

# Jeremiah's Run

by Gareth Evans

**M**y son asked me again the other day to tell him more of the woodsy days in Maryland and Virginia when we used to light out fishing, shooting or just loafing so as to get away from Washington DC and my mother's cocktail parties and having to wear socks and sit up straight and all.

On summer evenings the wood thrushes would scatter round their beautiful bell notes in the darkening forests along Jeremiah's Run, that most beautiful and trouty of streams. Afterwards we'd sit on the back stoop of the house, smoke corncob pipes and watch the raccoons, possums etc. feed on the scraps we'd put out for them.

For some the father's nearly always there. Mine was from a long line of professional soldiers. These days I recollect him most vividly when we make fires in camp whilst fishing or shooting. The Old Man used to be there with his face lit up cherry-red on the one side and shadowed black on the other. There was that slight pleasant smell of him too, of bourbon and Cuban cigars and trout and fire.

It's a fine place the Maryland, Virginia area of the South. In addition to trout (brook trout mainly, and bass and bluegill, there are dove, quail (Virginia partridge), ruffed grouse, and more wild turkey and white-tail deer than in the days of the first settlers in Elizabethan times. Shakespeare's *Tempest* was written about a voyage to Virginia. And there are black bear. A pretty woman who still lives nearby was chased out of her house by one which then dismantled her kitchen. Cotton-tail rabbit and gray and fox squirrel are high up on the list too, and in season, are made into delicious 'Brunswick stew.' My Yankee friends, who often don't know what's good, still find this idea hard to take. 'Brunswick stew' in winter (ingredients obtained with a .22 and squirrel dog), and Brook trout in summer (6' cane rod, long leaders and small dry flies), trout cooked right on the banks of the stream, both these are utterly unbeatable.

And now following small streams up in the Drakenberg with a 6' cane rod, long leaders and small dry flies, I often think back on those Southern woodsy days.

Those last summers and early autumns at home were a fine time with the songs of cardinals, mockers and tohees and the self same sound of the stream. It's amazing how time has swallowed things up at home - the parents, the house at Manning Place and so many friends too. The older brother had sense enough to finally get out of Wall Street etc. and now lives at the house in Virginia, so at least that's still intact. I expect he reflects a good deal these days. It's a good place to reflect, there in the Warren County above the Shenandoah River in the lovely rolling wooded Blue Ridge Mountains.