

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

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The Bandera Prophet

People often comment that it must have been great to have grown up in Bandera. That is true but it's taken me a lifetime to fully realize it. I had to get through it and then look back to gain the appreciation of what we had.

City kids had everyday conveniences that we only got to enjoy on certain occasions. It was something special when we visited Wonderland Mall in San Antonio. It had its beginning with John Wayne doing the ribbon cutting ceremony in 1959 at the Handy Andy Store, which had its opening two years prior to the completion of the rest of the mall. Sadly in 1961, when the remainder of the mall opened, there were segregated facilities with "Whites Only" and "Coloreds Only" restrooms and water fountains. I never realized this until I was doing some research and stumbled onto it recently. I would bet that none of my friends knew it either. Another example of how far removed we had been from the outside world and it's troubling times while growing up in our small country town.

I started getting hints as to just how naive I was when I began commuting to work in San Antonio. I endured the harassing name calling on the job when I was greeted with "Country" and "Clem" pretty regularly. Up until then I had no clue that I talked so slow or had an accent. That all soon disappeared when they learned that I was no stranger to hard work.

Soon after being inducted into the U.S. Army I found out that San Antonio wasn't all that big of a deal in the worldwide scheme of things.

All of a sudden this country hick had flown in an airplane for the very first time and had even made a couple visits to New York City.

Visiting Greenwich Village was a real eye opener. The only familiar sight for me were the horses that the police were riding on the street. Woodstock hadn't happened yet so all the hippies were kind of an oddity for me too. The miniskirted Go-Go dancers in the windows around Times Square I had seen before on TV.

Yes, Growing Up In Bandera was something special but it took a lot of getting out of town to fully appreciate how fortunate I am. An education in the outside world proved to me there is no place like home. Especially if you're from Bandera.

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