said, "What? I don't think so." He said, "Yeah, I think it does." Sure enough it had a weak valve. We had to do valve job on it. On auction day, we'd get there early and try to do our homework and we wouldn't turn down a car after we had placed a bid on it. There were a few dealers who were bad to always turn cars down. The last year or two of Dad's life, especially when he wasn't feeling good, we'd go to the auction on Thursdays, and he'd sit up in that chair, and if he saw something coming down the line, and he thought it was pretty cheap, he'd run over to me and say, "What about that one?" and I'd say, "Dad, we don't want that one." Or "That's Us," And he'd say "OK [laugh]" and go back up and sit down. I don't know how many times he did that.*

### Conclusion

As one listens to Dale talk about the Davis Family and their "car business," you often find him reminiscing. He's so grateful for the relationship that he had with his dad and the time they spent together. He obviously misses his dad, and also his mom and brother, Don. He talks about his Uncle Herman and Uncle Gene, both of whom are now in very poor health at ages 87 and 82 respectively. But, as you listen to Dale, you also detect an excitement about the future. His attitude seems to be, "I'm so happy the Davis tradition of selling and fixing cars is continuing in my family."

Dale says: *It's good to see my sons and grandsons continue on with the Davis Family Auto Sales and Service. Our car history now spans almost 70 years. I hope it makes the century mark.*

### Grandpa Elmer Davis and His Brothers Attend Mt. Taber School in 1908-1909

**Souvenir**  
**Mt. Tabor Public School**  
**Ava, Douglas County, Missouri**  
**1908-1909**  
**Isora Surguine, Teacher**

**School Officers**  
**S.E. Day, President**  
**J.T. Davis**  
**D.C. Pettit**  
**W.C. Nowlin, District Clerk**

### Names of Pupils

Alice Day	George W. Davis
H. Frank Day	Elmer L. Davis
Daisy M. Adams	Fred Davis
Crocket Hagee	Luther C. Phillips
Alonzo Hagee	Willie Nowlin
Lizzie Hagee	Johnnie Nowlin
Hazel A. Pettit	Mary Nowlin
L. Eujan Pettit	Hattie Phillips
Roxie E. Pettit	Hazel Wright
Oliver Bloomer	Otis Howard
Robert Bloomer	Clyford Turner
Stella Howard	Gertie Howard
Urcell Howard	Dan Turner
Paul A. Kearney	Tressa Turner
Gilbert R. Kearney	Lila A. James
Myrtle Kester	Leta A. James
Edith M. Kester	J. Marchel Turner
W. Cecil Kester	Lizzie Turner
Lillie A. Kester	Inez C. Turner
Tina E. Kester	Fred Phipps
Amy Turner	Edna Turner
Iva Turner	Ina Cox
Winnie S. Turner	James Blakey
Elsie Turner	Calvin S. Nieman
Ruth Turner	Ananias Harris
Eadith (sic) C. Turner	Carrie Denny
Carrie A. Turner	Peter Hampton
Enoch Davis	John Hampton
Neal S. Davis	

The Souvenir Book from Mt. Tabor was kept through the years by Elmer's brother, Enoch, and his wife, Annie (Gunnels) Davis