

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark

The Bandera Prophet

I'm sitting at my computer this morning and listening to the sounds of a strong thunderstorm as it passes through the area. My thoughts now are switching back and forth between how we sure needed the rain and wondering what I left out in the yard that is getting soaked. Those things were never on my mind as a youngster during such events.

As a kid I immediately thought how just a slightly muddy tint to the river water was going to be providing a good catfish catching day. If the rain total was high and the river was on a big muddy rise then it would be days before fishing would be good. Nothing to do then but go watch the big cypress logs go floating down towards Medina Lake.

I learned some things about flooding on the river from some of the oldtimers who spent lots of time on the banks of the Medina River. It was Doc Gray who told me to watch the driftwood going down the river to determine if the river was still rising or receding. If the debris was traveling down the center then it was still rising. If it was along the edges then it was falling.

If there was ever anyone who could claim to have spent more time on the river than me it would have to be Doc. He knew the best places to catch minnows and to dig worms for fishing bait. Between him and Cricket Kalka I could always count on getting a few minnows out of their minnow traps just below the old Mayan Bridge. While Doc had given me permission to share his catch I figured what Cricket didn't know wouldn't hurt him.

I could even predict the weather by keeping an eye on those glass minnow traps set in the grooves of the river bottom. When they

disappeared then I knew there was a chance of big storms and they had been removed for safe keeping. I don't recall ever monitoring the weather when I was a kid other than when rumors of a chance of snow were circulating. Just hoping for enough snow to be able to have a snowball fight and the guaranteed closing of the schools was pretty darn exciting for a kid in our part of Texas.

I have a number of those old glass minnow jars in several styles among my antique fishing collectibles. They are a cherished reminder of a man and a time when my life was more carefree and I had freedoms in a place that people now can only imagine. The image of that stern looking face with the ever present cigar stub was misleading for some folks. If he ever had a bad day he never let it show around me. Being on the river was far removed from the reality of our other lives where he was the longtime custodian at the Bandera school system and I was a student. Growing Up In Bandera was an adventure and some of the people I encountered along the way are forever connected to the memories. If you know me and how much I love the Medina River then you understand why Doc Gray was a special friend from back in the day.

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