

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark

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Having a mother of Polish descent meant we were all automatically Catholic. Not a bad thing you understand. That's just the way it was. Come to think of it, all my friends of Mexican descent were too. Attending St. Joseph's Catholic School through the eighth grade was a life experience that was memorable. The teachers at the time were all nuns and they could be harsh in their teaching methods but later in life I came to appreciate that about them.

Father Victor was the parish priest at the time and he was loved by the community. Being an altar boy I got to spend more than my fair share of time of serving masses with him. Living so close to the church I was always scheduled to serve at the early mass. Then when services were over in Bandera I was recruited to accompany him to St. Victor's Chapel at Lakehills. I will admit I tried to hide sometimes to avoid the trip but my mom would give me up. Being a boy who spent so much time in church you would think I would have reached sainthood level. My friends can attest to the fact that it never happened.

I wonder how many people were aware of that little trap door in the wall behind the altar at St. Stanislaus Church. When mass was over the altar boys were supposed to empty the leftover wine and water containers through that door. I am here to testify that very little wine ever made the trip to the ground. That tradition was passed down through the generations.

Mr. Ben Pyka was a member of the congregation who faithfully attended the early mass. He gave me a quarter every Sunday after I served mass.

Sunday church attendance was a household law that my mom enforced with an iron will. I recall when I was in my last year of high school I came sneaking in one morning as the sun was starting to peek over the horizon. Brother Eddie and I had our bedroom on the back porch so I could sneak in the back door. We had an old bed with squeaky springs and as soon as I was undressed and my butt hit the mattress my mom called out to me, "Glenn, is that you?". "Yes ma'am", was the reply. "Are you going to early mass?". "Yes ma'am". I got dressed again and off to church I went.

Bubba Montague and I were the designated school crossing guard in the eighth grade at St. Joseph School. There were street barricades we had to put up and take down every day. The street between the school and the church were blocked off daily. There was no city permit required as I recall.

One day we had just taken the barricades down when my friend Brandy Humphries comes flying by me on his bicycle and ran into the backend of a car. So that's how my friend ended up with that front silver tooth. The area of the catholic cemetery located on the corner of Cedar and 8th is where our baseball field was located. Some of my fondest and saddest memories are connected to that field. Two of my childhood friends I played softball with were killed in Viet Nam and lie there now, as well as a baby my wife and I lost.

I swear I can still smell those homemade tortillas being made by Mrs. Martinez on the corner across the street from the cemetery. On occasions when we got to eat on of those freshly made it was a real treat.

Angel Martinez kept me broke buying marbles to replace the ones he got off me while playing marbles on that lot. He was the king when it came to playing "keepsies." I wonder what ever happened to all those marbles he won off of me. It must have amounted to a 55-gallon drum full.

Of all the friends I had back in those early days at St. Joseph's, I think of Angel most often. If he had survived the Viet Nam War I wonder if we would have remained close friends like we were back then. I like to think so because he was the kind of person it was easy to be around.

Growing Up In Bandera certainly had its ups and downs.

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