Preface

When Mary Rubio asked me if she might publish *Leonard Broadus,* I reread it after an interval of over forty years. My memories of both the story and the background that gave rise to it are as clear as if I were again nine years old.

So much of the story is woven around events in my own life. The raft is, perhaps, central in my memories and what a fine raft it was! Three large logs lying longitudinally with shorter, thicker logs lying transversely, one at each end, supported a plank deck on which there was a wooden box to serve as a seat and storage locker. When I stood upon it and poled up and down the creek with my dog, Captain, running and barking along the bank, I imagined that I was exploring the upper reaches of the Nile or Amazon and overcoming the most dreadful dangers.

My father knew how a boy's mind worked and he would fuel my imagination with stories of Chinese pirates and savage jungle tribes at the table and at bedtime. He also warned me of the dangers of the raft when the creek was in flood, as happened each spring. Like most boys, I did not take his warnings seriously and when attempting to secure the raft against the flood current, I was almost carried away with it. The raft was never seen again but a story was born.

The father I remember was not the stern, austere man who has been described in much that has been written about him. My father built rafts, doghouses, kites and knight's armour and told me stories to go with them. He built me a small shed near the garage and understood at once when I referred to it as a crusader's castle and Edison's laboratory on the same day. It was my sanctuary and he understood that too, and a boy's need for such a place. Now it shelters my own son from the adult world.

My father's imagination was a match for any boy's and every bit as real. My memories of him are full of these things. In my imagination, as Leonard Broadus, I wish he had been on the raft with me. He would have made it much more fun and even more exciting.

Leonard Grove
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