

Going Shrimping

by Roland Foster

[This was a writing class assignment -- tell a story in one long sentence.]

When we could, that summer that I was seventeen, my best friend Dave and I would get off work early on a Friday night, getting Herb to close up the store for us, and we'd borrow Dave's uncle's Coleman lantern and pile into my old blue 1950 Chevy surveyor's model truck with the rotted-out floorboards and the cool radio I had taken out of a '52 Pontiac at the junkyard and paid ten dollars for; we'd stop at my house to get a couple of long-handled dip nets and a washtub, sometimes the big one and sometimes a smaller one, depending on what kind of luck we had had the time before; we'd stop at Todd's Grocery for 50 pounds of crushed ice; then we'd hit the road for New Smyrna Beach and a long night of shrimping off the bridge over the Indian River, smoking furiously to keep the mosquitoes away (as if we needed that for an excuse), with the lantern hanging a foot above the water, dipping shrimp one at a time as they came to the bridge or came out from under the bridge and rose to the light, sometimes getting as many as three or four hundred but usually maybe a hundred and fifty; raising the lantern or lowering it as the tide came in, turned, and went back out; now and then sipping on a can from the six-pack of Blue Ribbon that Dave's uncle had bought for us; pretending to be grown men, which we would have liked to think we were; cussing fluently when a needlefish scared away a good shrimp (or, on one memorable occasion, when Dave tied the lantern on with a granny knot, which he doesn't admit to this day, and it came loose about four in the morning and the lantern went into the river, which meant that he and I had to come up with about 15 dollars apiece to buy his uncle a new lantern); listening to the friendly chuffing sounds of a group of porpoises catching their breath as they cruised by; then, as dawn finally began to lighten the eastern sky, gathering up our gear and our catch and piling into the truck for the chilly, sleepy drive back home where Dave's mother or my mother would do something really wonderful with the shrimp, and we would have good memories to remember together for a long, long time.