

THE BIG ONE THAT GOT AWAY

*J. W. "Bill" Firey, Jr.
Written in 1991*

It was in the late part of August long ago. Rock Creek was pretty well dried up; Just a small hole of water now and again. We would get in those small holes of water and noodle fish. We had done this ever since we were little guys. We lived up on the bank of the little creek and were raised there. Brother Kenneth and I looked forward to noodling every summer when the creek would go dry. We could get lots of the big fish that way. We would find them under the rocks. There were also holes and pockets along the banks under the water where the fish would hide. Dad and Mom told us many times how dangerous this was. We knew that too, but it seemed to be worth the risk to us. We had done this for many years and hadn't got snake bit yet. When we would come up to a small hole of water, we would come in very slow and look it over real good. If there were any snakes, we would kill them and throw them out on the bank. Then we would start noodling fish. One time we came up on this little hole of water in the bend of the creek. This was going to be our last stop for the day because it was getting late in the evening. As we slowly moved in we only saw one cotton mouth water moccasin. We killed it and threw it out on the bank. Things looked alright so we got in the water and started noodling fish. We were getting some nice big ones under a rock in the middle of that little hole of water. The rock was about three feet across and was sticking up out of the water about one foot. Kenneth was on one side of the rock and I was on the other. We were laying down on our bellies, when all of the sudden Kenneth came up out of the water. There was a big cotton mouth water moccasin wrapped around his arm three or four times.

Kenneth was having one devil of a time getting that snake shook off his arm. After several attempts Kenneth finally slung him off. There were two long gashes on the top part of Kenneth's arm, where the snake fangs had hooked in deep. As he slung him off, the fangs had torn his arm bad. That cotton mouth had bitten Kenneth a number of times. Some of those bites were on the back side of his arm. Kenneth started sucking the venom out of all the places he could get to with his mouth, but he could not get to the places on the back of his arm. Frank Fulks was with us that day, so Kenneth asked Frank if he would suck the poison out of the bites. Frank said, "No, I'm afraid to." Kenneth said, "Well, now you are some kind of a friend, Frank!". My throat and tonsils were all infected, but I told Kenneth I would and I did. I could sure taste that poisonous venom as I sucked it out of Kenneth's arm. That cotton mouth moccasin was about as big as any I had ever seen, and we lived on that creek all of our lives. He was about the size of Kenneth's arm. We thought the cotton mouth to be the most poisonous of all the water moccasin snakes. We went home, then I took Kenneth to a doctor in Sapulpa. The doctor checked Kenneth over and gave him some shots. He thought it best Kenneth spend the night at the clinic so he could check on him. I was sick all night. My throat was sore and my tonsils were infected bad. The next morning around 8 o'clock I took my double barrel 12 gauge shot gun and went down on that creek to that little hole of water where the snake bite happened. I saw the ole boy swimming around out there, so I pulled down on him and let go with both barrels. I blew him completely out of the water and over on the

other bank. That double barrel shot gun just polarized him. Then I thought to myself, "Old Boy, This squares the account some between us." Then I went to Sapulpa to see how Kenneth was doing. Kenneth was just fine after a good night's rest and was ready to come home. I asked the doctor to look at my throat. I told him I had been in much pain all night. When he looked in my throat he said, "You are the one that should have been in the clinic last night! That poisonous venom you sucked out of your brother's arm could have cost you your life with a throat like that!" The doctor gave me some shots and told me to come back in the morning for some more shots. Kenneth and I never noodled any more fish after that.

This is just one of the many things we did in our life time together. We had a bond of friendship for each other that lasted a life time. We seemed to be more than just brothers - We were pals too.

