

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

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Special to the Prophet

When it comes to food and snacks, I have to admit I treat myself pretty darn good here in my retirement years. Pudding, chips, cookies and drinks of all types are available here within arms reach. When my son and grandkids were living at home we always had snacks and drinks of different varieties but they didn't last long on the shelf, if you know what I mean.

When my son was in high school we always had extra guests around and we bought in bulk and mostly in the cheapest brands. They would descend on us like a swarm of hungry locust devouring everything in sight.

When I was a kid we never had those store bought snacks around our house. No ice cream in the freezer and no cookies in the cabinet. The only time I had a soda pop was when I went to the ice house with my dad and he bought me a Grapette. It was the best tasting soda on the market at the time and I think the six-ounce size bottle helped make it popular with us kids.

I always looked forward to everyone's birthday because it meant my mom would be baking a cake and there would be vanilla ice cream to top it off. Other than that, the only time I had ice cream was with a meal in the St. Joseph's Catholic School cafeteria. We lived in a paradise with chocolate milk and vanilla ice cream along with our meal every day.

Back in the day, I loved those little Dixie ice cream cups and the little wooden spoon that came with them. They even had faces of celebrities and sports figures on the lids sometimes. You better believe I licked the lid to make sure I got every bit of the ice cream off of it.

It wasn't store bought, but the mustang grape jelly my mom made was better than anything they had on the shelf at Rhodes Country Shopper. We had an ample supply of it along with some bread and butter pickles in a cabinet out in the smokehouse behind our house. My momma did a lot of vegetable canning too when we had a large garden.

Squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, okra and pole beans covered an area that at one time had been a horse corral. In my mind I can still see those beans climbing up on the bamboo poles we had cut. They looked like green tepees sprouting up out of the ground. We had cucumbers with every meal when the garden was in prime time.

We had a pear tree by our house so naturally that fruit became a victim of my mom's canning as well. I never ate canned pears although momma tried to force them on me often. "Just try it one time," she would say. I can eat a green pear with no problem but I still refuse to eat a canned one.

Pecan trees were around our home and along the river throughout my Growing Up In Bandera years. Even today if there are pecans on the ground I will be picking them up to eat but now I have to share them with my dogs.