

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark
The Bandera Prophet

Anyone who grew up in Bandera will always get around to telling stories involving the river. Fishing, swimming or just hanging out, it was the place to be. It always provided some entertainment if we didn't have enough gas to drag main or follow the fire truck when the siren on the water tower signaled the volunteer firefighters.

I can still recall the day at Dripping Springs when I was finally able to throw a rock to the top of the bluff across the river. I was the only one in our group who could do it for quite some time. I was a pretty darn good rock skipper too. Simple skills were a source of pride back in the day. We were constantly building and rebuilding rock dams just above the big rocks at Dripping Springs.

Most of us learned to swim at Dripping Springs before we moved down to "The Swing" where the bigger kids hung out. I remember well the process of learning to do a dive and back flip off the swing. Lots of mishaps but no permanent damage and no one died.

The river provided a source of income too when we were young. Raymond Baily had the Phillips 66 station where Pico was located in more recent years and we provided him with minnows and worms to sell for fishing bait.

I recall one time when we were using a long minnow seine above the Mayan Ranch Road bridge and we hauled in a snake that was in the process of swallowing a fish. I can't recall if anyone ever retrieved that seine but rest assured, I didn't!!!

The area behind where River Oaks Inn is located was one of our favorite camping spots. We would build a big campfire and fish most of the

night. Nothing better than a cup of campfire coffee. We took canned biscuits and flattened them out like tortillas and cooked them in a cast iron skillet. They even tasted a lot like a homemade tortillas.

Below the dam on the river was a favorite fishing spot too. After a good rise when the water was starting to clear was prime time. If it happened at the right time of year we could catch white bass there when they were running upriver to spawn. I heard stories from oldtimers of them running all the way to the headwaters in Medina.

Charlie Eckhart had a snorkel, mask and flippers when he worked the area below the dam retrieving lost tackle. Pretty fancy equipment for the times. He kept all the lures he found but he gave me enough hooks and sinkers to keep me well supplied. That area was and still is a dangerous place to swim when the water level is high. I remember more than once seeing Coy Ross go into that churning water to do a rescue.

Unfortunately it didn't always have a good ending.

When I think back to those summer days we spent on the river something that stands out is how we were always barefooted walking on the dirt roads and river banks. There was several inches of loose dirt in the the tire tracks and it was heated up pretty good by the summer sun but it had a soothing feel. We could tell who had passed by earlier by the footprints they left. My younger brother Eddie was easy to identify because his feet always pointed outward when he walked. They still do but he doesn't go barefooted too often these days.

My Uncle Melvin Clark told me about buying fishing lures at the Texaco Station to fish the river when he returned from his military service. He said the best lure for catching bass was a Spinno-Minno. It was a Dallas, Texas made lure by Uniline Mfg. I have been collecting antique fishing lures for over thirty years and now I have a big display of Spinno-Minnos thanks to the spark of interest provided by my uncle. One of these days I'm going to get one out and see if it will still catch the big ones. Sometimes the old ways are hard to beat while Growing Up In Bandera.