

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

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The Bandera Prophet

Laughing uncontrollably until we were out of breath and rolling around on the ground was a pretty common occurrence among the group of young ruffians I ran with in my early years. I'm not sure things were all that funny but living in our seemingly carefree environment had that effect on us. A simple mishap could be turned into a comedy routine in a flash by adding a mock insult to a buddy's misfortune. That's the way we rolled as kids back in the day. I never thought of it as bullying since everyone was a potential victim.

Not all of our silly antics were well received by some of the adult population. Father Victor, who was the priest assigned to St. Stanislaus parish back in the day, frowned on his altar boys getting the giggles while serving mass. For some reason when I was teamed up with Tommy Callahan it always seemed to happen. Tommy was one of those people who had fun no matter what was going on. The nuns we had for teachers were not easily amused by our horseplay and they were quick to administer punishment. Looking back at the times we were reprimanded I don't recall our regrets lasting longer than it took us to get out the door where we could start laughing again.

Spear grass and cocklebur fights were a rite of passage among young boys back in the day. Girls usually weren't involved in these activities although I do recall a few exceptions to the rule. I can assure you that there are few things that make a girl as mad as having cockleburs tangled in her hair. At school that usually meant someone would be getting raps on the knuckles with a wooden ruler. At home the

punishment was applied to a different part of the body applied with a switch.

Any and all activities in my early school years required getting into a line. Going to get a drink or go to the restroom? Get in line. No talking or fidgeting. Going to lunch or out for recess? Get in line. I truly believe they were preparing us for U.S. Army basic training.

I think what makes some of my earliest school childhood friendships so special is the fact that in our small town we spent so much time together. We just naturally shared a lot of our personal life experiences. The good times like birthday parties, swimming in the river and such were special but there were the tragedies too. When a friend lost a family member it would hurt for the longest time because you were so close and could feel the pain your friend was going through. Those are feelings that a person never forgets and will carry over a lifetime.

Special times in a special place have made some special memories. The years I spent at St. Joseph's Catholic School were filled with some of the best times of my young life. Many of us who attended St. Joseph's back in those early times shared the same heritage. Family ties were common and we often called each other "cuz" because we were cousins but often used that term even if we weren't because that's just the way things were back then while Growing Up In Bandera.

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