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LeRoy Johnson at McGee Bend Reservoir (Lake Sam Rayburn) in 1956

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LeRoy Johnson at McGee Bend Reservoir (Lake Sam Rayburn) in 1956

Edward B. Jelks

McGee Bend was one of some 40 reservoir and dam projects in Texas where salvage archaeological excavations were carried out as part of the nationwide River Basin Surveys program administered by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service between 1947 and 1968 (see Jelks 1965, 2006, 2014, 2017). In 1956, I rented an old vacant farmhouse for our McGee Bend field headquarters where our crew lived without indoor plumbing, and it was there that the photo of LeRoy Johnson bathing in a washtub was taken by one of our crew, Milburn Lathan (Figure 1).



Figure 1. LeRoy Johnson bathing in washtub in 1956 McGee Bend Reservoir field headquarters. Photograph courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

LeRoy heard the camera shutter snap, looked up, saw Milburn with camera in hand, and leapt out of the tub with mayhem on his mind. Skinny Milburn, who weighed perhaps 60 percent as much as the husky LeRoy, quite sensibly fled out the door into the adjoining piney woods at full speed with an enraged, naked, barefooted, soaking wet LeRoy in hot pursuit. Fortunately, after his bare feet had trod on a few of the pine cones that littered the ground, LeRoy gave up the chase. When Milburn returned warily the next morning, LeRoy had cooled down and let Milburn go without corporal punishment after I promised to give him the negative when I got the roll of film developed (I could not give him the whole roll as it contained some shots of excavated features and the like). Later, I did give LeRoy the negative, but only after secretly salting away a print.

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