**The Fish**

By: JP Weir

It was an early August morning in Sea Isle City, New Jersey. It was humid outside but it was still a nice day. I woke up to the noise of my neighbor Buzz knocking on the front door. I slowly got up and answered the door. He said “Hey JP, I’m about to go fishing with the bout.” As he points over his shoulder across the street at his bout. Without hesitation I said “Sure!” He then told me “Just come over when you have all of your stuff ready.” I quickly replied “Okay, I’ll be there in 15 minutes.” I quickly shut the door and grabbed my sunglasses, my fishing rods, my fishing bag, some sunscreen, and I also brought some snacks to eat on the boat. When I walked over he said to me “We are fishing over in Wildwood about a couple miles out.” I said “Sweet!”

On our way over to wildwood we had to stop at a tackle shop to get bait and some lures. We stopped at a place right when you get into Wildwood. It was called Sterling Harbour. Once we walked in Buzz and the guy behind the counter started talking it up. I just kind of ignored them and started to walk around the store. The first thing I saw was a giant hook the size of my head. And above that there was a replica of a shark that the owner must have caught. That tackle shop is so cool. Once Buzz was done talking to the guy behind the counter, we ended up getting a couple Snapper Zappers. They are a kind of lure. We also got some minnows to catch some more bait later on. We would use the minows that we got here to catch more bait to use for bigger fish.

We got to the pier and put the boat in the water right away because we wanted to fish right away. But then we realized that the boat was out of gas. And the place to get gas is in the bay but right across the bay from us. At first we were thinking to just drive around but that would take too long and just wanted to start fishing. So, I came up with the idea of taking a kayak over with a jerry can. I quickly filled up the can with gas and made my way back over. After we got the gas in the boat we were on our way to the first spot. While driving over there, Buzz looked at me and said “You wanna drive?” I said quickly “Sure!” I stood up from the back seat on the boat and grabbed the wheel. It was amazing, the wind in my face, and seeing nothing but water. The smell of the ocean breeze hitting you in the face can just make you fall asleep. Buzz let me drive the boat for 15 minutes. After the 15 minutes were over, Buzz drove the rest of the way over to the spot. Once we got there, we were cast netting minnows for some bait.

Once we got some bait, we started to drive away, but for some reason the boat didn’t start. Buzz said “What the hell is happening.” Then the engine of the boat started to smoke. Once I saw the smoke I thought the boat was going to sink. But it turns out I was just being overdramatic. Buzz called the coast guard as soon as he could. Then in about three minutes we see a boat coming at us at full speed with lights flashing and sirens blasting. Once they pulled up, they asked “Is everything alright?” Buzz responded quickly with “Well the engine is smoking and I don’t know how to fix it.” One of the other coast guard members said to Buzz “It's okay, I can fix that for you right here right now.” Once I heard that I knew that the fishing day wasn't over.

Once we got the boat fixed, we headed to the actual spot. On our way there I was rigging up some flounder and kingfish rigs. We pulled up and parked next to this buoy. All we can see around us is water and nothing but water. I put one rod in the water and then put it in the rod holder. After I put another one in the water I waited for about 20 minutes. Then all the sudden my one rod just started to bend down real quick. I ran over and picked up the rod and started to reel in. Buzz started to stream “Get the net!” I kept reeling and reeling. When I brought the fish up, we found out that it was a big flounder. We quickly scooped it in the net and got him into the boat. We measured it and it was 23 inch long. At that point of my life, that was the biggest fish I have ever caught.

Throughout the day we only ended up catching three more flounders that we can bring home and cook. Once we got to the dock, my job was to filet the fish. I always liked filet them because I like to eat my fish in thin long pieces. After I filet the fish I had to help Buzz with cleaning the boat off. My job was to go around the outside of the boat with a hose and spray it down. Once I was done it was time to head back home and cook up the fish. I cooked the flounder by breading it with bread crumbs and soaking it in butter. Then we slowly cooked it on the stove. It took about 2-3 hours to cook. Once that fish was cooked, we all dug in. Some of the best fish I ever had. It feels good to go out and catch and cook your food.