

Chapter 29 – New Job, Marriage, and Gang Wars

1991-1996 In the summer of 1991, I started my new job as Assistant Principal of Highlands High School on the SE side of San Antonio. Linda had moved out and was living on Broadway across from the La Louisiane restaurant. I moved out during the middle of August to a small apartment on the Pecan Valley golf course on Pecan Valley Drive, about 1 mile from the Highlands campus.

The new job was a big mystery. Not knowing anything about campus administration, it was on-the-job training. Assigned the textbook distribution system, the daily bulletin, the public address system announcements, programming the bell system, scheduling the class times, and discipline for one-half of each of the 9th and 10th-grade students, I was busy. All five administrators were new to the campus. No one knew the kids and very few knew the teachers. Chaos was abundant. I did my best. Totally exhausted every night.

I quickly found out that the campus was not the same as it was when I left 10 years earlier. The neighborhood gangs had moved in. Fights broke out early in the morning at the entrance of the school cafeteria. Bandanas, black, red, blue, and brown dangled freely from the sagging pants pockets publicly flying their colors, pledging their allegiance to their families on the streets. The strongest, most experienced A.P. was named Ken. He quickly guided me to use my power and radio to strip the rags, recognize the leaders, divide the groups, and to disrupt the lives of the troublemakers. It felt like war. Linda had warned me, but I did not listen. I had hoped Highlands was going to be my peaceful sanctuary forever.

During the next few years, Ken and I solidified our control of the student population. The teachers were very happy. A new principal moved in during the summer of 1993. He was a big guy, kind, experienced high school principal. He let me continue being the voice of the administration using the communications function. We strengthened the resource officer's presence. He appraised the probationary employees and any who were questionable.

We continued to thin out the gangs. Sometimes, we had to admit a gang member from a different school and his/her presence would cause a wave of violence among the peaceful members we had calmed down.

Part 1 - Times and Places

Yes, I found guns, machetes, knives, chains, nun chucks, marijuana, and a few weird homemade weapons. Most weapons were for security getting to and from school. Most weapons were discovered by information about what had happened on the streets the night before. We would meet the affected kids at the door.

Linda and I purchased a house six doors away from the school in 1992 on the South Side Lions Baseball Park. It was a great place to live for the next 17 years. Ken died in a car crash in February of 1996. It took the wind out of my sails, and I retired at the end of 1996, two days before Father died.