

## OUTDOORS

# Local man puts the Ozarks lifestyle into words

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**BY BRENT FRAZEE**  
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Rolland Love has no trouble remembering the first time he realized how good life was growing up in the Ozarks.

“This guy from the city came by one day, very nicely dressed and driving a fancy car,” recalled Love, 73, who now lives in Overland Park. “He was talking to us about how bad things were during the Depression. He was telling us about the bread lines and the soup lines and how people were going hungry.

“After he left, my dad turned to my mom and said, ‘Did you understand any of that?’ “

Fact is, the Love family was rich and didn’t even know it.

“We were completely self-sufficient,” Love said. “We hunted for quail; there were lots of quail and rabbits back in those days. We’d fish all the time and bring back what we caught. And we’d raise vegetables out in the garden.

“We also had cattle and hogs. so we didn’t lack for anything. We just didn’t need much money.”

Ah, life in the Ozarks. For Love, it was a great lifestyle, one that he recalls fondly now that he lives in the big city. In fact, those memories have led to an avocation of sorts for Love since he retired.

He has put the colorful lifestyle of the Ozarks into words in a series of books, short stories and blogs. Not every word of it is true, he’ll readily admit. He combines the experiences

of his past with some, shall we say, creative imagination, to write tales about adventures in the Ozarks.

In his book “The Blue Hole,” for example, he writes a Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer-type tale about two brothers’ terrifying camping trip in the Ozarks. It is a murder mystery based on a tale Love’s grandfather once told him. Young adults were the target audience, but Love said it has proved popular with all ages.

Many of the experiences and the setting were drawn from his life as a youngster growing up in the Ozarks.

He lived in the country near Summersville, Mo., about 7 miles from the Jacks Fork River and an equal distance from the Current River.

It was an outdoors lifestyle, he said. He was at home with fishing and hunting as many youngsters are with computers and video games today.

“I had an old cane pole, and I would fish almost every day in a pond close to our home,” he said. “I would bring home the fish I’d catch, and my mom would fix them up for dinner.

“But what I remember the most is when my dad would load all of us up, dogs included, and we’d drive down to the Jacks Fork. I remember thinking that it was the most beautiful place in the world.

“There were caves, springs and bluffs to explore and all kinds of fish to catch. We’d camp out there, and sometimes we’d just stay for a few days.”

Love became so proficient at fishing the stream that he became a guide at the age of 12 working out of his uncle’s resort on the river. He took customers down river in a heavy oak johnboat. His pay for the day? Five dollars.

“The first customers I took out were from St. Louis,” he said. “We caught a lot of smallmouths that day. But what I remember most is that we came across this dead cow with buzzards all over it.

“When we came up on them, they flew over us and threw up all over the fishermen I was guiding.”

Love laughs about that day and many others he experienced growing up. Life in the Ozarks was a world unto itself, complete with its characters, closeness to nature and its simple pleasures.

In one of his stories, Love wrote, “I spent my spare time enjoying the slow pace of each day. Some of my favorite memories are of long hikes and riding horses on back roads, floating spring-fed rivers in a johnboat we made by hand out of oak timber cut from a nearby ridge, lying on a bed of pine needles in the woods, watching a red-tail hawk soar high above like a kite without a string, exploring caves, and diving off limestone bluffs into cool deep pools of water.

“In town, we’d have fish fries where everybody would turn out and where there would be a fiddler playing tunes so good that a coon hound would howl along.”

And then there were characters such as Art, a local who made 180-proof corn whiskey up on Moonshine Ridge.

“Art sold the so-called white lightning for two bucks a gallon,” Love wrote. “He was always in trouble with the taxman and got arrested so many times he lost count.”

Finally, Love wrote, Art was hired by the authorities to brew “denatured” whiskey at a tourist exhibit in one of the parks. It was one of those if-you-can’t-beat-’em, join-’em type of things.

Love eventually left the Ozarks when he decided he wanted to get a “real job.” He went to Springfield and got into respiratory care.

But he still has regrets about leaving mountain country.

“In retrospect, I should have started a float service down there on the Jacks Fork,” he said. “I miss that lifestyle. But I still get back and float the Jacks Fork. And it still has some big smallmouths in it.

“It brings back a lot of memories when I’m down there.”

## **More information**

For information about Rolland Love’s stories and to buy his books, go to the website [ozarkstories.com](http://ozarkstories.com).

In addition to his stories about Ozark Mountain country, Love also co-founded the website [imastory.com](http://imastory.com), which shows seniors how to write their life stories.

**To reach Brent Frazee, the Star’s Outdoors editor, call 816-234-4319 or send email to: [frazee@kcstar.com](mailto:frazee@kcstar.com).**



# **Blue Hole**

**Rolland Love**