

By GEORGE ROBERTSON, M.D.

Have you been bitten yet? When warm spring weather comes have you had the urge to get to a pond, creek, river, lake or whatever body of water is close by to wet a line, drown a worm, or otherwise chase a fish?

Every spring, the compulsion strikes me and as soon as the water clears up from the last big rain I simply must get to the riverside for that primeval experience.

The drive might have something to do with the fact that my grandfather and father would load me into the fishing boat every Wednesday (our day off) to go to catch a fish in the river near my hometown. I can remember it being a family ritual for most of the summer months.

Even my aunts and uncles would be in on the fishing trip and Grandmother would get the iron pots ready to cook the fresh catch lakeside at noon. One of the favorite stories we still talk about when we get together is the time my aunt fell into the water trying to get into the loosely tied boat. She still insists that she was showing me how not to stand up in the boat when it happened.

We always rented a flat-bottomed boat and would pull others with a small gas motor to that favorite spot on the river where you just knew the big ones would be biting. It seemed like an eternity waiting until my daddy could get my fishing pole outfitted with a nylon line, a lead weight and a quill cork. I always put my own bait on the hook.

For the first moments the anticipation and action would be consuming, but after catching a few fish my attention would wander to the little turtles swimming in the shallow water or the butterflies on the button bushes overhanging the bank and I hoped to be able to paddle my own boat so that I could fish and go where I wanted.

It would be several years, when I reached my teens, before I could skull my own boat and chase the other things that I liked in addition to the fish. By the end of the day, we would have caught several small turtles and usually would release them back into the lake. Sometimes we would take our swim trunks for a dip in the cool water when the sun was blazing hot over head.

Getting back to basics

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Hearing the birds singing in the cypress trees and looking at the thick growth on the river banks still reminds me of a simpler time when we didn't worry about global warming and radiation exposure, and I often long to get back to those days when the biggest worry I had was wondering if I was going to run out of bait before the day ended.

Take someone you love fishing. It may be the best day you'll have and the day they will remember all of their life.

Editor's Note: George Robertson is a physician with Family Medical Associates, PC, in Lebanon.