

If but he could have foreseen the nature of the water sport industry, he might have pondered that in half a century, thousands of Oklahomans would own recreation boats, and water-skiing would become a growth industry in dry, north Texas.

"Someday," he could have predicted, "we'll take this river that you can walk across today, and we'll turn it into a water highway that runs clear to the Mississippi."

"Suuuuure you will!" his buddies would most likely have jeered. Such dreamers don't share much company, especially at the scratching end of a depression. But the fact is, those early dreams, refined and embellished as time went on, were to come true. The reality was beyond the predictions.

The dark valleys of 1939 would someday twinkle with lights powered by falling water. The ghost of that young planner would walk once-dry prairies now blooming with well-watered crops.

Someday it would rain cats and dogs in eastern Oklahoma and southern Kansas, and the lakes would hold back the water. And the papers would print a story that it didn't flood at all.

THE FLOOD THAT DIDN'T

"In the newspaper business, we almost never write big headlines about floods that don't happen. It's the floods that do happen . . . that get the banner-play.

"This editorial is an attempt to correct the imbalance.

"A \$3 million flood did not sweep down the Grand-Neosho and Verdigris river valleys in Oklahoma and Kansas last June. The heavy rains of June 10-14 and June 20-30 were contained by the Toronto, Fall River, Elk City, John Redmond, Council Grove and Cheney reservoirs in Kansas and the Hulah reservoir in Oklahoma.

"According to Col. George A. Rebh, Tulsa district engineer of the U.S. Corps of Engineers, 120,000 acres were not flooded.

"The Corps reported that flood control operation of Hulah Dam on the Caney

River prevented six feet of flooding immediately below the dam and three feet of additional flooding as far downstream as Ramona, Okla.

"Flood control operations for John Redmond and Council Grove reservoirs on the Grand-Neosho River prevented eight feet of flooding at Burlington, Kan., and three feet of additional flooding at Commerce and Miami, Okla.

"These are the dams and reservoirs that Oklahomans and Kansans lobbied hard and long for in Congress five, ten, and more years ago. Their efforts may have got some headlines then, but they tend to be forgotten now. Who remembers dry feet?"

— The Tulsa Tribune, Sept 27, 1967



Photo courtesy Fall River/Toronto Post



1951: Fall River Dam, emergency flood gates open.