

On the Mora

E. D. White

We had been in the canyon only eight hours, but the rest of the world seemed far away. The fishing had been good, and as I sat on a huge boulder casting into the water, my mind went back to the moment when my father and I had left the car on the rim of the canyon. The Mora River from there had looked like a very thin ribbon of blue. Our descent, by way of a winding rocky trail, with heavy packs on our backs, had been an arduous task. The temperature that afternoon had risen to eighty degrees, but as night settled upon us the temperature dropped considerably. A New Mexico full moon was overhead as it had been the year before. Father and I had agreed that the previous trip would be our last. The fishing in the Mora had been good that year, but we had enjoyed it at great price. The descent had been difficult, for we had then, as this year, been loaded down with food, water, and fishing tackle. There had been the fear of rattlesnakes. Two anglers who had previously fished on the Mora River had warned us of the danger of the deadly reptiles. The knowledge of them had instilled a fear in us which was with us during the entire outing. The ascent from the floor of the canyon had been laborious, the hot sun had been unmerciful, and we had exhausted our water supply before starting up the trail. We had no food to weigh us down, but in its place there were forty pounds of catfish. Four hours of climbing, without a drink, and stumbling over rocks, had left us with very dry mouths and aching bodies. No, we had said, we would never come back.

A whirring reel snapped my mind back to the business at hand. Father, a short distance from me, had landed another catfish which had fought valiantly to get off the hook. Our string of fish was becoming quite large, and the night of fishing had just begun. We left our camp farther behind as we moved upstream. Each pool gave up two or three fish. I thought of how beneficial this life was to the soul, for here was peace of mind. How true were Izaak Walton's words in **The Compleat Angler**. "God never made a finer form of recreation than angling." That foremost angler could not have enjoyed this night more than I. The moon had drifted low behind the mountain. Far up the canyon a coyote let loose his mournful howl. In the darkness bats flew unhesitatingly between the great boulders and occasionally dipped down to the water in their flight as if to drink. My eyes tried to pierce the darkness as theirs did; but, in the end, I had to resort to my flashlight. I had a fleeting

uncomfortable feeling of being out of place in my tranquil surroundings. I wondered where the bear, whose tracks I had seen at the water's edge, was bedded down for the night. Perhaps far up the mountainside in its den it slept lightly, waiting for us, the invaders of its domain, to leave.

Moving rather slowly over and around huge rocks, we progressed upstream. We hoped that our lights would hold out, for the moon was gone for the night. By 2:00 a.m. we had very nearly our legal limit of fish. We fished on, knowing well that we would eat several of them the following day. Our stumbling over rocks and roots had left our shins raw, but this did not prevent our trying another deep pool. Nothing, it seemed, could have spoiled such a well-planned successful trip.

We came upon two pools of equal size which were connected by a very small expanse of moving water. I suggested that we each fish in a pool until the supply of catfish in each was exhausted. My father, agreeing, made his way toward the second pool. The hillside was steep, and to aid his insecure footing he placed his free hand on rocks which jutted from the mountainside. I was intent upon baiting my hooks when an ominous buzzing sound filled the night air. My fishing pole dropped to the ground, and I all but followed it. Many times I had heard rattlesnakes give their warning, but at this early morning hour it sent a bitter chill into my spine. I know that I trembled as I turned to the direction whence the sound came. My father had retreated a few paces from a rock on which fell the rays of his flashlight. He was searching for a club. He cursed as I warned him that he should not try to kill the reptile. The intermittent whirring of the rattles continued. My father, angered as well as scared, broke a pine root loose from the hillside; and, with it in his powerful right hand and the flashlight in his left, he advanced in the direction of the deadly sound. I saw the rays of the light sweeping the top of the rock. My father's silhouette cut off my view. I felt sweat roll down my forehead. Then the club rose and fell again and again. The unnerving buzz ceased, and all was quiet. My father sat down, and I, moving for the first time in what seemed hours, walked on rubbery legs over to him and seated myself beside him. The deadly snake had probably lain on the sun-warmed rock most of the night. While moving toward the pool, which we both had momentarily forgotten, my father had laid his hand on the rock a bare six inches from the coiled snake. Why it gave a warning at all is as much a mystery to us now as it was then, for it was apparent that the reptile had been startled. It was certain to us that a man bitten by a rattlesnake in the deep gorge of the Mora would never have reached the rim alive. We are so enervated by the scare we had both received that we gathered up our equipment

and fish and returned to our camp.

We have not been down to the Mora River in the past two years. After the second trip there, as after the first, we vowed that we would not enter the canyon again, but this coming August, while vacationing in New Mexico, I know that I shall want to return to the Mora. My father has in his letters indicated that he also has a yearning to fish that nearly forbidden water again.

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Social Democracy in a Small Town

Adel Fochtman

In a broad sense it can be said that social democracy has progressed, if we think of the government—instituted social reforms for the masses. But what about our flourishing intra-community snobbery and bigotry? Only when a crisis appears are the residents of the community prompted by their innate sense of the equality of men. In the meantime there is no thought of the hurts and injustices that are caused by narrow-minded thinking.

Consider, for example, Smalltown, Illinois. It is a mining town of about one thousand people of modest means. Their social life consists of visits in each other's homes, occasional movies, and church gatherings. This community is divided into two factions—the German merchants, laborers, and retired farmers, who are Protestants, and the Polish and Hungarian miners, who make up the Catholic element. There is a constant undercurrent of antagonism between these two groups and no intercourse of socialibility. But one day there is an accident in the mine, and a call goes out for volunteers to rescue several trapped miners. The strong, burly Germans rush in and work tirelessly until the last Hungarian or Pole has been brought to safety. Women who have ignored each other for years comfort each other. For the moment all bigotry is forgotten.

Not only are these townspeople ordinarily prejudiced in religious matters, but also in matters of race. Never has a negro been permitted to loiter momentarily. On occasion the men have been known to mass and literally drive out any negro who dared