



Fishing With My Grandfather **Edwin M. Whiting**

By H. Lee Berry



One summer when I was 12 years old, my grandfather, Edwin Whiting, invited me to go with him on a three-day fishing trip. We left St. Johns early one morning, driving first to Springerville, and then turning on the road to McNary. This road passed within sight of Green's Peak, and at some point within sight of that mountain, we left the road and drove for a mile or two. We parked Grandpa's car, and continued on foot. We climbed a mile or two into the thick and beautiful timber, and came to a small stream of water that one could easily step across in most places.

Grandfather's clothes on a fishing trip were as constant as a uniform. Tied around his belt at the waist was a flour sack containing flour, with a bulge perhaps half the size of the average watermelon. A small frying pan was anchored to his belt. He also had his hunting knife, a can of bacon lard, and other equipment compactly fastened to his belt. We carried our fishing poles in our hands, and we carried the bait in a shirt pocket in a Prince Albert Tobacco can. We brought some worms, but a few minutes pause would always produce grasshoppers, which always excited the fish more. We both carried on our backs very small, compact bedrolls.

None of our attire interfered with our fishing. We started fishing very slowly down that stream. The fishing was fair, and we had no trouble catching enough trout for our dinner.

Grandpa selected a place near the stream where we would camp. We carried pine needles to make a bed close to where we built a fire. We stacked the needles up eight or ten inches high. When you put your bed roll in place, you slept in a slight depression. The result was as soft as a mattress.

That night we had a perfect dinner as far as I was concerned. Grandfather unpacked his flour sack, his frying pan, and other paraphernalia. We cleaned the fish in the stream. From the flour that we brought along, Grandpa made some twisted rolls, not sweet, but delicious. By bedtime, I was satisfied in all respects, including the fact that I had eaten well and sufficiently.

The following morning we woke up very early, and Grandpa soon had a fire going. He fixed bacon and flapjacks (pancakes), each one the size of his skillet. Grandfather almost always ate flapjacks for breakfast, with butter and honey.

We soon had the simple, compact equipment returned to our backs, and headed down the stream for more fishing. We came to a very beautiful meadow through which our stream ran. Grandpa grabbed me by the shoulder and made a sign for me to be very quiet. He then pointed in the direction of a huge timber wolf, with two cubs almost fully grown. We were hidden by the bushes, and yet we could see them.

The two wolf cubs chased each other in the same way that active puppies play, often catching one another, tumbling and rolling in playful combat. Grandfather said to me, "Now I will show you how I would get a shot if I had a gun." He then whistled slightly. The mother wolf instantly sprang to her feet in a position perfect for a hunter with a gun. She froze in that position for a few seconds, apparently realizing the danger, then bounded into the bushes and we saw no more of her or her cubs.

We fished down the small stream until we came to an extensive beaver dam, and I realized that Grandfather had been looking for this dam. The fishing had been poor prior to our arrival at the dam, but

now whenever we cast in a line, we would get a strike. The fish were larger than usual for the streams in that area, and the fishing was fantastic. Grandfather caught over 100 fish, and I caught 27.

We fished mostly with worms, and during one lull, Grandfather caught some grasshoppers, but they seemed to strike at either. Toward the latter part of the day, a slight rain began to fall. All old hands at trout fishing know that is the best fishing of all, because the fish cannot see you.

We camped close to the beaver dam that night, and repeated our preparations by carrying pine needles, making our beds, and again feasting on trout and bread which Grandfather made at the camp fire. The following morning, we arose early and began a fair hike to join the other part of the Whiting fishing party, although good fishing on the way delayed us until the next day.

The next morning, breakfast was again flapjacks and bacon. By now Grandfather had emptied the sack, which became a convenient way to carry the fish. If licenses were required at that time, I was not aware of it. We were fishing at the Apache Sitgraves National Forest. I am certain that licenses were required 15 years later.

We then joined the bigger party and fished another day with that group. Father and Kay and I believe Uncle Earnest could not resist a go at the beaver dam. They walked back that way to fish and pick up Grandfather's car. The fishing had been mediocre in the big camp compared to the beaver dam. However the second attempt at the beaver dam was met with almost no success, and everyone assumed that we had harvested most of the fish.

Advancing Technology

Later that summer, Grandpa took Kay and I on another fishing trip in the same area of the White Mountains. We left St. Johns early one morning in Grandpa's one-seated, open Model-T Ford. We passed through Eagerville on the road to McNary. Two or three miles beyond Eager we heard an engine sputtering somewhere above us. Grandpa stopped the car and we jumped out.

Above us we could see an airplane in trouble. On the right side of the road were some level fields and it was now obvious that the plane was trying to land. We watched as the plane touched down, rolled along for perhaps one hundred yards, and then nosed over forward. The tail now pointed directly upward. We ran over to the plane.

When we arrived, the pilot was attaching a rope to a wing strut and soon pulled the tail down to the ground in a normal position. The propeller was splintered but otherwise there was no damage. Grandpa asked if he could go for help, but the pilot said, "No thanks, the help will come to me."

This was the first airplane that any of us had seen. We knew all about airplanes because we had seen planes in the movies. The airplane had a double wing like World War I planes, except it was lighter and smaller. Later in my life, after watching two different neighbors build their own airplanes at home, I realized that that first plane was home-made, probably by the pilot.

It is hard to explain the impact of seeing your first airplane. Grandpa was very excited, as were Kay and I. It was something like it would be today, seeing a rocket plane land and a man get out.

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