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# Memories Of A River

*By Margie Snowden North*

The Caddos have walked here  
on the banks of the river,  
the Northfork of the Red River,  
and sought food —  
turkey and deer and fish,  
wild grapes, sandhill plums —  
and sought peace.

Officials have disputed her position,  
the Northfork of the Red River,  
and she has been a boundary  
for Old Greer County, Texas (1860-1896)  
and since then an integral part of Oklahoma.

Summers found her lazy,  
slowed to a trickle (or less)  
shimmering in the hot sun,  
while only the spring before  
the headrises had come  
and foolhardy boys had ridden  
on six-foot walls of water.

Bottom lands flooded,  
bridges swept away like crumbling toothpicks  
and an empty coffin floated down from  
places unknown.

Bridge-building, year after year.  
Headrises, spring after spring.  
Men and mules and horses  
pulling Model T Fords across swift currents  
(sometimes for months on end)  
until new bridges take the place of old,  
spanning the wide river,  
the Northfork of Red River.

And still years later the headrises come  
and suck at pilings (new, strong,

unmovable, the "unsinkable Tittle Bridge,  
six years in existence)  
and the bridge went once more,  
and two young lives went with it.  
And until time healed that memory,  
the river, the Northfork of Red River,  
was not a fun place to be.

These waters have cooled the feet  
of generations of young from here and from there.  
These banks, always changing  
with the tides and the winds,  
have known camp fires and weiner roasts,  
angel wings in the sand,  
castles that dissolve in the dampness  
and are worn away by the wind,  
just as life is lived and  
disappears bit by bit, day by day.

Ah, the memories of a river,  
the Northfork of Red River,  
memories sad and haunting,  
memories lazy and satisfying,  
fleeting, like sunbeams  
caught for a moment on the water's surface.  
This place has made history  
and is history recorded in sand-choked beds  
and meandering trickles  
or insidious currents and  
recorded in the hearts and minds  
of all who have ever known the river,  
the Northfork of Red River. ■

*MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH lives in the Erick area. A regular contributor, she is WESTVIEW's "nature poet."*

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