

# Natural Tarzans...Make That Au Naturel

Imaginary “ape-men” faced exposure to safari of females.

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IN THE SUMMER of 1942, when I was 11 years old, I spent several weeks visiting my grandparents Max and Nellie Woodruff on Eaton Street in Springfield, New York.

I had three friends my age, all named Donald, in Springfield—Donny Zimmer, Donny Sergeant and Donny Baker. That summer, the four of us explored the length of Spring Brook where it meandered out into the country north and slightly east of town.

Our favorite spot was where an ancient willow tree stood all alone on the very edge of the creek’s west bank. It was a mighty tree, 4 feet or more in diameter at its base, with an assortment of thick limbs sticking out horizontally in all directions. It was a tree made for boys and for climbing.

One of our biggest heroes at the time was Tarzan, who was played in the movies by Johnny Weissmuller. Naturally, we decided to use the magnificent willow tree to emulate our hero. With no vines, we sought an alternative.

We ended up “borrowing” about 50 feet of thick rope from a building at the local canning company. They had so many coils, we figured that no one would miss a few feet of rope.

We cut the top into two pieces. One was tied to a big limb extending over the water so we could swing out and drop into the creek. The other went on a higher branch for swinging back and forth, Tarzan-style, between two big limbs.

Concluding that Tarzan really didn't wear clothes in the jungle, we took ours off. Then, hollering and yelling in our best imitations of Tarzan, we climbed and swung and splashed about in the creek. The nearest house was almost a mile away, so we did our thing with glorious naked abandon.

One day, while swinging about, we heard the sound of young female voices. A quick glance downstream revealed some vague movement in the brush lining the creek bank 50 or 60 yards away.

Our clothes were stashed on a big limb well up in the tree and, at that moment, were inaccessible.

Instinctively, with one common thought, we splashed through the water toward a muddy mess on the east bank. Cows and horses from the local farm created the mire when they came to the creek daily for a drink.

We threw ourselves onto our backs and wiggled as deep into the mud as we could, then hastily used our hands and arms to pile on more mud and to coat our exposed faces liberally.

We lay there and watched apprehensively as a troop of silly, giggling Girl Scouts and their leader walked along the opposite bank. Fortunately, they were too interested in their conversations for anyone to notice the four sets of eyeballs in the mud.

After the troop was well past our hiding place, we eased ourselves out of the mud and spent the next half hour scrubbing the muck off of us and washing it out of our hair and ears.

The girls never knew how close they had come to seeing more nature than they had expected on their walk in the country.