

The Bandera PROPHEET

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark

The Bandera Prophet

Many changes have taken place around the old neighborhood where I grew up in Bandera. Very few refer to the area as Polander Town these days. Not too many even know how the term came into being. Because of my last name they will scratch their heads when they hear someone call me "Polander." They just don't know.

People weren't so concerned with landscaping and beautiful yards back in the day. Where once we had empty lots we now have newer styled houses. On those empty lots we had an ample supply of spear grass and cockleburrs to wage war against anyone who dared to enter the battle zone. To gather spear grass all you needed to do was walk through the field and then pluck the spears from your socks.

Cockleburrs could inflict more damage and cause more rage than the spear grass. This was especially true if you encountered a girl who had a cockleburr tangled in her hair. If it happened at school the nuns had an uncanny way of dealing out punishment. A sharp rap on the knuckles or a thump on the back of an ear would get your attention in a hurry.

Red wasps were uncommon back when I was a kid but the black wasps were in abundance. Every empty lot had huisache bushes and were the favored place for nest building by the wasp. They were tempting targets for young boys who were always looking for an adventure. I wish I had a dollar for every time I was stung. It always amazed me how far those winged devils were willing to pursue us.

Pretty much like today, I excelled at slow running which made me the obvious target among the fleeing intruders. Over time I learned my long

arms gave me additional rock throwing distance so I gained a slight advantage there.

Everyone would laugh at the unfortunate one who was stung. In my case everyone except my mom would laugh. Looking for sympathy only led to a lecture and an ear thump. I often wondered if she learned that from the nuns.

Huisache bushes in empty lots are becoming scarce around the neighborhood these days of Growing Up In Bandera. The wasps are still around but the red wasp seems to be the most plentiful. They are more aggressive than the black variety so I have to make sure they don't have nests around my house. Between them and the yellowjackets it's a constant struggle with nature but I can't have my grandbabies getting stung.

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