

THAT GOOD OL' COUNTRY LIVIN': THE CREEK

by Terri White

Ten Mile Creek meandered through our property, stretching to parts unknown. It looked so inviting. In fact, irresistible.

In case you didn't know, creeks change depending on the rain. After heavy rains, our deep pockets adjusted their locations. Those are mini pools for swimming. The rest of the creek featured either boulders that created rapids or gentle currents. From towering 20-foot cliffs to gently sloping banks, the topography often altered dramatically.

Normally, we never dared tackle the creek after a heavy rain due to the raging currents. However, after one bout, we threw down the gauntlet and plopped onto inner tubes to careen on those swift currents. Pure thrill! That thrill, though, soon got the best of our six-year-old daughter when she flipped off her tube. Soaked to the skin, she called it a day. Although not a pleasant experience, she still returned to enjoy other water adventures.

When we discovered the rope hanging from a tree, the kids delighted in swinging out into the deep pools. Yeehaw! Tarzan and Jane, here we come! Shrieks of pure delight echoed up and down the banks.

After one heavy rain, our boys spent a week constructing a raft out of driftwood from the creek bank. Picture Tom Sawyer or Swiss Family Robinson – that's them. Unfortunately, on their maiden voyage, it sank. Undaunted, they moved on to other challenges. They traversed that creek for miles in both directions. Good, clean fun with plenty of exercise and fresh air. A boy's paradise. They continue to declassify their adventures by the year.

Let's not forget fishing. Every so often, Steve and the kids fished for our dinner. They wandered the creek to search for the best spots. Then they settled in. It didn't take long before they reached their goal. The first time they brought their treasures to the house, Steve proceeded to clean them in our kitchen sink. Oh no! Not happening. I shooed him outside in a flash. No fish scales would mess up my kitchen. He learned his lesson – along with the children. You fish, you clean – outside. I cook. End of story.

But wait! There are more fish stories! Due to a lack of rain one year, we found fish trapped in a shallow pool. The next morning raccoon and bobcat prints littered the pool, leaving only the fish's skeletal remains. The demise of the fish provided a feast for other creatures. Thus nature takes care of itself.

Soon Steve, terrified of bees, crawled out of his comfort zone (whoop!) and ventured into the world of beekeeping. Placing his hives in the woods that lined the creek, he provided a nice shady spot for them. While I'll regale you with our beekeeping antics at another time, just know that beekeeping ain't for sissies. (Pardon my poor grammar.) So back to creek stories.

For a couple of years in a row, spring rains flooded our area. The creek, with those 20-foot banks, overflowed into our pasture and right up to our barn. It was downright boggy out there. Squish, squish.

And guess what the floodwaters swept away? Yup! Our beehives. Never seen again. I hope someone rescued them and put them to good use because that ended our beekeeping venture. Although I think my husband might have been a tad relieved, he's not talking.

Low water bridges, cheaper to construct than high ones, can't be crossed when flooded. Imagine our neighbors behind us, whose property sat on the high bank. Across the creek. On the other side of the low water bridge. Obviously, crossing proved impossible. Of course, there's always that guy who will try anyway – in a VW.

Notice that I wrote "guy". You will never find a woman doing something that dumb. Trust me, that's pure testosterone gunning it.

The VW. A pip-squeak of a car, while grand on gas mileage, was no match for the heavy floodwaters. It sailed down the creek in a flash. Fortunately, our neighbor escaped. I wonder if he learned his lesson?

A few months later, when the kids and I strolled down to the creek to play, we spotted four tires peeking out of the water. Thinking they were only tires that had swept down the creek during the floods, we ignored them. However, later that day, our neighbors hoisted their VW out of the water. Obviously, not just tires. Just between you and me, I'm pretty sure that car was a gonner.

Good ol' country living meant well water powered by electricity. Frequently, our transformer crashed during a storm. While waiting for the serviceman to adjust it – probably last on his list, every time – we had no water. Although we kept a reserve for drinking, what about washing dishes and bathing?

Enter the creek. Steve and the boys lugged buckets to the house so I could boil water for washing dishes. Then we donned our swimming suits, and down to the creek we tramped – soap in hand. Scrub-a-dub-dub. Sometimes the neighbor's cows strolled down to bathe with us. Charming.

As soon as 70-degree temps hit April, it amazed me that my kids bee-lined for a swim in the creek. Brrrr. While 70-degrees in the air is comfortable, that creek water still clung to its wintery chill. Me? I lollygagged in my lounge chair while my kids kicked off their first-of-the-season watery welcome.

Besides fair weather creek fun, winter brought its own delights. During the years we lived there, our winters were severe by Texas standards. But no problem! The kids pulled on their rubber boots to slip and slide on the icy creek. Growing up ice skating on rivers, lakes, and ponds, I enjoyed those rosy-cheeked, icy treats for my Texas children.

Ahhh, the creek stories. Imbedded in our memories to cherish and pass on to the next generation. Nothing beats that good ol' country living.