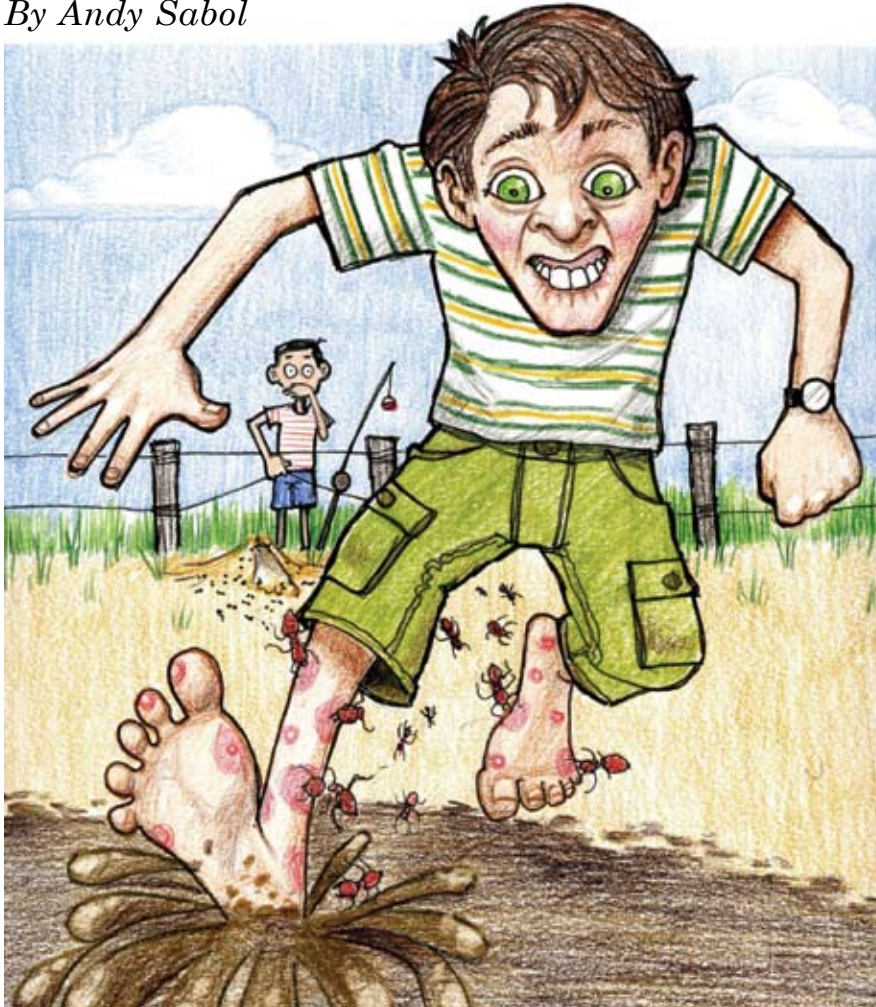




## Fishin' Follies

# Fire ant fling

By Andy Sabol



JOHN PAPERSONA

“All we have to do is climb this one fence (barbed wire), put in our tubes and start pulling in the bass!”

Bill, the part-time dentist, full-time fisherman, was about to cause me pain again. I just didn't know exactly when or how.

There were no signs on the fence, but I still felt funny about being on someone else's land without permission. But then again, there were no houses for miles, in fact, we hadn't even seen any cattle... and that lake looked soooooo bassy!

So it was over the fence with the tubes, over the fence with the rods and small tackle kits. Bill spread the wires, and I crawled through.

Wearing only shorts and tennis shoes, I was a prime target. Hidden in the weeds just inside the fence was one huge, fully-occupied hill of fire ants and I put both feet into their grand ballroom before I realized it.

If ants have anything like trumpets, they were sounded because in the dawn's early light they amassed a charge

that would have gained the admiration of the Light Brigade.

Each ant, in its own way, set to chompin' and stingin' and even kickin', I guess. The quickest relief was the mud at the edge of the lake some 75 to 100 yards away. Bruce Jenner, eat your heart out! With a combination of 100-yard-dash, high and low hurdles and a running broad jump, I made it in an unofficial time of 3.917 seconds.

Well, that mud took care of the ants... sort of. But oh, the pain and flame! The person who named them fire ants knew of what he spoke.

From my insteps to halfway up my shinbones the welts started to erupt. Bill took one look, gave a sigh of dejection and mumbled something like, “I think we should get you to a doctor.”

I seconded the motion by starting to hobble back toward the car.

Just before I reached the fence, Bill hollered, “Watch out! You're going to get into them again. Come on down this way.”

We moved about 50 feet down the fence line and I held the wires for Bill. As he crawled through, he lost his balance for a second and put his left hand down to catch himself. Right you are... his arm went up to the elbow through the fire ant Holiday Inn.

While 30 years have passed, every time I shower, those scars on my legs remind me of Bill beating my just-established record back to the mud at the lake. I bet he remembers as well. **FW**