

DAVID GALLAWAY ELLER

A Modern-day Texas Entrepreneur

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David Gallaway Eller has always been proud of his ELLER surname. For several years he wondered about the origin of the Eller family. He especially wanted to know more about his own personal family history. Handed down to David from his father, James Marion Eller, were only a few family stories.



He was told of his grandfather, Julius Marion Eller, who had left North Carolina when he was about 24 years of age to seek his fortune in Texas. The year was 1877, when Julius left Waxhaw in Sandy Ridge Township of Union County, North Carolina. Before boarding the train, Julius stopped by a local photographer's to have his portrait made. The small tintype (ferrotype) of Julius, posing with his small valise, is a prized possession of his grandson's, David G. Eller, the subject of this narrative. Upon his arrival in Texas, Julius settled in Hillsboro where he took a clerical job for the Hill County Tax Assessor. Times were very wild in the West as he described in a letter to his relatives back home in Waxhaw...

"The Jail in this town always has on hand a full stock of horse thieves and robbers. The detectives are moving them up in a hurry. They have seventeen in jail at this time. In these western counties you can often see three or four thieves hanging on a tree together with an inscription on their persons giving the crime they committed. I reckon you have heard of the capture of a desperado of the worst order, John Wesley Hardin..."

The letter would have been written the latter part of 1877 as shown by the mention of Hardin's arrest, which was 23 August of that year.

Upon his leaving home, Julius had been given their family Bible as a keepsake from his dear father, who was also named David Eller. In the back of the old Bible, Julius recorded his wedding date six years later. He married on 3 December 1882 in Hill County, Texas to Sophronia "Frona" Carolyn Scott, a daughter of John Coleman Burriss Scott, and a granddaughter of James Williams Scott. Frona's family were early colonists to Texas and had been there since April 1831. Her grandfather was a signer of the Goliad Declaration of Independence written in December 1835. Also, Grandfather Scott was a soldier of the Texian Army, having fought in the Grass Fight, the Battle of Goliad, and the Siege of Bexar, all of which were crucial in the fight for Texas Independence. Grandfather J. C. B. Scott was a veteran of the Civil War

along with his brother Palestine Gilead Scott. Both participated in the defense of the Texas coast and were stationed at Fort Galveston.

Julius and Frona had a large family of nine children. David G. Eller's father was the youngest. In the community of Sand Flat, near Cleburne, Texas in Johnson County, Julius and Frona established a country store. Far in the back of the store, the Ellers operated the local post office, a common practice for store owners in Texas during the frontier days. The Eller store was torn down years ago but parts of the old foundation can still be seen near the crossroads at Sand Flat.

After living in Texas for some time Julius Eller returned to North Carolina to visit his relatives. His niece Mary Eller Taylor recalled that he gave his younger half-brother the Eller family Bible at that time. She wrote...

"As Uncle Julius walked down the road to catch the train at Waxhaw, he sang an old hymn I'm Going Home to Die No More. My Father would tell this story and tears would roll down his cheeks. He often sang the song himself and would always end in tears."

Julius Marion Eller died at the age of fifty-one, leaving a widow and six children. The Ellers had three other small children who died in infancy. They are buried near their father and mother in the Cleburne Cemetery (Texas).

But little else was known of the family that Julius left behind in North Carolina. It was recalled that Julius' father David of Waxhaw, Union County, North Carolina, had other sons named Thomas L., James Albert, Franklin, Cicero, and Henry D. Eller. The latter was known to have remained behind in North Carolina to care for their aging father. As it turned out in the search, Henry D. Eller was actually a half-brother; a child by David's second marriage to Jane Hargett. The mother of the older boys, including Julius Marion Eller, was Elvira Dempster Withers.

James M. Eller, the youngest child of Julius Marion Eller and Sophronia Carolyn (Scott) Eller, was born on 24 May 1902 at Sand Flat, Johnson County, Texas. He was only two years old when his father died so knew little about his father and the Ellers. James' mother later moved into Cleburne where she owned and operated a boarding house which catered especially to Santa Fe Railroad employees. James Marion Eller, named after his father and uncle James Albert Eller, grew up in Cleburne. After high school he attended the University of Texas. He also served in the National Guard during the 1920's. A few months before his twenty-eighth birthday James married Myrtis Gallaway in Commerce, Texas, and they are the parents of David Gallaway Eller, the subject of this article.

In the early 1960's, David G. Eller in search of the Eller roots had found a copy of George Michael Eller and Descendants of His in America. Searching through the book for information concerning his great-grandfather David, he found only a few men who might be his ancestor. Though there were discrepancies one did seem to fit more than the others: David Eller the son of Peter Eller, Jr. A preponderance of evidence uncovered in the search has explained and resolved these differences, being a result of four years extensive genealogical research. The weight of these arguments is presented at length in a manuscript of David G. Eller's ancestry.

The beginning of the search for our subject's roots was to locate the other descendants of Peter Eller and his son, David Eller. From information gathered from old family letters, U.S. Census records, several North Carolina county courthouses and state archives of North Carolina and Texas, the story of David Gallaway Eller's heritage has been pieced together.

At the outset an interesting quotation was found in a very old letter written by Mary Eller Taylor of Lancaster, South Carolina. In it she told about her father, Henry D. Eller, who often said..."...(my grandfather) was named Peter and I've heard Daddy (David Eller, 1815-1883) say that he came from the mountains of North Carolina..."

One of the earliest records of this particular Eller family is found on pages of the Union County Taxable Property Lists of 1845 and 1847. Apparently two brothers, Henry and David Eller, came to Union County. The older one, Henry, came first in 1845. By 1847 both Henry and David are recorded in the Taxable Property List. The lure of gold had evidently brought the brothers from the mountains of Wilkes County, North Carolina. The first gold rush in the United States took place during the early 1800's in North Carolina in the area of Anson, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Union counties. The brothers Eller evidently had caught the "gold fever" and left the home of their father Peter Eller, Jr. in search of prosperity in the goldfields.

Of historical interest, the first branch mint of the United States was built in Charlotte, North Carolina to accommodate the nearby goldfields. The mint was closed during the Civil War after operating for several years. The stones used in its construction were preserved and reused in the building of the Charlotte art museum, appropriately named the Mint Museum, for its benefactor.

For the older son, Henry Eller, and his wife, Elizabeth (Secrest) Eller, the search for fortune was cut short. He died in 1849. Cause of death is unknown but may have been by accident in the dangerous gold mine shafts or even by snakebite. The region is infested with the treacherous copperhead, a common pit viper. The probate of his estate is documented in the court records of Union County. His widow and three small children are enumerated in the 1850 Union County Census but by 1860 the family had returned to Wilkes County, N.C. to be near their relatives. The oldest child of Henry and Elizabeth (Secrest) Eller was Alfred P. Eller, whose middle name is thought to be Peter, named after his grandfather. In later years Alfred and his family lived in Watauga County at Booneville, North Carolina.

In the Colossus Gold Mine (also known as the Howie Mine) David was employed as a blacksmith, a trade common to the sons and grandsons of George Michael Eller. David also farmed in Union County where he rented a house and land from J. C. Bates. David's home stood only 100 feet away from the main shaft of the Howie. A photograph of the old homeplace has been preserved among the possessions of David's great-granddaughter Maxine Garner Nelson. It was here the sons of Elvira and David Eller were born. He married there on 4 January 1858 to Elvira Sample. Apparently she had been married before as her maiden name was Elvira Dempster Withers, according to her grandson Irby W. Eller. All of Elvira and David's children were born in the old homeplace near the Colossus Gold Mine.

During the Civil War, David Eller enlisted as a private in Co. I, of the 2nd Regiment of Senior Reserves on 8 June 1864. His age was given as 48 years 5 months and 21 days; making his date of birth 17 December

1815. Physically described as being of dark complexion with dark hair and eyes, David was of relatively short stature being five feet four inches.

David Eller lived on after the war in Union County, and spent the remainder of his days there. All his sons had moved away except for the youngest, Henry D. Eller. In his old age David suffered from gout (edema) and was quite large for his height, weighing about 300 lbs. On the afternoon of 17 May 1883 at age 67 years David passed away. As the farmhands approached the house for their noon meal, David spoke to them and his son Henry..."If this is death, it is the easiest thing I have ever done." With that he closed his eyes and died while sitting on the front porch of his home near Waxhaw.

Among the records of Union County, North Carolina are found the proceedings probating David Eller's estate over the years 1883-1885. Of note were David's funeral expenses of \$7.00 due to B.C. Austin on 17 May 1883, which gives us his date of death. No tombstone or place of burial was located, but it is presumed he was buried in Pleasant Grove Church and Camp Ground Cemetery which is located about one mile north of Mineral Springs, North Carolina. The family of David's son, Henry D. Eller, is also buried here.

David Gallaway Eller, the great-grandson of David Eller and subject of this narrative, was born 13 March 1938 in Mexia, Texas. Though he still resides in Texas, he has lived, worked and traveled extensively in all parts of the world as he conceived and built the company he heads today, Granada Corporation.

David G. Eller's parents were both born in Texas as were both his grandmothers. David's paternal grandfather was born near Waxhaw in Union County, North Carolina as already told. His maternal grandfather, Dr. Edgar Gallaway, was born in Sevier County, Arkansas near the community of Brownstown.

After graduating from high school in May 1955, David G. Eller entered Texas A&M College in the Fall of that same year. He began his studies there in the geological-engineering department, and combined that with a B.S. in Business Administration. He attended the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University.

Upon graduation from Texas A&M in 1959, David served for two years as a Captain in the U.S. Army/Corps of Engineers in Germany. Upon completion of his service he elected to stay in Germany as Manager for Western Europe operations for Warren & Company, an engineering firm that held petrochemical patents.

He returned to the U.S. in 1965, where he was President of Becco, Inc., a chemical-engineering company with offices in New York and Houston. By 1967 he was Chairman and CEO of Becco's parent company, Alcorn International, with offices in New York, London, Paris, and Milan.

His Involvement With Texas A&M University

Though his work and travels took him to all parts of the world, David G. Eller's return to Texas to live and start his own company is not surprising. It allowed him to be close to his family and the school that has meant so much to him, Texas A&M University. The school influenced his life in many important ways,

and he returned much of that gift through years of service to the college that was later declared a university.

The Texas A&M University campus is located on land granted to David's great-great granduncle, Joseph Euclid Scott, and a part of which was bequeathed to David's great-great grandfather, James Williams Scott, and the remainder to others of the Scott family. The land was subsequently owned by Reverend J. Fred Cox, another Scott descendant. It was Rev. Cox who sold the property to the State of Texas for the creation of an institution of higher learning, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College.

In 1983, Governor Mark White appointed David Eller to the Board of Regents of Texas A&M University System for a six-year term. On 26 March 1985, David G. Eller was elected to a two-year term as Chairman of the Board of Regents and on 6 April 1987 he was elected again as its chairman for a second term. He led the Board in establishing policy and providing direction for the dozen component institutions of Texas A&M University. During David's tenure as Chairman, the Board of Regents was responsible for managing a \$794 million annual operating budget which would affect the future of Texas A&M University for years to come.

As Chairman, Eller established the Institute of Biosciences and Technology, a \$100 million commitment by Texas A&M University to interface the medical, biomedical engineering and biotechnology expertise of the Texas A&M University System within the Medical Center of Houston, Texas. The Institute is scheduled to open in 1991 with an additional complex due to open in 1994.

David's accomplishments were many as Chairman, and upon completion of his term, the Board of Regents unanimously voted to name the University's Oceanography and Meteorology Building for him. The David G. Eller Building, a fifteen story tower, is the tallest building between Houston and Dallas, and serves as a fitting tribute to the man who gave so much of himself to the school he loves.

The Founding of Granada

Of his many business interests, his proudest must be the establishment of the company he heads today, Granada Corporation. Granada is an international marketing firm dealing in genetically improved cattle embryos as well as finished meat products. David and his brother, James "Jim" Marion Eller, Jr., founded Granada in 1972 with the idea of applying new technologies to one of the world's oldest industries, the agricultural industry. Their purpose was to improve production efficiency for the farmer or rancher as well as the quality of the resulting food products.

Today, the Company is recognized for its far-reaching work in bovine genetics and is a leader in an emerging industry, the science and business of biotechnology.

Over the centuries, the slow process of cross breeding has been the traditional means of producing animals with certain characteristics and for certain uses. Artificial insemination came along in the 1930's and use of frozen semen began in the 1950's. This allowed for more certain selection of desired traits. Embryo transfer work began in 1953, frozen embryos in 1971 and embryo splitting in 1982.

Now in the 90's, Granada can actually build and design a better bovine or type of cattle. The Company has developed techniques to insert specific genes into cattle embryos and then, using molecular biology methods, can clone the cattle they have. designed so they can replicate the improved animals; animals that convert grain to muscle at an improved ratio. The clones are identical even down to their chromosome; whether the technology is applied to beef or dairy producing animals, it is the same. The goal is to design cattle which meet the specifications of Granada's customers who want more marbled or leaner meat or cows that produce more milk.

Granada was named by The Wall Street Journal as a company who will experience exceptional growth in the '90s. In an article (June 1989) titled "A Select Few Poised To Lead Business Into the '90s" Granada was cited as "a cattle dynasty that's producing not only quality beef, but cutting edge ideas and technology that could solve many of the industry's problems." The Company's accomplishments have been reported in other national publications, including The New York Times, Fortune Magazine, Time Magazine, and on network news programs.

In 1986, David G. Eller received the National Beta Gamma Sigma "Medallion for Entrepreneurship" and in 1988, the Houston Business Journal gave him its Enterprise Award.

He is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Granada BioSciences, Inc. and Granada Foods Corporation, two companies he created from Granada Corporation. Granada BioSciences, Inc. and Granada Foods Corporation are both traded on the American Stock Exchange under the symbols GBI and GNF, respectively.

Granada BioSciences, Inc. is a biotechnology and genetic engineering company which focuses its technologies on improving the quality of food products. It is a leading supplier of genetic products and reproductive technical services, including embryo cloning and transfer and sire services to both domestic and international customers in the food animal industry.

Granada Foods Corporation is the largest meat purveyor in Texas and the largest smoker of whole body turkeys in the nation. The Company is a producer, marketer and distributor of value-added food, specializing in certain red meat and poultry products. The Company's Texas-based processing and distribution facilities service various metropolitan areas in the continental United States and certain international markets.

Other Accomplishments and Honors

David Eller's accomplishments belie his years. Though just 53, he has founded numerous companies and the list of important boards he serves on is most impressive.

In 1979, six years after starting Granada, he founded American National Petroleum Company (ANPC), a publicly held oil and gas exploration and development company operating throughout the major oil producing areas of the United States, as well as in the offshore waters of Texas and Louisiana. In 1984 he acquired Coquina Oil Corporation and merged it into ANPC. ANPC's stock was divested in 1987 by sale to

Oxoco, Inc. He served as Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of American National Petroleum Company from 1979 to 1987 and continues to serve on its Board at this time.

In 1984 he acquired Baylor Company, an engineering and steel fabrication firm serving the petroleum industry, from Armco Inc. He also acquired Dretech, a competitor of Baylor's, and merged it into Baylor. After successfully diversifying its operations, Baylor was sold in 1989.

He is currently serving on the Board of Trustees of Baylor College of Medicine including several ad hoc research committees. He is also on the Board of Trustees of the Houston Ballet Foundation and Hermann Hospital. He is a Director of the Foundation for Biomedical Research, the Texas

Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Houston Partnership, and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

His Personal Family History

On 5 March 1966, David married Margaretha Eleanor Sallen, born 11 July 1943 in Uppsala, Sweden. There were three children born to this union, David Erik Eller, born 18 November 1968; Kristina Margaretha Eller, born 25 July 1970, died 10 December 1970; and Dirk Gustaf Eller, born 16 July 1972. Erik and Dirk are currently students at Texas A&M University.

Margaretha (Sallen) Eller died on 14 November 1973 from injuries sustained in a car accident. She is buried near her small daughter in the Mexia Cemetery.

On 28 June 1980 David remarried. His second wife is Linda Anne Schmuck of Houston. There are no children by his second marriage.

David Gallaway Eller takes pride in his family's heritage and the attributes of his forebears. As a scion of the Eller, Scott, Gallaway, and Bryan families, he is a noteworthy and respected descendant. Through his accomplishments in both the academic and business worlds, he has brought worthy recognition to the name of ELLER. His character is a true reflection of those from whom he descends.

David Eller has authored a new book on his Eller and related genealogy. For more information on the book, [click here](#).

George Michael Eller

Peter Eller Sr.

Peter Eller Jr.

David Eller (1815-1883)

Julius Marion Eller (1854-1904)

James Marion Eller, Sr.

David Gallaway Eller