

By GEORGE ROBERTSON, M.D.

Did you ever have a favorite place to hide? As a child we often had hideouts that were probably inspired by the Cowboys and gangster movies that were prevalent on early TV shows. The train robbers would always go to their secret place in a canyon where no one could find them.

Playing games of secret lives and espionage as children left us looking for the perfect place to stay undercover. Growing up in the country gave opportunity to search out those really good landscapes where our imaginations could have a free rein.

One exceptional spot, I thought, was the fence row behind my grandmother's house. It was covered with honeysuckle vines that grew into the trees and draped across the wire fences connecting several small fields. The vines were thick but the area where they folded over from the top of the wire to the ground left a sort of tunnel where, with a little maneuvering, you could crawl long distances completely enclosed in the dense cover.

The best hideout was near the center of the fence where the tangled bushes and greenery had spread into the trees creating a two-story extension for an upstairs window look out and balcony. On the ground floor was a clear area big enough for a camping out spot but was too spooky to make me ever want to spend the night there.

All we needed for the place was some furniture and kitchen appliances to feel like it was a real house. Those things we fabricated out of our imagination as we battled the make-believe armies and villains of our childhood games. The girls would come up with mud pies for meals. When we got hungry we went back home. The honeysuckle salad just didn't look appetizing enough to really try. Most of the time we were getting the hideout ready for living in it, which we never did.

Once in our playtime we came upon a possum and rushed back to the house to tell our parents of the find. When we returned to show them the strange animal that appeared to be dead in our playhouse it had come to life and left by the back door so that we had nothing to show them and we found out what playing possum was all about.

Strange thing is I don't ever remember getting a chigger bite or having a tick problem in my

many years of crawling around in the grass. Maybe I was too busy fighting the villains to notice.

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