

Leo's Lance

West Clear Creek Canyon

By Leo Copeland

A thousand linear feet doesn't seem so far, but when you are looking straight down from a rocky bluff into a gaping canyon with a rambling creek a thousand feet below, it seems a long way, and a bit frightening. My dream fishing spot lay at the bottom of this chasm. My Shangri-la!

When my fishing buddy and I heard about a wild trout stream down in a hidden canyon where huge German Brown and Rainbow Trout abounded, we just couldn't resist the challenge to go and see, and try our luck.

The place is West Clear Creek Canyon. The longest canyon cutting into the Mogollon, (pronounced "Muggy-own"), Rim which is over 7000 feet in elevation. The canyon is 1,000 feet deep and not very wide. At places the creek covers the entire bottom of the canyon. The walls look like the solid rock which had been sliced with a big butter knife. Most places it is impossible to get into or out of this canyon. The U.S. Forest Service calls it, "One of the most rugged, remote canyons in Northern Arizona."

There were stories about rattlesnakes, wolves and bears, but we heard the part about the fish. The guy at the nearby Long Valley Store tantalized us by pulled a 32 inch Rainbow Trout out of his freezer to show us the kind of fish we could expect to find down there.

We heard of the ruggedness and danger of the climb into and out of the canyon which kept many people away, and caused the fainthearted to vow never to come back. One young man threw away a basket creel full of big trout along with an expensive, new, split-bamboo fly-rod. He was about half way out when he gave out on the climb. He just flung them down the face of the cliff and swore he would never come back again.

We listened carefully how to get to the trail into the canyon, off the main road and through the pine forest over logging roads. "When you come to a fork in the road, just follow the main traveled road," they said, but logging roads, are obscure. We took a wrong fork somewhere and didn't find the trail leading into the canyon, the one they said was marked by a large, dead, pine tree.

Our road just suddenly ended. We got out of the pickup looking for where the road went from there, and we discovered, about ten yards in front of us, a gaping gash in the ground. We had "arrived at our destination."

The first thing we did was walk to the edge of the gorge and look in. We tried to see fish in a "puddle"

below us, but couldn't see any. The "puddle" turned out to be 20 feet wide, 30 feet long, 15 feet deep in places. Depth perception can play tricks on you, no wonder we couldn't see any fish!

We had missed the road which led to the dead tree and thus to the cut trail down into the canyon. This was a set-back, and cost us a lot of time, but we were determined to get down into the canyon catch some fish that day. After more than two hours of false trails, miss-guesses and much up and down mountain climbing we made our way down into a side canyon which led us into West Clear Creek.

There was no stream in this canyon, only little pools with water running in the upper end but no visible exit for it. As we got closer to Clear Creek, the pools became larger and I spotted a pool I thought might have fish in it.

We had been told, "These fish are wild and not used to seeing people. If they see you they will hide under a rock until you are gone," so I sneaked up close enough to make my cast, and tried to drop my lure just in front of a patch of moss which covered the lower end of the pool. As my lure descended toward the water, a sixteen inch brown trout leaped out of the water and caught it in mid-flight. He and I cleaned the moss off the pool before I was able to talk him into my creel. My first trout was caught on Tom Creek, not Clear Creek.

Our first up close view of West Clear Creek was breathtaking. The water was so clear you could see every pebble in the bottom, even of deep holes. At places the water was over your head, and in other places it was a jigsaw of little streamlets weaving through the rocks and weeds.

At one such place I caught a little trout by accident when I slipped on a slick rock and dropped my rod, causing it to release the lure and when I retrieved it I had a five inch trout on it.

At some places the Creek was a

semi-swift river 20 feet wide and it was at such a place I saw the biggest live Rainbow Trout I have ever seen. I was wading in hip deep water, casting far downstream. I saw his dorsal fin when he came out of some bushes along the bank and headed straight for my lure. I felt him hit it, but I think I anticipated his strike and jerked too, soon, jerking it out of his mouth. He took off up stream and swam by within three feet of me. (I would tell you how big he looked, but you would call it a "fish story!")

We caught our limit of foot long trout in a short time, but because of the time wasted finding a way down the mountain, and the approaching darkness, (we sure didn't want to be caught down there and have to climb out after dark). We had to leave before we got to do very much exploring.

On a later trip we were able to locate the trail we had missed, where, in the 1930's, the WPA (Works Progress Administration) built a long since gone, aerial tram, into the canyon and cut a zigzag trail to the bottom. It was more convenient although still treacherous because the trail was only about two to three feet wide. It took about 45 minutes to an hour to descend or ascend on this trail.

The largest fish we caught was a 24 inch German Brown Trout which my buddy caught. It had a protruding lower jaw and sharp teeth which were about 3/8 inch long.

A huge brown followed my lure into shallow water, but he saw me and vanished.

We found a cave in the bottom with rustic shelves stocked with old, rusty cans of food and a note dated 1924, stating, "Take what you want, but replace what you take."

Except for the climb in and out, which kept many people away, this was an ideal place. A regular Utopia, the fishing hole I had dreamed of all my life. We didn't see any rattlesnakes or bears, or wolves in the canyon, although a game ranger warned us bears were in the

area. We did see deer and elk, and a coyote up on the rim.

Down in the bottom, I disturbed something in a deep thicket which made a lot of noise and shook some

good sized saplings. I didn't see what it was, but I decided I really didn't need to know, so I departed the way I came, and left it to its own doings.

This place is still my Shangri-la.

Will I ever go back again? Who knows? It has been nearly 40 years since my last trip, and it is a long way from Seminole. Would you go back, if you were me?

Community Calendar

Check Dates and Times Below for All Weekly Community Happenings

SUNDAY, February 24

Attend the church of your choice.

MONDAY, February 25

- 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 1:00-5:00 p.m.--South Health Clinic, 704 Hobbs Hwy.
- 9:00-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-3:30 p.m.--Immunization clinic, South Plains Health Department, 704 Hobbs Highway. (Clinic in Seagraves every third Monday, 1:30-3:30 p.m.; open from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. the first Monday and from 7 a.m.-5 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month).
- 9:00 a.m.--Exercise class, Senior Citizen Center.
- 10:00 a.m.--Gaines County Commissioners Court Meeting, Commissioners' Courtroom, Gaines County Courthouse.
- 6:30 p.m.--Masonic Lodge #957 Meal and Meeting (meeting at 7:30 p.m.), Masonic Lodge...meet 1st Monday of every month.
- 7:00 p.m.--Seminole City Council Board Meeting, Board Room, City Hall.
- 8:00 -9:00 p.m.--Alcoholics Anonymous, CR 402K, #110.

TUESDAY, February 26

- 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 1:00-5:00 p.m.—South Plains Health Clinic, 704 Hobbs Highway.
- 9:00 a.m.-12 noon—Seagraves shot clinic, Senior Citizen's Center, 1204 Avenue F.
- 12 noon—Seminole Lions Club, First Presbyterian Church.
- 1:30-4:00 p.m.--First Monday of the month Adult Learning Center Registration, SE 4th St.
- 7:00 p.m.--Al-Anon Group, 109 SW Ave G (First Assembly of God Fellowship Hall).
- 6:00-7:00 p.m.—Young People's Group, Gaines County Rehabilitation Center, 110 Southwest Avenue B.
- 7:00 p.m.--Al-Anon Group, 110 SW Ave B.
- 7:00 p.m.—Seminole EMT Volunteer Association. EMS building. (First Tuesday of each month).
- 7:00 p.m.—Gaines County Committee on People with Disabilities, Seminole City Hall. (First Tuesday of each month).
- 7:00 p.m.—"Wings of Glory" Chapter of the Christian Motorcycle Association, Thelma's One Stop. (Fourth Tuesday of each month).
- 7:30 p.m.—Seminole American Legion, Legion Hall, two miles west of Seminole on U.S. 180. (First Tuesday of each month).

WEDNESDAY, February 27

- 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 1:00-5:00 p.m.—South Plains Health Clinic, 704 Hobbs Highway.
- 9:00 a.m.—Exercise class, Senior Citizen's Building.
- 10:00 a.m.-12 noon—Bob Lewis Mission open, 109 Southwest Avenue B. (Open each Wednesday during the same hours.
- 8:00 p.m.--Alcoholics Anonymous (Spanish), Community Rehabilitation Center, 110 Southwest Avenue B.
- 8:00 p.m.—Al-Anon, Community Rehabilitation Center, 110 Southwest Avenue B.

THURSDAY, February 28

- 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 1:00-5:00 p.m.—South Plains Health Clinic, 704 Hobbs Highway.
- 12 noon—Seminole Rotary Club, First Presbyterian Church.
- 7:00 p.m.—Alcohol and other drug education group, 110 Southwest Avenue B.
- 7:00 p.m. (Mountain Time, 8 p.m. Texas Time)—Alzheimer's Disease and Related Demential Disorders Support Group meeting, Columbia Lea Regional Hospital Educational Complex Room, Hobbs. (Last Thursday of each month).
- 8:00 p.m. (Texas Time)—Gambler's Anonymous, 800 West Bender, Hobbs, N.M., First Assembly of God Church (across from Albertsons).

FRIDAY, March 1

- 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1:30-3:00 p.m.—South Plains Health Clinic, 704 Hobbs Highway.
- 9:00 a.m.—Exercise class, Senior Citizen's building.

SATURDAY, March 2

No scheduled activities

SEMINOLE THRIFTWAY
ANDREWS HWY. 758-9869

Birth Announcement

Flores

Kayla and Jesse Flores, Jr. proudly announce the birth of their daughter, Violet Faith Flores.

The baby was born at Seminole Memorial Hospital on February 7, 2013. She weighed 6 lbs. 4.4 oz. and was 19.5" long.

Paternal grandparents are Cecilia Aguilar of Seminole and Jesse Flores of Hobbs, N.M.

Maternal grandparents are Janie and Jesse A. Flores of Semiole.

AUCTION

TUESDAY, FEB. 26...10:00 A.M.

LOCATION: New Home, TX. From Int. of FM 1730 and FM 211, south 3 miles on FM 1730, then 4 miles west on FM 1317 (Known as the Petty Community). Or from Tahoka, 10 miles west on FM 380, then north 8 miles on FM 1328.

David Ehlers - OWNER
(806) 548-4795

"David is reducing his farming operation and the following sold at auction"

TRACTORS/GPS/HARVEST: 2007 JD 8130 MFWD, 2005 JD 8120 MFWD, '81 JD 4640, '80 JD 4440, JD Greed Star Receiver/Display, Duals, 2009 JD 7460 Stripper, 2005 JD 7460 Stripper, 2-BH Module Builders, 2-SS Boll Buggies and more.

EQUIPMENT: Approx. 60+ Pieces of Assorted Farm Equipment and Spray Equipment.

REAL ESTATE: 7,000 sq. ft. Storage Barn in Tahoka located at the corner of Lockwood and Ave C. Will sell at 1:00 at the farm equipment sale site.

CONTACT: Quality Auctioneers (806) 866-4646. Charles Macha, Auctioneer #6911, (806) 893-7151. See details, pictures & terms of real estate auction: www.qualityauctioneers.com.

AUCTION

THURSDAY, FEB. 28...10:00 A.M.

LOCATION: O'Donnell, TX. Northeast side of O'Donnell and US 87 under the Big Satellite Tower.

R&R Farms - OWNER
Roger Doss: (806) 759-7309

TRACTORS/HARVEST: 2000 JD 8310 MFWD, 1995 JD 8100 MFWD, 1981 JD 4440, JD 7400 MFWD, 1988 JD 7455 Stripper, 1991 JD 7445 Stripper, JD 7400 Stripper, JD 283 Stripper, CMC Module Builder, KBH Module Builder, Crustbuster Boll Buggy, 2009 SS L-37 Boll Buggy, Chev. 1500 Silverado Pickup.

EQUIPMENT: Approx. 50 Pieces of Assorted Farm Equipment. PLUS: Spray Equipment, Trailers, Shop and Misc.

CONTACT: Quality Auctioneers (806) 866-4646. Charles Macha, Auctioneer #6911, (806) 893-7151. See details and pictures: www.qualityauctioneers.com.

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