

Deep down, we all have some level of adventuresome spirit. It makes us want to do exciting things, and this sometimes gets us into trouble. My first great adventure, or journey of discovery, (at least that I can remember) happened when I was probably about six or seven years old. My cousin Steve lived next door to me at that time, and he was a whole year older (and wiser) than me. We mostly played in our yards, but there was a field nearby with a little creek running through it that captured our interest.

I now know that this was just a little runoff stream called Grindstone Hollow, but to us it was a formidable river. Where did it come from? Where did it go? Consideration of these burning questions caused us to one day cut loose and go exploring. On our own. Without telling anyone.

I am sure we sensed that if we had asked permission we would not have received it. But we really didn't consider fully the consequences of our action.

I remember that we had to cross a barbed-wire fence to enter this wilderness, and I was extremely pleased when I ripped a hole in my pants. You see, my mother made me wear jeans with and elastic instead of a belt, and I thought that very unmanly. Now I would not be able to wear them anymore.

So everything was good as we began our trip, and we followed this unknown watercourse with all of its pools of water, rocks, mud, and fallen trees. We absorbed this foreign land with all of our senses and made our way eventually to a bridge. This was a major development, but we did not hesitate to walk through it to cross underneath a busy street. We had now crossed another major boundary, and as intrepid explorers we moved on.

Eventually we came to a bend in the creek that presented problems for our passage. The water was deep here, the sides were steep, and the undergrowth was very thick. We were getting a little tired, too, so we decided to call it a day and return home.

Alas, there was no tickertape parade to celebrate our achievement. Quite the opposite: we had been missed and our parents were extremely upset and worried. Little did they know how well these young men had performed out in the wild. But we were in great trouble nonetheless. And to beat it all, my mother put a patch on my elastic-waisted jeans and I had to wear them anyway!

After almost fifty years, the woods we traveled in have been taken over by new houses and such, but the creek is still there. I trace our trip out on a map, and I am still a bit awed that we undertook it (and lived to tell about it). I look back on that journey with great fondness, for it recalls a spirit that I still believe in, for there are times that we just need to step out boldly where we have not gone before, and discover the wonder of life.