



3-15-1990

Grand Daddy Fish / After-Dinner Affliction

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Recommended Citation

Baker, Aaron A. and North, Margie Snowden (1990) "Grand Daddy Fish / After-Dinner Affliction," *Westview*: Vol. 9 : Iss. 3 , Article 15.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol9/iss3/15>

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GRAND DADDY FISH

A memory I have of being eleven is following the footsteps of Old Les as he carries a mammoth catfish, which bumps against his legs, as he trudges down the railroad tracks on a shortcut for home.

I heard them call Old Les a simple man. He was getting along in years--about 49, and lived with his brother's family after his mother and father died. They were good friends of my parents. We often went fishing together. Old Les had been trying to catch the grand daddy of all the catfish, he said, that summer in the lake above Eagle Creek.

Now he had the stinking old king of a fish, and it weighed him down like a sack of gold or potatoes. It was a king and Old Les the slave. I lagged along away behind that August day, knowing that my friend would get his picture taken with the fish probably in *THE CLINTON DAILY NEWS*, and maybe even *THE SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN*, and some would say a simple fisherman outwitted a lot of wiser anglers.

I was proud of my friend, except this trip meant that summer was over, and school awaited anybody who was eleven "Hey, kid, come on!" Old Les called, "You and me, we did it!" I shouldered my fishing pole and stepped up my pace. It kind of made me feel grown-up and important. 🐾

(AARON BAKER, although he has been a frequent WESTVIEW contributor, ceased writing for a time because of the serious illness and subsequent death of his wife. He is a poet and a retired teacher and newspaper editor. He is a graduate of OU, where he was influenced by the late Dr. E. E. Dale--noted Oklahoma historian and poet--and by Weatherford native Dr. Walter Campbell [Stanley Vestal, English professor who wrote about the Old West]. Aaron has written two books of poetry--MAKE ROOM FOR THE INTRUDER and SOMETHING WILL COME TO YOU--and is currently working on another. Although he is now living in Shreveport, Louisiana, he remembers with much nostalgia his growing up in Southwestern Oklahoma.)

AFTER-DINNER AFFLICTION

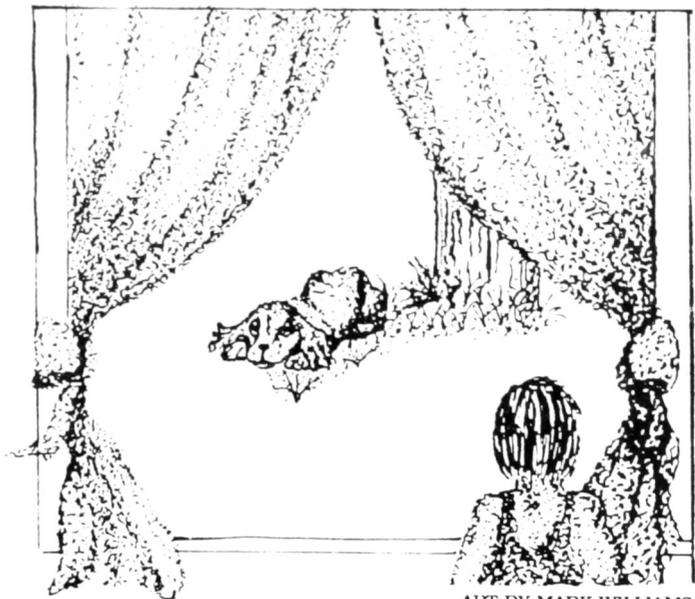
By Margie Snowden North

Ole Rattler was lazy,
as dogs are in the swelter of summer,
and he spent his days stretched comfortably
under the Paradise tree by the house.

Mama, little Ransom said,
how come Ole Rattler lays around so much?
Oh, guess he's got spring fever, son.

Papa in the fields since sun-up
comes into a dinner fit for a king:
beans and cornbread and chow-chow,
a big slice of onion, a quart jar of iced tea.
Stretched out on the floor afterward
without his shirt he goes sound asleep.
Mama keeps the flies shooped off
and listens to Hank Williams
singing blue love-songs on the radio.

Mama, little Ransom asks, pondering,
How come Papa lays down so much?
Does he have spring fever
too? 🐾



ART BY MARK WILLIAMS

(MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH of Erick is a loyal WESTVIEW contributor. Her novel, TO CHASE A DREAM, which deals with the same Western Oklahoma setting as this poem, is available from the author: Route 1, Box 87; Erick, OK 73645.)