

## Chapter Twelve

### Distant Cousins

I guess everyone has a whole bunch of cousins. I know I have. I have first cousins, second cousins, third cousins; probably more than there are numbers. Now I don't know a whole lot about it, but I wonder if a cousin once removed is the same as a first cousin. I heard my aunts talking about that stuff and never paid it much mind until this summer.

We had a cousin come visit us from Nevada. Only thing I know about Nevada is that it is a state and it is way off somewheres. The only thing I know about this guy is he is suppose to be kin and that he looks a lot different than us. I don't even know which side of the family he is supposed to be kin to.

He talks different. He can't swim worth a hoot. When we play fish and minnow, anybody can catch him. No Sir-ree, I don't think he's kinfolk, not for one minute do I believe he's kin. I think maybe they come down here to mooch off us. You know we all have good jobs, I told you about that; you know about me and C.C. making 4.00 dollars a week stacking lumber. Matter of fact, he hit Uncle El up about a job himself. Only thing he had for him was water-boy for the logging crew. Me and C.C. had outgrown that job years ago.

He didn't know nothing about a sawmill. I asked him if they had sawmills in Nevada and he said they probably did but he had not personally seen one. And you could tell. We had to show him everything.

It wasn't but a few days though and he was skidding logs with a team of mules. Uncle El was bragging on him and how he could handle the mules. I got to thinking that he may be ok.

Well, anyway we asked him to go swimming with us to this new lake about four or five miles from home. All of us cousins went. One of our favorite things to do in the new lake was to dive for the bottom. To prove to everyone that you had made it to the bottom you had to bring up a hand full of mud.

The lake was about a half-mile wide and the deepest part was about half way out. This was a regular thing for us, staying in the water so long I mean. If we were not working we were swimming.

We could play fish and the minnow for a long time without having to come out of the water to rest. Most of the time we came out of the water to get warm, especially if we were in Middle Creek. Well, this lake was warm and you could swim in it a long time. We dove for the bottom for a long time before deciding to head for the bank.

When we were about half way to the shore someone noticed Cuz was not with us. Our friend Sonny, not a cousin, was swimming along side me. We started looking for Cuz and saw the top of his head as he was going down. We both swam as hard as we could. When we arrived at the spot we last saw him he still had not come back up. We both dove and were lucky to reach him on our first dive. He was so tired he did not fight us and we started swimming back to the bank.

C.C. and Doug swam back to meet us and helped in getting him back to shore. We laid Cuz on the bank and he was so tired he just lay there for the longest. He thanked us about sixty times. He said he had never been so plum give out in all his life. All of us were very thankful that we were able to pull him out of the water.

He still don't look like any cousin of mine but he was a pretty good kid. He went back to Nevada not to long after that and we never did see him again. Ain't it funny how people come and go in your

life? They give you just a little touch of themselves and then they are gone. He was probably saying "Them boys ain't any kin to me; I don't care what you say". That's probably what he told his Momma. However, he passed Uncle El's test for good employees. Uncle El said he made him a hand.

One thing he did while he was working in the woods with the cutting crew that Uncle El was telling us kids about. All the crew was eating lunch one day when someone noticed a wasp nest on a bush nearby. They were all talking about robbing the wasp nest. Cuz allowed as how he could rob that nest barehanded and never get stung. Well, the betting was on and somehow Cuz was able to cover all the bets. Uncle El said Cuz took his right hand and rubbed it all under his left armpit several times and reached very slowly over to the wasp nest, holding his hand close to the nest. All the wasps on the nest just left the nest and came on his hand. After all the wasp was on his hand he simply flipped his hand hard and fast to the side, flinging all the wasp away, reached and grabbed the nest and handed it to one of the crew sitting nearby. Boy that really impressed all of them according to Uncle El. Maybe he was kind of kin to us, probably third or fourth removed I'd guess.