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### My Outdoors

I come from a long line of fishermen and outdoorsmen. I was born in Lafayette, Louisiana and my folks had me outside as an infant and a toddler. The first memories of fishing began when I was about 3 years old. My older brother, Jon, hooked a 'something really big' that ran under the boat – the line broke and I was hooked. Since that day I have been addicted to the outdoors. The warm sun on my face, the gentle waves beside the boat. The warm salty wind all around me as I stand on the deck of my Dad's boat. It is as though the salt wind's hands are rubbing my face and it spikes my hair in multiple directions. I love to breathe the aroma of the wetlands environment. The salted water, mud, decaying plant matter, fishes, shrimp and the distinct smell of gas and oil all combine to identify a day of fishing. It is not just the aroma of the wetlands I love but the wildlife too. Especially, the brown pelican as it hovers with its wing tips just above the water's surface. It makes me wonder how they can do that without moving the wing. I watch the pelican's vertical climb from the water surface during hunting maneuvers with a 90 degree head first dive into the water to collect bait fish. A mouthful of water and fish is the reward with a shake of the head the hunger is no more. The noise maker sea gulls overhead while I fish are looking for an easy meal. I love the pods of dolphins old and young. To hear them break the water's surface and exchange old air for new. The sound is a misty swish and a rapid intake of air. All this is done as they swim and glide through the water. These events and more can be seen while I fish with my family.

I love saltwater fishing. Fishing has been my life since I was three years old. If I can't get to the marsh I fish the local collection ponds in my neighborhood. I am so at home with a fishing rod in my hand on land or the deck of the boat. To cast my rod I feel the excitement of the catch. Will this be the 'big one'

or will my bait be stolen? I love the fight of a catch. I can feel the speckled trout or lady fish shake its head in an attempt to spit the hook. The catfish will dive straight to the bottom to anchor itself there. The red fish will swim straight away from capture. The contest to identify the fish before reeling it in is great fun. Not being able to identify the fish while reeling it in is even more fun as I watch each catch. The beauty of Louisiana from the wetlands, marsh and waterways should be seen by all people. This beauty of nature is what keeps me going and wondering all about it. There are countless lessons to learn and endless possibilities in nature to be discovered. Yes, I plan to be around a long time to take it all in with each fishing trip. Hope rain is not in the forecast....