

# FROM WHERE I SIT

By A. E. CAHLAN

"The reason most people grow old before their time is because they forget how to play—think it undignified, or that they're too grown up for 'kid stuff,' or that many of the things they used to enjoy no longer hold any thrill. Take our friend Joe Brown for instance—he spends most of his time in the dingy office of his store, coming down early in the morning, working late at night. He's been doing it all his life and doesn't know anything else.

"He has forgotten there is such a thing as play, has even forgotten how to smile, and wouldn't know how to begin to enjoy himself again. He's getting old and one of these days he'll die, right there in his office. All the hard work he's done—all the money he's made, won't do him a bit of good after he's gone. He can't take it with him. He'd have lived a lot longer, and gotten a lot more out of life if he had taken time off once in a while to PLAY."

It was the Old Philosopher talking—the gray haired young fellow who just won't grow old—and being right down ye scribe's alley, I opened both ears wide and listened for more. The best part of the whole dissertation, however, was the last paragraph which sounded something like this: "I know the swellest place in the world to play, and I'm going tomorrow, how about coming along?"

And so it happened that your observer was at the boat-landing on Boulder lake yesterday morning at ten o'clock for his FIRST adventure on the great reservoir. Yes, I'm a bit ashamed to admit waiting this long to join the ranks of the desert sailors, but you see I like my comfort and it's been a bit too warm these past months. Yesterday was a swell occasion for the lake's debut, so far as I was concerned, and we went places in a big way.

We weren't just ordinary voyagers—we were explorers, bent on discovering new and unclaimed territory. He was Columbus, I was Magellan. We were kids again, embarked on a great adventure. Our equipment consisted solely of a brand new Gar Wood speed boat, capable of skimming along atop the water at 35 per—a bit faster than the boats piloted by the characters we had chosen, but then that's no handicap for an active imagination.

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First off, of course, we had to be orthodox and go DOWN the canyon to thrill again to the giant concrete structure that's responsible for all this. That's a never-ending source of inspiration—and there's always something new. This time, since we were harking back to kid days, the biggest thrill was riding the waves left by all the boats that had been there during the previous few hours. (It seems the waves are so cooped up down there in the canyon they have to wear themselves out instead of spreading out on shore.) Anyway, it was more fun than the best roller coaster or chute the chutes ever invented, and it didn't matter much that you gathered in a good share of the lake's water in the process. The shadows down under the dam, and the various colorings of the water there are beautiful. The silence and the vastness of it all grips you for an instant and fills you with a wholesome reverence that is most refreshing.

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The urge of the explorer took possession of our fancy in short order, however, and we started for the upper reaches of the lake where few men have ever trod, and where new and intriguing conti-

nents remain to be explored. Vegas wash offers the first opportunity for romancing. Once just a debris-filled, gravelly old outlet for cloudburst waters from all the country around, it is NOW a pretty little bay, with several islands that were once just drab looking hills, poking their heads out of the water.

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This seems to be a favorite spot for ducks and geese and you run upon five groups that remain floating around on the smooth water until the last possible instant before taking off in self-protection. You can almost taste a good duck dinner, cooked out there on the lake-shore, deliciously flavored with desert air and sagebrush.

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But there are other bays and coves that need attention, and you take off once more up the shore-line. Imagination never told you when you used to tramp over the ravines, gulches and canyons of this southern Nevada desert, just what cute, little, private bays might be formed, if water ever started meandering in and out, following every curve, and investigating every recess within its reach. But they're there, thousands of them. Every one is different. Some are highly colored in reds, browns, and greens. Others are merely of the desert. Some are just sharp curves in the shore-line, others wind in and out until you are completely hidden from the inquisitive eyes of the world. Some have little islands in the middle—some are deep and some shallow. You try to visualize what they looked like without the water, and find it difficult, for now they are SO beautiful, and before SO drab.

You resolve that they all should have names and hope that when they do, it will not be a series of politicians who will be honored, but rather that the names will be chosen to fit BOULDER dam.

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You get a big thrill when one bay turns out to be the old road to Fort Collville where you used to pick your tortuous way for Sunday picnics over a trail that cloudbursts had almost completely closed. For you realize that down under perhaps a hundred feet of water, is the old fort near which you had stood on many and many an occasion.

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When Boulder canyon looms ahead, you attempt to discover some familiar marking that might remind you of picnics spent THERE in the days when THAT was the dam site. But you realize that all those are now well under water, and that the dangerous old trail carved out of the rock wall of the canyon is no longer visible. The roadway, though, still leads to the water's edge, although the place it suddenly widened out after miles in a winding canyon, is now another of the lake's thousand and one little bays.

From Boulder canyon, the lake widens to take on huge proportions. No longer confined between the walls of the canyon, it becomes a vast body of water. Lacking time to continue, you resolve to return again, and explore this lake, and probe the Virgin river and its many historic spots, as well as to move clear to the end of the still water and watch the muddy Colorado pouring in.

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On the way back, there's a particularly inviting bay that has all the alluring qualities of the old swimming hole. It doesn't take long to get rid of superfluous clothing and dive in as in other days. It's been twenty-five years, you reflect, since you enjoyed swimming wherever a cool stream of water offered an invitation, and relied on underwear and socks to serve as towels. Driftwood furnishes a convenient water horse to take care of the deep water, and for two hours, you're a kid again, remembering and executing all the joys of those carefree days, when summer and freedom were the year's most looked-forward-to season.

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The water is warm, the afternoon the laziest you've spent in years. It's good to be a kid again—to whoop and holler and splash in the old swimming hole—to explore new country, and plant the flag of conquest on new islands. To play at this intricate game of life instead of taking it too seriously. To be foolish and smile and laugh aloud at the kid stuff you're enjoying.

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It takes years off your life, and the mystery of how the Old Philosopher stays SO young, is a mystery no longer. He's been doing this all his life, while you—yes, although an ardent advocate yourself, suddenly discover that you had just about forgotten how to play. You try to recall how long since you've laughed right out loud, and how often. Whether the old smile that used to be your pride is still there. You resolve to dip back into the past and pull forth the urge and joy of playing again, and all because the Old Philosopher showed you the way.

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Boulder lake will mean that to thousands. A boat and a few hours time is all that's needed. And perhaps a kind friend will furnish the boat, even as mine did. To be a kid again for a day—you can do it down there, and WHAT dividends it pays in soul comfort.