## Chapter Eight
## Summer Vacation

I wish the school year could go as fast as summer vacation. Seems like you just get out of one grade and then its time to go back for another year.

One of the reasons this summer went so fast is 'cause Uncle Johnny wanted his corn field irrigated. Last two or three years it has been so dry that Uncle Johnny made very little corn. You know, he is pretty smart also. He didn't say to us boys, do you want to help me build an irrigation system for my corn field?" What he said was, "Why don't you boys build you a swimming hole under the railroad trestle? I'll furnish all the equipment you will need."

We jumped all over that, saying thing like, "that's a great idea, when can we get started, that sounds like a lot of fun, oh boy, a swimming hole closer to home."

I mean to tell you he suckered us a good on this one. Let me draw you a map. (**see insert**)

From Mulberry Branch to the start of the corn patch must have been a quarter mile and the corn patch could have been another quarter mile or so across it. That's a lot of ditch work. I ain't ever going to be suckered like that again. No Sir-ree, I ain't. I'm going to ask a few questions, especially if it sounds real good.

He showed us what we would need including Buster the mule. He had a contraption that you hooked to Buster, kind of a scoop looking affair. He started us scooping dirt out of where the ditch was going to be and piling it near where we would eventually dump it into Mulberry Branch to dam it up. We also ditched for a spillway around the dam for when Uncle Johnny was not irrigating his fields the water in the branch could by-pass the dam. We piled rock and stone in the spillway to keep it from eroding.

We did all the ditching first. When the ditches were ready we notched the banks of the stream and dropped about 4 logs of roughly 10 inches in diameter into the notched out places. Then we went to shoveling like crazy until we had that stream completely dammed.

But we were so caught up in our irrigation system that we wanted to make sure it worked properly. We made sure it ran all the way to the upper side of the field and would run down the rows evenly.

It was a tremendous success. All our Uncles came by and were bragging on us. Uncle Johnny gave each of us 5.00. That came out to about a dollar a week for each of us.

We did have a nice swimming hole right under the trestle. The water was good and deep, over our heads by a good bit so we could dive and jump off the trestle into the water.

News of our swimming hole spread all over the county and people were coming from every where to swim and bathe. There was a road that ran along side the tracks so car loads of folks started coming to our swimming hole.

We talked about charging folks to swim but we thought that might push our luck a little too much. Anyways, we built a diving board in addition to having the trestle to dive off and jump from. We tried to clear the underbrush from around the banks and we got a lot of it but it barely put a dent in all the growth that was there. We worked at cutting brush from time to time between swims and had it cleared around the diving board but the rest of the banks were briars and brush. One day while we were swimming a work train came by. It had an engine, a caboose and a couple of flatbed cars. There was a dredging machine on one of the flatbeds.

One of the workmen said, "You boys want us to clean out that swimming hole for you?"

Well, of course we did and they did not have to ask twice. They probably spent two hours or more

working on our hole. Not only did they widen our hole and increase the depth, they scraped the banks on both sides of the trestle and on both banks of the stream, clearing all that brush we had been worrying about. That fellow just put our swimming hole on the map.

One or more of us boys tried to hang around that hole every day for the first 2 or 3 weeks so we could let everyone know who was responsible for it. We would tell the story of our ditching and dam building in great detail, trying to make sure each one of them remembered the important stuff, like our names and ages and whoever was telling the story generally took most of the credit for the engineering of the project.

We told how we flagged down the train crew and talked them into doing all the digging and clearing and how they would have passed us by if we had not convinced them that this was something sorely needed by this community. The more we told the story the greater the needs became.

Homer and his brothers would usually meet us there each morning. All the grown ups were working so us kids would have an exclusive on the swimming hole. We spent the biggest portion of that summer either working on the swimming hole or swimming in the swimming hole. What a great place it was.

Yup, that's what I said, "was". Toward the end of summer we had we of the worst rains and floods you ever did see. My house was closest to Middle creek and the water came to within 20 yards of our house.

Us boys went swimming in the pasture near our house. It was a week or more before we could swim in any of the streams around our community. We went down to our new swimming hole as soon as we could. Everything looked ok. Doug saw the diving board was ok so he went to taking his clothes off.

You remember me telling you how he always wanted to be first at everything. I think I told you that. If I didn't, well, he always wanted to be first. Anyways, he was hollering as he hit the diving board, "Watch this jack-knife." And he did hit the prettiest dive I had seen him hit in a while.

He was naked as a jay bird, his butt just a shinning as he touched his toes making his jack-knife. He broke the water so clean he would have scored a ten in competition.

It was short lived. His dive stopped when he got about waist deep. Mud and silt and leaves and all manner of stuff was just a boiling around Doug. His old feet were just a kicking and kicking.

About the time C. C. and me were ready to dive in to get him he came backing out of all that junk. His face was as black as Homers and he had leaves and mud all over his face, in his ears and in his hair. He was a mess.

The water came to about his chest but he allowed as he was standing about knee deep in silt. We got to checking after that and found out our dam had washed away, and the hole had filled with silt. That branch used to be a good place to bath because of the rock bottom.

It was not fit for anything now. If you stepped into the water you would sink up to your "you know what in mud". Well, that took care of one whole summer. The only good came out of it was Uncle Johnny made a good corn crop and we made some good memories and also we learned to ask a few questions, even if it sounds real good.