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COLUMNS

Campbell Vaughn: Recent death of a childhood friend brings back memories of playing in creeks

Campbell Vaughn Columnist

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There was one thing that I was always envious of as a child.

Let me preface this with my childhood was blessed beyond measure with so much that I could never thank all those who made my life so lucky. I had parents, friends, a great home and opportunities available to me that a lot of people might have never had.

As wonderful as the house was that I lived in, my envy stemmed from any of my friends' houses that had a creek in their backyard. It was the absolute coolest thing ever to go play in a creek.

I caught my first catfish behind Nesbit family's house, which bordered Rae's Creek. It was not a big fish, but for someone who thought fishing was the most fun sport ever, it was an absolute thrill. The Nesbit's house along Rae's was also the location for our Cub Scout meetings in which Mrs. Nesbit was our scout mom. She often incorporated fun stuff involving the creek and scouting into our weekly gatherings.

Chip Melton had a house on Rae's Creek where we once spent two days finding worms and catching about 50 little bream, hornyheads and an occasional little bass while building a small pond on the sandy beaches of the creek to corral the fish. I might still be there if my mom had not finally made me leave so I could make it in time for Sunday school. Chip and I ended up breaking the dam and letting the fish back into the main channel when mom said I had had enough fun.

This week I had some sad news about one of my oldest friends who passed away after battling demons for a long time. His name was William Maguire, and we had been friends since we were 3 or 4 years old.

William grew up off Walton Way in a neat house back in the woods and we used to have a blast when I would visit. And guess what we did? We played in the creek behind his house.

We would build dams, turn over rocks looking for crawdads and stay soaking wet for hours. Once when we were about 9 years old, we followed the creek upstream to a big fence that hid what seemed at the time like a giant backyard filled with a variety of ponds. Never one for rule following, William and I crawled under the fence and came into a back yard that was like a magical oasis. The place had a giant goldfish pond that reminded me of a real-sized cement fishing pond. Of course, we took this opportunity to swim in the unsuspecting homeowner's backyard paradise. From what I remembered, we had to leave in a hurry because someone was not happy about us frolicking in their koi pond, but it was one of the greatest days of my early childhood.

I went on many trips with the Maguires during my childhood and William and I would get to wherever we were staying, and we immediately went looking for a fishing hole or creek to dirty our clothes.

My neighborhood pool borders Rae's Creek and a lot of times there will be more kids fishing or playing in the creek than swimming in the pool.

I am glad that new generations are enjoying one of my favorite past times as a kid while learning that nature is cooler than video games. If they are having half as much fun as I did in that same creek 40 years ago, they are lucky kids.

Campbell Vaughn: Tips to take care of a holiday cactus

There are members of Mrs. Nesbit's Cub Scout Troup that are still my friends 40 plus years after we aged out of scouting – Howard, William, Chip, Tommy, Cord, Jeff, Maxwell, two Scotts, and I am sure I am missing others.

A huge part of my life was based around these guys and William was a big part of that. I had not seen William in a few years, but something always kept me looking for him because I felt like we both needed to hug. To this day I cannot drive by those former houses without thinking about all the fun we used to have as kids playing, learning, and getting filthy in some muddy ditch with a trickle of water.

I am sad that I can't give one of my oldest friends the hug I know we both needed. It is hard to lose a lifelong friend like William, but I am glad to know that all those memories of great times from so many years ago will never leave. I do know that if heaven is as awesome as they

say it is, I am looking forward to spending some time with my Cub Scout buddies checking under rocks for crawdads again one day. Maybe William and I can sneak up the creek to see where it leads us.