



Glen Elder, KS -- Heritage & History

~ Memoir Lane ~

Adventures on the Solomon River

-- by Wallace Taylor

For me and Richard Marzolf, life during the war-frayed years of the 1940's was an ongoing event that most adventurous teenage boys only imagine. At Glen Elder's southern edge, just a stone's throw beyond the elevators and past the railroad tracks our opportunity for fun waited for us in, along, and sometimes on, the Solomon River, whether flowing or frozen solid as a rock.

One of the more fun things we did was strip down an old Model A, Ford. When the river froze to the estimated proper thickness, and after locating a suitable place to drive the car down the riverbank, we'd take it for a real "spin!" Traffic was not very heavy down there and we had the road to ourselves but for a few stalled carp along the shoulder.

If the ice was good, a flood was better. High water rushing frantically downstream, scant feet below the south-of-town bridge provided favorable "log spearing" conditions. From the bridge deck we would wait for logs of appropriate proportions to pass beneath. Then, with ropes tied to eight-foot long steel-tipped spears, we'd become "Whalers" and harpoon those huge logs preventing some downstream bridge from possible damage.

On one such day some men whose rowboats had been swept away several miles upstream approached the us. Not wanting to lose their boats, the men offered us \$5 for each rescued. Soon, the boats came down the river but swept by too rapidly for Richard and me to catch. Planning quickly, we jumped in our car and sped off to a place downstream where we hoped to intercept them. The plan worked; the rowboats appeared. We jumped into the river, swam to boat, climbed aboard, and rowed to shore—a successful salvage job!

Another exploit occurred when the Solomon was so high the bridge-deck was submerged. On this particular afternoon, Richard, me, and my cousin Bob were available to row farmers coming into Glen Elder from the south, back and forth across the river. Needing groceries, Harold German Sr., Sheldon Lowdermilk, and "Fuzzy" Coble arrived at the south bank. They hired Bob to row them across.

Immediately, the current grabbed control of the boat, sweeping it and the men quickly down stream and into the tangle of a treetop. The boat capsized; everyone fell into the water. Luckily, everyone grabbed tree branches and avoided being swept away. Watching the calamity, Harold's family, including my future wife, Maxine, started hollering that the men would drown. Already in a four-man boat, Richard and I went to the rescue. Realizing the need for a speedier recovery, Richard soon jumped from the boat and swam to a tree where he waited. I proceeded to take Sheldon, Fuzzy, and Bob to the town-side of the river. Harold, who had opted to wait in the tree, was saved and rowed back to where the adventure started. He had had enough and stated: "That if his family got hungry he'd just butcher a cow."

And that was just part of Richards and my life on the Solomon River.