



Robert T. "Bob" Brown III was born in Sumter, South Carolina in 1940. He fished, sailed, and explored the lakes, rivers, and streams of the state as a boy. Bob graduated from Edmunds High School in Sumter and then

received a BS degree in physical geography from the University of South Carolina. He attended the Naval Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island and was commissioned in 1964. After spending four years at sea traveling the world he left the military and worked at a regional agency in Florida managing their computer technology. Bob is a licensed pilot in single engine aircraft and gliders. He started freelance writing after becoming interested in the Brown family history. The family stories told by family members provide endless subjects for writing projects. Bob says that there is a lifetime of work remaining on this topic alone but his interests include many other topics including fiction. He lives with his wife Barbara in their solar powered home in West Palm Beach, Florida.

The Cove

by
Robert T. Brown III

I stood on the porch of mom and dad's lake home off Patriot Road near Wyboo Creek watching the sky change from the clear blue of an autumn day into the copper sunset so typical of the fall in South Carolina. A chorus of frogs raised their voices as the drone of the jet skis and speedboats faded along the shoreline fingered with docks. The warm day cooled quickly. Watching the night fall I remembered my boyhood days spent at this place over a half century ago. Unlike today when a trip to "The Lake" is a half hour certainty, back then it was an adventure. A trip to the lake involved automobiles that could overheat and tires that could blow out. The road now known as "Patriot Road" was an unpaved, red clay road called "Old River Road" that could be a slippery, careening, thrill ride after a rain. The entrance to "The Cove" property was at the bottom of that hill, a winding sandy road that took us to a place that seemed as far away and remote as today's Amazonian rain forest. In many ways it was as remote. There were no phones or tv and the shoreline was sparsely developed. It was true wilderness.

Mom and dad are Robert T. Brown Jr. and Jeanette K. Brown. My grandfather, Robert T. Brown, known as "Poppoo" in the family, purchased around 20 acres of land upon hearing of the Santee Cooper project. My dad tells the story of his father standing in the woods in the early 1940s with him describing the way that the water would rise once the

dam was constructed and how the shoreline would follow the contours on the Geological Survey map to form what he later named "Tranquility Cove." "The Cove" became our wilderness escape from town life, work, and school.

I recall that in the 1940's while working at McCollum Motors, Daddy came by and asked me to ride to Manning, SC. On the way he told me that he had a chance to buy some land that would be a part of Santee-Cooper Lakes. I really didn't know what he was talking about. I do recall that the road from Manning to Old River Road was a dirt road. He had a map and we walked from Old River Road to a small stream . He stood there and told me that the water would rise when a dam was completed and that it would come right up to the point where we were standing. I believe that he was going to buy 19 acres for \$100.00 per acre. He would split into 10 lots. Two for Home Place and one each for the eight children. That creek is now "Tranquility Cove". He had a plat and I told him I would like to have Lot #16.



Robert T. Brown Jr.

The small stream my grandfather described is now **Tranquility Cove** on contemporary maps. Back in the 1940s a rough winding road was the first thing built into the property. Poppoo did not want a straight road as he knew from experience that a road should follow contours to reduce the grade and reduce erosion. By the time we were boys making our trips to "The Cove" for the summer we knew every twist and turn of the road. We knew that when we entered that winding road that we had left civilization far behind. At first it was used as access for fishing and hunting camping trips by my grandfather, other family, and friends. The stories about those times are always enhanced with each telling. A favorite of my dad's is this one:

A good many men were at the "Cove " for a week end and of course one of them happened to be Mr. Carl Gamble.

It was getting late , almost dark, and Mr. Carl was still on the lake. I asked Dave ,his son, if we should go out hunting for him. He said no "Papa" can take care of hmself. Don't worry.

Well he did come in shortly and I asked "Where have you been". He said you are not going to believe this , but in the mouth of the cove the "Biggest Damn Spider" I ever saw in my life was blocking the mouth of the cove and I had to wait until it left before I could come in.

The Big Spider was Mr. A. K. Bernshouse in a six foot green boat. He had on a big straw hat and approx. 12 cane poles all set around the boat fishing for crappie.

Robert T. Brown Jr.

A well and pump were a necessity. In Poppoo's usual fashion the pump chosen was no ordinary pump. This pump was huge, at least to us boys, and it required a series of short strokes to get it primed. We each thought we had just the right rhythm to get the water going. Then the large handle and levers would lift cold clear water into a reservoir built into the pump. That portion of the pump could hold two or three gallons which could be released by means of a valve to fill a pitcher or wash hands. The water was cold, clear, and sweet. My dad remembered:

The first thing was to have a well and pump installed. No electricity so we had a very large pump with a valve that could be closed and then pump about one or two gallons and it was retained in an enlarged part of the pump and you could slowly open the valve and get enough water to wash your face and hands. Never saw a pump like that before or since. Nothing but the best.

Robert T. Brown Jr.

The comment, "nothing but the best" is an observation my dad makes about his father's approach to any task. If it was going to be done it had to be done right. Poppoo often said "If it is worth doing it is worth doing right." My cousin, Robert, and I traveled to the lake as cooks, dish washers, and support for the men on their fishing expeditions. We did more dish washing and cleaning than cooking. Our pay was getting time on our own to explore the woods and lake. We learned to keep a sharp eye out for snakes, There were Water Moccasins along the shoreline and Copperheads, Rattlesnakes, and Coral Snakes on drier lands. The snakes were fairly numerous at that time. We also learned to deal with much smaller critters, the ever present chiggers or "red bugs" as we called them. Our aunts and mothers often treated our "red bug" bites by painting nail polish on the bites saying it would suffocate the varmints. I don't know if it really did or not but we believed it.



The next essential item to be constructed was an outdoor "privy" or bathroom. My grandfather had the deluxe "two holer" constructed in Sumter and hauled by truck down to "The Cove". My uncles Murr Brown and Tom Brown were conscripted to ride on the trailer steadying the "Taj Mahal" as it had been dubbed as it was transported from Sumter through Manning to "The Cove". The two had to endure endless ribbing and humiliation from the schoolmates after the ride through town. With a well in place and an outdoor bathroom the men's fishing and hunting expeditions enjoyed a new found luxury. My grandfather's brother

Perry would bring two stake trucks to the lake for some of the fishing expeditions. They would be parked back to back about 15 feet apart with a tarp strung between them to create a covered area for cooking, eating, and sleeping. This arrangement served the family and friends well for a number of years but the women considered the conditions too rough and never came to "The Cove" My grandfather still had a plan however and the next stage of the project was put into motion. With a well in place and road access the stage was set for additional improvements. The war was ending and much of the equipment and housing was going on sale as surplus. He found that Fort Jackson was selling eight-man huts that had been used as barracks for soldiers, so he bought two of

them with the plan of replacing the trucks used on the camping trips with two solid structures connected by means of a screened porch. My dad recalls:

After World War II, Daddy saw where they were going to sell surplus eight-man huts at Fort Jackson. He contacted someone listed in the advertisement and as I recall he bought two of them. His idea was to replace the stake body trucks with the two huts. One on each end of a 30 or 40 foot screened in porch. One on the East end to be used as a kitchen and small eating area and the one on the west end to store 12 roll away beds. He had Dantze Mattress Works in Sumter to make real good mattresses to replace the pad type mattresses that came with the roll aways.

Construction began by pouring footing for concrete block pillars. These were about 4 ft tall so we could store fishing canes, tools and kerosene for the lamps and heaters. Still no electricity. Walter LeNoir and I mixed concrete and poured the footing and Mr. A. K. Bernshouse constructed the pillars.

A Mr. McLeod did all of the carpenter work. The huts were delivered and they were in eight sections. The roof was in two pieces, the floor was in two pieces and each of the sides was stacked on top. Sort of a prefab package. The porch was made from new lumber.

Daddy went to Imperial Lumber Co which was owned by a friend (Mr. C. D. Brunk) and sat at the sawmill and picked out the flooring which was rift cut pine. Daddy wanted this because the grain of the wood was vertical and not horizontal. This would preclude any splinters turning up to hurt any children that might be playing on the porch. When it was finished, It was absolutely beautiful for a "Fishing Shack" On the screened porch we had a front door on the lake side and a back door on the parking side. Still used the privy.

Robert T. Brown Jr.



The house was used by friends and family for fishing and hunting trips. My grandfather had several wooden fishing boats built for all to enjoy and they were in use constantly. As boys we were allowed to accompany the men on these trips as long as we functioned as cooks, dishwashers, and cleanup crew. The wide screen porch was used for sleeping at night. Fold up cots were

kept in the "bedroom" on one end. This was before air conditioning so the porch was the preferred sleeping location. At this point the women became involved in the trips. The women being my mom, and my dad's sisters. My aunt, Betty Cain, insisted on the construction of an indoor bathroom so that process was set into motion in the 1960s and finally the "Taj Mahal" was reduced to emergency backup status. The "Taj" was what my cousin, Robert L. Brown, referred to when his girl friend, Cathy Valentine, asked what the lake house was like. His answer was "Two rooms and a path." But, of course, that was before the modern improvements. Cathy is now his wife and knows what "Two rooms and a path" mean.

On warm summer nights from our cots on the porch we would watch the yellow bright opening in the darkness cut by the floodlight over the pump house. Sometimes deer

would dart through the light. Swarms of insects swirled in and out. Large horned owls would silently float in from the darkness to pounce for an evening snack then fly back into the darkness as silently as they had arrived. Frogs and Cicadas enveloped us with a blanket of sound as they droned in the night lulling us to sleep.

My grandfather had five boats built for the lake. All but one were sturdy, heavy duty wooden fishing boats with a bold green stripe along the hull. There was one we called "The Juniper". Perhaps because of the wood used in its construction. It was a small boat with an extremely low freeboard intended for fishing the shallow headwaters of "The Cove." This was the boat of choice for my cousin and I because it was light and highly maneuverable. I remember that with any of the boats one had to be extremely cautious



when first pushing them away from the shore. It was not unusual for water moccasin snakes to be coiled under the bow. Snakes were something that you constantly, almost subconsciously scanned for. One of the greatest seafaring adventures my cousin, Robert L. Brown, and I went on was the time that we paddled all the way across Wyboo Creek to a then deserted beach where we swam and dove for fresh water clams thinking we would find a giant pearl in one of them. Another time we put a small outboard on "The Juniper" and promptly swamped it in the middle of Wyboo Creek. We thought that was the funniest thing that happened that day but we had a hint of fear that we would lose the boat and have to face "Poppoo" to 'fess up to what we had done. Luckily we swam the boat to the shore, bailed it out, and got it back to the mooring spot with no damage. Summers at "The Cove" are wonderful memories for me and my cousins. We learned to live with "red bugs", chiggers, water moccasins, and the hornets and yellow jackets that built nests in the outdoor shower. We swam in the lake thinking it was the best swimming hole in the world despite the mud, algae, and critters living in the lake.

My mom and dad still live on the original lot #16 having moved there after their retirement in 1978 and 1982. It was a move that brought them back to Tranquility Cove and a life with many wonderful friends and neighbors. My wife and I, my son and his wife, and our grand children still love visiting "The Cove" and spending time with mom and dad. The original house burned in a fire when lightning struck the big tree by the pump in the 1970s but the memories remain of the wonderful times we spent at "The Cove". The wooden fishing boats and the small "Juniper" have been replaced by jet skis and fiberglass boats with powerful and reliable engines. Some of the big fiberglass bass boats that patrol the waters of Wyboo Creek cost more than my grandfather paid for all 20 acres of the Tranquility Cove property. The cottages have been replaced with modern homes with all the comforts of the city. But, the area is developing intensely and the very things that mom and dad moved here to escape have followed them. I would be willing to bet that no one has as much fun on those jet skis and modern boats as we did in the old cottage in that wilderness known as "The Cove."