

# CEDAR HILLS DAYS....

SAM CAMP



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warm summer nights,  
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I often don't know what's on my mind (facebook) until sometimes when I look at an old photos like these. It's the old house I lived in during 1977, and most of 78 near Cedar Hill, Texas (actually those are Junipers on the hill). The house had no electricity or running water. The retired dentist who owned it said it was not livable but I knew better. My first daughter was born upstairs in that house in January of 78. It was 17 degrees outside and the wood heater was blazing. The stovepipe glowed orange. Our mid-wife drove through the snow late one evening to get there. After we moved out, the house was burnt down to make way for what some call "progress". You could say that I've always burnt my bridges, but usually those bridges were burnt by that thing called progress. I wondered who had lived there before, and when it was built. The windmill used to pump water out of the ground for livestock. The land looked like is was dry farmed and that house sat on an old 110 acre dilapidated farm. There were old rusted farm implements scattered around the sheds. We were the last to live there, an in between time of old family farm and future reservoir.

When I look over at that roomy, rap around porch, I remember sitting out there on warm summer nights, drink in hand, watching those great storms move in with ground shaking thunder amongst a chorus of crickets and cicadas. The house had several lightning rods. When the storms did arrive I would collect rain water from the roof for a bath in the galvanized metal tub. Sometimes they didn't and I would just watch the lightning a hundred miles distant, far enough for a silent light show. I remember it like it was yesterday. By day, there could be grand thunderheads floating on the horizon. There could also be tornado clouds which are really little tornados in the sky. Only about 10% of tornados ever reach the ground.

I spent two hot summers there. One of those a plague of grasshoppers or locust moved through. They would get caught in your flip flops. The large black and yellow garden spiders responded by building webs around the porch. On occasion I would throw a grasshopper into a web. The spider would run over, wrap it up, stash the hopper in the corner of its web and then go about its business of hanging out, coming back later to suck the juices out of its catch. It gave me a feeling of kinship with them.

Along the roadside leading to the house, there were grand displays of wildflowers in Spring, like bluebonnets, brown-eyed susan, blanket flowers to name a few. I loved the open space of the prairie, different grasses drying to various shades of brown and beige waving in the wind in multiple patterns. After the long hot Summer, the first cool air moving down the Great Plains was a welcome arrival. In late Fall a blue northern would arrive, the temperature could drop 50 degrees in an hour. In that country there's nothing to block the Arctic wind but a barbed wire fence.

I came back to see the old house in 1980 before heading west again and the house was nothing but a pile of ashes. When I was young I didn't think too much about looking back from the distant future, I couldn't possibly image that one day I would look back with such fond memories and reverence for that place. After all in my mind then, as much as I enjoyed experiencing the charm of the ruins of that old farm and house, it was just what I thought would be a stepping stone to something better. Time has taught me that is was much more than that.

The old Cedar Hill place is now under Joe Poole Lake. Memories flooded, nothing left but a few photos from my Kodak Instamatic which I recently scanned, a moment in time like the one you have now. Live your life to its fullest because it will be gone before you know it....

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