

# Carterville

*Douglas Thayer*

I WANTED TO LIFT THE GLASS-FRAMED LID and hold the big German brown trout. He was smooth, beautiful, all shining gold—darker gold on top and lighter gold underneath. The gold had black, orange, and red spots in perfect symmetrical and proportioned patterns. He was a joy to look at. The white card said: “Caught by Earl Jones on June 15th, Umbrella Hole, Provo River. Weight—6 pounds 3 ounces. Length—22 inches.”

“I’m going to catch a brown bigger than that. I’m going to win the prize.”

“Oh sure,” said Richard Nelson, who stood next to me looking down. “You and what army? You can’t even catch a limit of little browns. Besides it’s already almost July. You only got two months left.”

Richard and I were friends and fished together, but he wasn’t always encouraging, his tone not always kind. I didn’t always fish with him now, for he caught more and bigger trout than I did. I didn’t tell him about the big trout I’d hooked and lost in the Moss Hole. I was beginning to understand that some things I didn’t tell anybody, not even my mother.

We stood in the glaring Utah summer sun outside Carlson’s Sporting Goods on University Avenue looking down into the glass-topped ice chest at the big trout.

---

DOUGLAS THAYER teaches at BYU. His novel, *The Conversion of Jeff Williams* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2003), won the Association for Mormon Letters novel prize. He has a new novel, *Harris*, under consideration by a publisher and is finishing a collection of stories. Earlier publications include two collections of short stories, *Under the Cottonwoods* (Provo, Utah: Frankson Books, 1977) and *Mr. Wahlquist in Yellowstone* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1989), and a novel, *Summer Fire* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1983). Thayer and his wife, Donlu DeWitt Thayer, have six children and four grandsons.

Every year on September 1, the fisherman who had caught the biggest German brown on the Provo River (it had to be the Provo River and it had to be a brown) got to choose a hundred dollars worth of fishing equipment from Carlson's as a prize. The Second World War was over, but equipment was still hard to get. I fished with a metal telescope rod, the two top sections pulling out to make the full rod. I couldn't afford hip boots, but wore old tennis shoes and cut-off Levis.

All of the winning trout were caught on the Provo River in Provo Canyon, but my mother wouldn't let me ride my bike up the canyon. I could only fish the river in Carterville. Richard went with his Uncle Pete to fish Strawberry, Scofield, Deer Creek, and other distant reservoirs, but I didn't have access to these waters. Uncle Pete took Richard fishing, bought him fishing equipment, and taught him how to fish. Nobody ever did those things for me. This persuaded me that life was not always fair and could even prove tragic.

I wanted desperately to catch the biggest trout and win the prize. It was a great passion with me. It was the first time I'd felt a great passion, although at the time I didn't know what passion was or which of the various passions I was capable of. I'd just turned thirteen. I wanted to have my name on the card for all the other fishermen to see, have my picture and an article in the *Herald*, be able to tell the story about catching the trout, and become a Provo hero.

At that early age, fishing was my only passion; I had little time for girls. Yet I knew that girls existed and were different from boys. I knew that older boys thought girls were necessary for some reason. However, about this same time I'd begun to feel my body inside my clothes, which I'd never done before. My mother complained because I kept growing out of my shoes.

"I don't know where you think the money's coming from."

"But I can't help it."

"Boys," she said, "boys." I had three married sisters but no brothers. My mother often told me that when I was born I was a surprise.

In the sixth grade at the Franklin Grade School, we'd had to learn to dance. You had to bow to the girl before you asked her for a dance. We learned the waltz and fox trot; but we were not allowed to hold the girls close, which was something I didn't want to do anyway. But at Dixon Junior High School, where I'd been for one year, you could hold them close at the Friday afternoon dances if you wanted to. When I thought about

school starting in September, it seemed more and more like an interesting and even necessary thing to do.

I locked the bathroom door now when I took my Saturday bath. I didn't need my mother to wash my ears. She didn't say anything. I liked to lie in the water with the wet washcloth over my face and think about things. She didn't have to comb my hair anymore either or ask me if I'd put on clean underwear and socks. These had become quite personal matters.

I didn't tell my mother about my great desire to catch the prize-winning Carlson's Sporting Goods trout or tell her about my emerging interest in girls.

She often put her hand on my forehead.

"You look feverish these days," she said. "Are you sick?"

"No."

I'd been sickly as a child.

I was a religious boy. I went to Sunday School. I was taught to be clean and pure and believe in perfection and the celestial kingdom. I would be a missionary someday. I took piano lessons. When I'd turned twelve, I'd become a Boy Scout and had to live the Scout oath and law, and I'd received the Aaronic Priesthood and was ordained a deacon and passed the sacrament. Although still innocent at that early age, I'd begun to feel burdened. But I knew that Jesus liked fishermen and knew where you could catch the most fish, which helped strengthen my faith.

I had chores and cut two older neighbors' lawns but had no full-time summer job, so I had time to go fishing often, as long as I cut my lawns, did my chores, and practiced the piano first.

The first big fish I'd caught had been a carp in Utah Lake. They were easy to catch on night crawlers, big six-inch-long worms that came out at night. I would spot them with my flashlight and grab them. But it did not please me to catch carp, not even if they weighed twenty pounds. I didn't like the carp's large heavy scales, sickly yellow color, and pig mouths; a carp was not pleasant to hold. I also didn't like the heat, the glaring, unshaded lake sun, the gray sewage-tainted lake water, the smell. Carp were not perfect; I did not offer prayers in their behalf. I had begun to need deep, clean, cool, moving Carterville river water, the shade of tall trees, and solitude. Carterville wasn't a town, just a place along the Provo River bottoms where a lot of farmers named Carter lived.

There were carp in the Provo River, but I'd never heard of one being

caught above the Twelfth North diversion dam. If you caught a carp below the dam, you threw it up on the bank to die as a warning to other fisherman that there were carp lurking about, but I always fished a mile above the dam in Carterville. Richard and I also fished Brown's Creek and Spring Creek, the only other two places we could reach on our bicycles.

I liked Carterville best. The deeper water pushing against my legs and thighs was cool, gentle, pleasant. The wide border of high, green, soft trees shaded me. The sounds of birds and water comforted me. The rhythm of fishing, its single-mindedness, stopped me remembering things my mother wanted me to do or said I should do, and that next year I would be old enough to get a full-time summer job. I swam in the deep pools. I didn't wear swimming trunks. I didn't tell my mother about this fact or that I smoked cedar bark occasionally. I'd begun to have a private life.

My father didn't fish. He worked hard at Dixon Taylor Russell selling furniture. He liked to go to war movies. My mother didn't go with him.

"Your father's a good man," my mother said. "He manages to earn a living, which is more than you can say for some men, and he doesn't spend his time and hard-earned money in pool halls standing there drinking beer all afternoon and telling stories. Such nonsense. Nothing but lies."

My mother was death on pool halls.

Feeling a bite come up through the leader and line into the rod, the pulling connecting me to the unseen trout down deep in the water, was wonderful. Feeling it, wanting to be sure before I jerked and set the hook, I waited for the strong pull, my whole body growing tight, my blood pounding. I waited, wanted to know the trout was swimming deeper with my night crawler-baited hook in his mouth, maybe even had it swallowed. I wanted to be sure. It could be a five-pounder. I knew I would need at least an eight-pounder to win the contest. Last year a six-and-three-quarter-pound trout had won.

"Well, at least you caught one," my mother would say when I came home from a discouraging day on the river. She always tried to encourage me.

"Fishing is hard."

"Yes, but it's the hard things the Lord gives us to do in life that make us strong. We all have life's lessons to learn."

"I guess."

I couldn't explain how I felt. Things inside me were changing. I'd begun to feel a great urgency deep inside of me, a longing I could not name, which made me feel strange, aloof, and unique, as if something important and mysterious was about to happen to me.

"The Good Lord can't abide foolishness," she said. "He expects a boy your age to be responsible. You're a deacon now and a Boy Scout."

"Yes. I know."

The legal limit was eight trout, eight browns because planters didn't count. Planters were small rainbow trout the State Fish and Game planted, which were easy to catch, so a real fisherman couldn't count planters as part of his limit. Although I'd never caught a limit of even small browns, what I really wanted was one brown so large he wouldn't fit in my basket. I would have to carry him, my fingers up through the gills and mouth, as I rode my bike up to Carlson's, men and boys coming out in the street to stop me and ask me where I caught him. I saw myself walking, splendid and triumphant, into Carlson's, Mr. Carlson walking out from behind the counter when he saw me come into the store.

"Well, son," he would say, "looks like you got a whopper. Where'd you get him?" And he would call all the clerks and customers to come and see my trout and hear my story about catching him.

My only real hope of catching the prize-winning trout was the Moss Hole, a hole a mile below the mouth of the canyon in Carterville. It was full of roots and snags. An old dead cottonwood tree lay in the middle of the hole. Because of tree limbs and brush hanging out over the hole, fly-fishermen couldn't fish there. Bait fisherman didn't fish it much either because of the snags and moss. You had to get down on your knees to get under the brush and low, dead limbs.

I always fished this hole for a long time because I believed there had to be a big trout there. Kneeling, I cast again and again, snagged sometimes, took off my clothes to wade in and get the hook loose, but sometimes had to break my leader because the snag was too deep and then tie on another Eagle Claw hook.

One late afternoon the end of June, the hole hidden in shadows, I'd had a bite, felt the tap, tap. Hands sweaty I waited, waited, but not long enough, jerked too fast, felt the trout for just that one second, felt him pull, start to swim away. I knew he was big, could feel that, my heart pounding hard, wanting to holler, but then he was gone. Breathless,

mouth dry, I reeled in. My night crawler was gone. I put on two night crawlers, cast many times, but the big brown did not bite again. Browns were smart; they bit only once. I didn't tell Richard or anybody about hooking the big brown. I didn't want anybody else to catch him.

I began to fish more alone. Richard catching more and bigger trout than I did filled me with jealousy, which I knew was a sin. Trying to stay ahead of him on the river, I fished every hole fast. I believed that the first one to the hole would get the fish. I found this not to be true, but it didn't seem to make any difference to me. I needed more patience, more faith. My mother and Sunday School and priesthood teachers mentioned these virtues.

I prayed that I would catch the big trout. I believed that if I were good, Jesus would help me catch more trout. I offered prayers at night in my dark basement bedroom, a narrow window my only light, but up to that summer they were prayers never answered and so lessons in faith. Fishing, sometimes, momentarily having lost hope, I took off my clothes and waded out into the holes, sank, swam underwater seeking to be *with* the trout, if I couldn't catch them. I didn't think Jesus would care if I didn't wear a suit. None of the other boys swimming in the river wore suits.

"Are you kneeling by your bed to say your prayers every night? Boys get lazy and just lay in bed muttering their prayers. That's a lazy man's way to pray."

"Yes, Mother." I always said yes.

"Good. A boy needs to keep praying on his knees if he wants to stay humble. He needs to ask for faith. This old life takes a lot of faith to get through and make it to the celestial kingdom." The celestial kingdom had degrees, and my mother wanted to get to the highest degree.

I didn't tell my mother that I prayed about fish. My mother was leery of fishermen because so many of them swore, smoked, drank alcoholic beverages, chewed tobacco, couldn't keep a job, and spent most of their time in Hank Smith's Pool Hall telling stories, drinking beer, and shooting pool.

I rode my bike up to Carlson's every day to check the big German browns. The biggest so far was six and three-quarter pounds.

When I hooked a brown, I did not fight him long. Horsing him out, I ran back up the bank. Then, dropping my pole I dived on him, smashed his head on a rock before I took out the hook. I measured him, hefted him to see how heavy, held him in both hands to look at him. Usually, my fish

was a quarter or half a pound, ten to twelve inches long, seldom larger. Fishing, I prayed silently for at least one ten-pound brown in my life, a perfect, splendid fish.

Neighborhood girls sometimes stood watching me as I rode my bike to go fishing, carrying my pole, my basket on the strap over my shoulder, but I didn't stop to talk to them. They just watched. Boys didn't talk to girls about fishing. But I liked the girls to watch me now, as if I were somehow worthy of their momentary attention. When I wasn't going fishing, I stopped to talk to girls, straddled my bike, leaned forward on the handlebars. I liked to look at them. Lying in bed I did think about girls at night sometimes, but I didn't mention them in my prayers as I did fish.

It was of course important to catch trout fairly. The beauty and intelligence of trout required fairness. I believed all good fishermen were fair. I'd heard of some Carterville fishermen dynamiting holes or damming off the water and pouring in gallons of Clorox to smother the fish, so that they could clean out the hole, but I would never do these things.

The Boy Scout oath and law complicated my life and made me more apprehensive about my perfection. Because I was a deacon and passed the sacrament, I must remain clean and pure, which meant I shouldn't drink tea, coffee, or alcoholic beverages, shouldn't smoke tobacco (cedar bark was never mentioned), and shouldn't steal, lie, play strip poker, or swear. And I began to sense there were other sins no one had told me about yet, sins even worse than those I already knew about, that I would have to avoid. I'd heard hints of these sins in Sunday School and priesthood meetings, but I didn't know what they were, and I didn't ask. I understood that some sins involved girls, but you had to be older to be able to commit them.

Kept in a box under my bed and read by flashlight late into the night, my scrounged, out-of-date issues of *Outdoor Life*, *Sports Afield*, and *Field and Stream* became scripture.

"Now don't you spend the whole night down there reading those magazines under the covers with that flashlight," my mother said. "I know what you're doing down there. You need your sleep. You're always tired these days. You're sure you're not sick?"

She'd put her hand on my forehead before I went down to bed.

"I'm sure."

From the magazines I learned of the great skill, deep knowledge, and costly equipment necessary to catch trout and about the splendid

trout-filled water outside of Utah—in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. Utah was essentially a desert state where there wasn't much water but where religion flourished. There were not many articles or stories about fishing for trout with night crawlers but numerous articles about fishing with flies.

I knew that fly-fishing was the most beautiful, the most expert way to fish. Men who fly-fished were devout fishermen. Hidden back in the trees watching them make their lovely casts, the trout rising readily to their flies, I closed my eyes against the perfection and the bounty of their lives.

When I tried to dry-fly fish, my fly wouldn't float, my line sank, and I couldn't cast very far with my metal rod and braided cotton line. You needed a special silk line that you dressed with a special wax so it would float, and an elegant bamboo rod to cast with. I tried fishing at night with big flies because I'd read that the big browns came out at night to feed, but my line kept sinking, dragging my fly down into the dark river water.

Clean and pure before all the valley sewers emptied into it, Utah Lake had once been full of big trout, not carp. The trout came up Provo River to spawn, the trout so thick you could walk across the river on their backs.

"It's true," Richard said. "My Uncle Pete told me. He knows all about everything. He's the best fisherman in the whole world."

I longed for those vanished trout terribly, blamed the pioneers for introducing carp into the lake, and I envied Richard his Uncle Pete.

Summer evening when, triumphant, Richard helped Uncle Pete unload from his car an iced box full of the two- and three-pound Scofield and Strawberry jeweled rainbows and native trout, and hollered for me to come and see, I crept away filled with the sins of envy, hate, and lust, occasionally now whispering "damn" or "hell" to myself, but nothing worse. The older I grew, the more sins there seemed to be and the more complicated life became, which caused worry.

My mother said, "You must pray that they will be more charitable and take you with them in the future."

"Oh, sure," I said.

Yet, kneeling by my bed, my eyes tightly closed, I asked to be able to fish from a boat and catch the big reservoir trout. I made promises of a faultless life if I could do that, but at that age my fantasies and my faith became my main solace, for I remained uninvited. Lying in bed after my prayers, I sensed my long body under the covers. I'd never thought about



my body before when I was in bed. In spite of my mother's complaint about shoes, my feet continued to grow.

It was already late July, so I fished the Moss Hole prayerfully, casting my night crawler again and again, sometimes getting snagged, but waiting for the big trout to bite a second time, knowing he would win the contest.

Sometimes with Richard, but now usually alone, I made my pilgrimages to the sporting goods stores uptown—Sears, Bee's, Guessford's, and Carlson's, but mostly to Carlson's. I stared up at the old photographs of caught trout and the mounted trout on the walls. Carlson's was a tabernacle, a temple. Boys in our neighborhood did not steal from Carlson's. I didn't steal from anybody. I was a serious Boy Scout.

"Son, do you want to see one of these automatics?" Mr. Carlson would say, taking the silver reel out from the glass case and handing it to me. He was a kind man. I knew everything I would buy with my hundred-dollar prize. Searching the racks, shelves, and glass-enclosed cases, I had the prices memorized.

On hot summer days, Richard and I sometimes stood at the open doors of Hank Smith's Pool Hall to look in at all the men drinking beer, playing pool, and smoking. The air coming out was cool. It was a very interesting place, with wonderful pungent smells and the click of billiard balls, yet I knew that the wide doorway was the entry to sin.

On the wall over the bar was a big calendar with a picture of a beautiful woman fishing without any clothes on. The woman held a fly rod in one hand and a brown bottle of Fisher beer in the other. A big trout jumped at the end of her line. All she had on was a fishing basket held with a wide brown leather carrying strap across her chest. She didn't wear any other equipment. Looking back over her shoulder, she smiled, her smile making me nervous. I didn't know what I would say if I met a woman like her on the river in Carterville.

The barkeeper, who always seemed to be wiping off the bar with his white cloth, sometimes waved at us. He was friendly. I didn't tell my mother.

One evening just at dark, I saw the great trout down deep. He was big, heavy, a long glint of gold, and, I knew, the biggest brown in all of Carterville. It thrilled me to catch that splendid glimpse of gold, my heart beating hard in my chest, my blood pumping in my veins. I knew I had a chance to catch him, to win the prize. The biggest fish so far that summer at Carlson's was seven pounds.

I hooked the big trout in the Moss Hole in late July, but he broke my leader. It was a sad thing to have a bite, feel the pulling coming up through the rod and line into your whole body. You jerked, missed, reeled in slowly, and found your night crawler half-bitten off or gone. It was even sadder to have a big fish break your leader. I saw the flash of the big golden brown again, saw how big he was, my body aching with desire. After that I started fishing with fifteen-pound-test leader. At night in my basement room, falling asleep in my narrow bed, I dreamed I caught the big trout, held him tight in my hands so that he didn't get away.

I didn't tell my mother, or anybody, about losing the big trout. She noticed that I didn't spend as much time with Richard as I used to. He was my only real friend.

"Have you boys had a falling out?"

"No."

"Well, remember that we must all have charity for each other. We all have our trials." She felt my forehead.

I said I'd remember, but I couldn't think of any trials Richard had to suffer through. He had Uncle Pete.

Seeing me on my bicycle, carrying my collapsed telescope rod, my basket hanging from the shoulder strap, men out watering their lawns in the early evening would sometimes wave me down to ask about my success. It was as if they needed to know and had a right to ask.

"You didn't catch any?"

"I had two on."

"You had two on?"

Shaking their heads, they turned away, offering me neither comfort nor instruction.

I knew from the outdoor magazine articles that I had to fish the right place, have the right equipment, and the right skill, even fish at the right time of day and phase of the moon—all in the required combination, perfection, and harmony. I understood, too, how important luck was. Their wicker baskets full of large browns, smiling, other fishermen asked me all the time if I'd had any luck.

"No," I said, "not much."

I'd never thought about the importance of luck before. I'd depended on the blessings and rewards that came from being righteous. I didn't quite know what luck was, except it wasn't something religious; if you had luck you caught fish easily and often. Luck seemed like an impor-

tant thing to have. I knew I wasn't particularly lucky. I wanted to have luck. I knew that my father didn't have much luck. My mother told me that.

"Your poor father," my mother said. "He tries so hard. He's a good man but not a lucky one."

If there wasn't a war movie playing up town, after supper my father sat looking through his old *Life* magazines at the pictures from the Second World War. He'd wanted to be a fighter pilot.

Fishing Carterville, I saw the heads and tails of big browns sticking out of other fishermen's baskets. Baskets came in several sizes. I knew that the fishermen who wore the biggest baskets had luck all the time, their baskets always dirty, bloody, and worn. My basket was small and clean.

Sometimes at night, almost feverish, not wanting to go in to bed in my deep, dark room, and not knowing why, I stayed out late. Dressed only in cutoffs and low-cut tennis shoes without socks, my T-shirt wadded in my pocket, I rode my bike under the dark summer trees to town. The sidewalks nearly empty, driven by some strange desire to know myself, I rode past the dark store windows to see my reflection flash by. It was as if I was in a movie. I found now that I often stood before mirrors studying my own face.

On my bicycle in the dark Provo streets, I saw older boys standing talking to girls. Sometimes they sat in cars with their arms around the girls. In the locker room and showers at school, some of the older boys talked disrespectfully about girls. Thinking this wrong, I didn't listen, yet I felt there were things about girls I needed badly to know.

It was already the middle of August. I walked and waded from hole to hole, my cutoffs wet to the crotch, to let my night crawler drift down through the deep water for browns. I fished only with night crawlers because the big brown in the Moss Hole had bitten on one twice. I had faith in night crawlers.

Always I longed to feel the pull of a bite, have that pleasure. I longed to set the hook, hold against the pulling, the resistance, the feeling from the rod coming up into my whole body. Hoping I'd hooked into at least a five-pounder, I leaned forward to see the trout come up out of the depths, see that first flash of gold, but was always disappointed.

However, I found some comfort in thinking about the Friday afternoon school dances that would start again that fall, the whole end of the

gym filled with standing girls waiting to be chosen, as if holding out some splendid promise of a mysterious fulfillment.

If I fished late and stayed to swim in one of the big holes, I watched if a fisherman came down to cast big flies for the night-feeding browns. These fishermen had delicate split bamboo cane poles, waxed silk lines, automatic reels, and the largest wicker fishing baskets. These they unstrapped and set down.

Treading water, I watched in the white moonlight the large hooked and fighting trout flashing gold as they leaped. And I got out of the river, and, not stopping to dress, walked barefoot over the smooth, white stones to see the trout. Kneeling before the basket, full of desire and envy, my thin, wet, tanned body golden under the moon, I asked permission to touch and hold the lovely long trout.

"They're beautiful," I said.

I fished always alone now. Richard's catching more fish than I did saddened my day, so I understood the folly of competition if you seldom won. I could deal somehow with my own failure but not with his success. Except for ten-inch planters, I still hadn't caught a limit.

Thirteen and sensing the waning hope for my personal perfection, I still wanted to be such an expert fly-fisherman that I got a strike on every cast, caught only two-pounders and up, the tails sticking out of my basket. When other fishermen passed me, I didn't want them even to have to ask about luck, their eyes full of envy and respect.

"Hell, kid, it looks like you really knocked them. What you usin', dynamite?"

As the summer passed, girls became increasingly more interesting; at least I watched them more, saw they had bodies, and I listened to their musical voices when I passed them on the sidewalk or saw them in church. Girls still weren't as important as trout yet. I didn't yearn after them.

"I don't want to go to the celestial kingdom if you can't fish." My despair growing, I said this to my mother in late August.

"Don't be silly," she said. "Whoever heard of not wanting to go to the celestial kingdom?"

"Well, I don't."

"Well, I certainly do, and so does your father, I hope, although you never know with that man and his war movies. Such nonsense."

I'd begun to see girls in my dreams, but they were always distant and shadowy. I didn't recognize any of them. When I went through the Sears

and Montgomery Ward catalogues to yearn over the fishing equipment, I saw the women's sections. The pictures of girls standing in their white petticoats and underwear surprised me. They all seemed to be smiling at me, as if they knew something I didn't know yet.

I fished the Moss Hole one last time the last week in August, the Friday before school started. The contest was over on Monday, Labor Day. The biggest fish was still seven pounds. I was alone, no other fisherman on that part of the river. It was evening. On my knees under the low limbs, I started at the top of the hole, casting and casting, the evening darkness growing, hoping for a bite, uttering silent prayers, willing the big trout to bite once more.

The third time down through the hole I felt a sudden heavy strike that almost jerked the rod out of my hand. Setting the hook hard, heart pounding, I knew it was him, knew it had to be him. Hooked, the big trout went deep, bending my rod, taking my line. Desperate to keep him out of the snags, I tried to keep a short line, turn him back to the bottom end of the hole. The big brown had incredible strength; I knew he must be at least eight or ten pounds, maybe bigger. So excited I thought I would wet my pants, I fought the big trout, held my rod up, depending on my fifteen-pound test leader, knew it would hold him if the hook didn't pull loose. I fought him a long time. It grew darker. I saw him flash gold down deep. I yelled, knew I was winning, edging him to the shallow end where I could slip him out on the grass. The trout was so big he caused waves. Long and gold, he was the biggest German brown trout I'd ever seen in my whole life. Running back, I pulled him until his back was out of the water, and then I fell on him, held him in both arms, dragged and wrestled the trout up onto the grass away from the water where it was safe, knew that the hundred dollars worth of new fishing equipment was mine, that I had won, because my trout was eight or nine pounds at least.

Kneeling over him, full of joy, almost crying, I moved my hands to look down at my big prize-winning brown. It was only then that I saw dimly in the half-light the rows of large scales, the big unblinking eyes, the pig mouth, the sickly yellowness that was not gold, all of my joy turning suddenly to unyielding sorrow.

I didn't kill the big carp, as I should have, leaving him to rot on the bank as a warning to other fishermen about the folly of hope and desire. I took the hook out of his mouth and eased him back into the Moss Hole because that seemed the way things must be, even in Carterville. I picked

up my rod and reeled in the line. I stood for a moment looking at the hole and then turned and walked in under the dark trees.

Riding my bike home, the street lights on the corners making pools of light, I understood that my long summer days of fishing Carterville were ended. The next summer, fourteen, I would have to give up cutting my few lawns and get a full-time job to save money to pay for my clothes, education, my mission for the Church, and other things my mother said lay ahead, and for girls. Going with girls would cost money for malts, movie and dance tickets, candy, and Christmas and birthday presents. Yet it had begun to seem worth the expense. At the Friday afternoon dances, being able to hold girls close as long as the music lasted seemed necessary and appropriate. I hoped that girls might be some solace to me in the life that lay ahead, for in my new wisdom I knew that the religious life my mother espoused, fraught with difficulty, disappointment, and failure as it was, would require great faith.