

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark
The Bandera Prophet

If you could see things through my eyes and the eyes of other older natives of Bandera I would bet it wouldn't be anything like you had ever imagined. There is getting to be less and less of the earlier Bandera we remember.

When you cross the river on Schmidtke Road headed to the Mayan Dude Ranch and top the rise on the other side you will see a big open flat to your right. I can visualize an old airstrip with woodframe buildings along the treeline which served as airplane hangars. Lon Cottingham is the only person I remember seeing use the landing strip for it's intended purpose. As a youngster I attended horse races there too when my Uncle Phil Kindla was raising horses.

That old oak tree on Main Street near the intersection of Cedar is where I spent quite a few summer days sitting on a trailer selling watermelons for my Granddaddy Harry Clark who had a vegetable stand where Gail Stone has her real estate office now. Fifty cents for a melon or three for a dollar. When we had Black Diamond melons they would bring a bit more. I had eaten watermelons on the river many times but there were two things I learned while sitting on that trailer. Sandia is Spanish for melon and there was a yellow meated watermelon too. I was getting a good education on Main Street in Bandera.

It was a great spot to watch what was going on in downtown Bandera and the smell was great too. The Best Yet Cafe was right next door and Smith Wright had a bbq place across the street. Those early years cafe hamburgers had an aroma unlike any you will encounter these days.

I had a good view of the entrance of The Silver Dollar too which was entertaining at times as the visiting dudes along with some local characters made the rounds. Those dudes are now called tourists or visitors. Currently in the big cities all the people are calling each other "Dude." Go figure!!!

On the opposite corner was the Sinclair Service Station run by Henry Lloyd Kalka. I made it a habit to keep up with when my dad or mom were headed there to get gas because I was always greeted with, "Hey Cowboy" and a piece of bubble gum. That spot along Main Street is still a very friendly place to visit. Go in and visit with Cody at Tripps Tire Shop and you'll see what I mean. Don't pay any attention to that grumpy old rooster that hangs around out front.

The old Hayes Feed Store down the hill is long gone but you can get some pretty darn good tacos at El Jacalito when you visit that site. In the old days I could have seen The Bantex Theater from my vantage point on the watermelon trailer but it too is gone now. In it's place we have a nice park but it does little to fill the void left by the loss of one of our most beloved places in old Bandera.

The old Texaco and Conoco service stations have disappeared along with the Phillips 66 and Free State Oil Co. where I worked while in high school. There were places like those where you could buy some ammo and a little bit of fishing supplies along with gas and oil back in the day. It is a bit saddening to see familiar things from the past rapidly disappearing as my Growing Up In Bandera runs head-on into progress.

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