

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13



Punky could both throw a football a long way downfield. But Reichen (my grandson) can do that, too, but he's also a nice young man, not full of mischief.

Punky, II

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’” I Corinthians 15:33

Punky was the best young athlete I ever knew (but see above). Besides being able to throw a football on the dime 40 yards downfield at age 11, he could spin a baseball with the best of them. We were never on the same baseball team, but I faced him once in a game. We grinned at each other and he threw one of his patented curveballs. I hammered it. It went over the fence but was foul by about a foot. Then he struck me out on three pitches. If Wesley had taken life seriously, he may have ended up in the majors, like his dad. But Wesley's mindset was not set on the MLB; it was set on mischief. It's as if he just couldn't help himself. But he was my best friend, who I walked to school with every day so all my mom could do was quote I Corinthians 15:33.

Punky was not one of those out of control kids who would scream at his mother in open defiance. Instead, he was sneaky bad. “Yes, mother,” he would say, then get back to badness. I knew him for less than two years but there are lots of examples of his malfeasance. For instance, he would go up to the overpass over the freeway and spit “loogies,” trying to time them to hit the windshields of the cars below. He kept score. He also used the “loogie” method to torment my younger brother. I won't go into details, but it was gross.

On another occasion, we were playing ball in our backyard and I see Punky eyeing the roof of our house. We lived in a small apartment above the church building and the gravel-covered roof was about three stories high. A couple of days later, Punky's up on the roof dropping handfuls of gravel into the vents on top of the roof (picture me with arms outstretched asking “why??”). My dad saw him and it was only in his role as a preacher that preserved Punky's life that day. Killing a kid would be bad optics for the church.

Punky topped that, though. One day we were walking on the sidewalk past an elderly lady's house. The poor woman had dementia and would sit on the front porch talking to herself. To a couple of dumb 7th grade boys, it was kind of

weird but usually we just ignored it. *Usually*. This day, Punky decided to serenade the woman. He began by singing, at the top of his lungs, “*You must have been a beautiful baby, but boy are you ugly now...*” I kept trying to get him to stop but he kept on, even after the lady went into the house. I should have kept walking but I didn't.

The next thing we know, a police car drives up with his emergency lights on. The lady had called the police! I'm shaking in my sneakers, thinking we're off to San Quentin for sure. The officer got out of the car and as he is loading us into the back seat — even putting his hand on top of our heads, like they do on TV — the woman comes out of the house, points to me and says, “he do nudding, he do nudding — *just that one*” (pointing to Punky). The officer still gave me a ride and delivered me to my house. The look on my mom's face was, let's say, *memorable*, but the officer explained to her that I was exonerated by the woman so all I got was several more doses of I Corinthians 15:33. My mom really liked that verse, especially when we lived in Vallejo, near Punky.

I felt for Punky's poor mother, a very sweet Mormon lady. Proverbs 23:25 says, “*Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.*” If I had to guess, his dad, like too many dads, rejoiced as long as Punky was spinning curveballs in a Little League game. After that, he didn't pay much attention. I can't imagine that his mother ever had occasion to rejoice.

I saw Wesley about 8 years after our middle school friendship days. He located me when I came home on leave after basic training and came to visit me in LA. We reminisced a bit and then he told me that he was awaiting trial due to a reckless driving incident but he didn't seem too concerned. Why wasn't I surprised? I guess I grew up. He didn't.

I have to admit that, back in 7th grade, part of me admired Punky's devil-may-care attitude. But as I got older, it occurred to me that “evil companions corrupt good morals.”

Wait... where had I heard that before??