The Bandera Prophet

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Growing Up In Bandera

By Glenn Clark
The Bandera Prophet

I was always under the impression that life would get easier as we aged. Come to find out things just aren't that simple. Some days I'm the bug, and other days I'm the windshield.

I have come full circle when it comes to footwear. Now I can't say for sure what my mom was putting on my feet when I was an infant. I suspect I was barefooted most of the time, unless she was taking pictures and she had to dress me up.

My earliest memories have me going shoeless all the time when I was outdoors. It made sense because I was usually going to the river, at the river, or coming home from the river. None of those activities required shoes. This was the reality of our almost carefree world as kids living the Texas Hill Country, but it wasn't without some drawbacks.

It didn't matter which direction we were headed to the river, we rarely encountered any pavement along the way. Don't assume it was a cakewalk though. Those gravel roads had their challenges, too. During those hot summer afternoons while walking and trying to avoid the hot dirt of the two ruts created by wagons, cars and trucks over the years, there was something even more sinister waiting between the ruts along the side of the road. The dreaded goat head burr was the most evil thing created by God to punish young boys sneaking off to the river to smoke a cigarette they swiped from their granddaddy's truck.

While attending St. Joseph's Catholic School, I can't even count how many times I endured a peach tree switchin', all because that merry-go-round had drug me unmercifully around and around while destroying the toes of both of my shoes. Anyone who has experienced that situation

knows it is impossible to let go while being dragged. It seems my mom would have preferred I let go and be completely destroyed, or maybe even killed rather that messing up my shoes.
"Get back outside and dust yourself off. You're going to be wearing those clothes to school tomorrow."
Two things put an end to my barefooting days: girls and those cool looking penny loafers. My mom no longer had to hound me to keep my shoes shined either. I had several years experience as a shoeshine boy, and all the equipment too. My old shine box had all the essentials. Black, brown and neutral wax, along with black and brown polish. Unlike today's complicated world, it was pretty simple back in the day.
Later when Growing Up In Bandera required me to start adulting, it was work boots for work and cowboy boots for every other occasion. I had what I called waffle stompers for my boat wear while fishing. They were ankle high and soft, almost like tennies but heavier.
Here in my retired "don't wanna leave the house" days, I shop for whatever footwear I can put on or take off without bending over, and that make me feel like I'm walking on a cloud. I'm pretty sure one pair costs more than what my parents paid for all the shoes they had to buy me back in elementary school.

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