

## The Catch

By Mark A. Chinn as told through the eyes of Carly Chinn

Although I don't care that much about fishing, it kinda hurt my feelings when my Dad chuckled and said, "Carly you're the worst fisherman I have ever seen." Even though my Dad and I kid each other a lot, this crack seemed a little cruel and certainly uncalled for. I don't get to fish that much. My family has a small home on Lake Lorman, a small lake not too far from my home in Jackson. It takes us about twenty minutes to drive there. The last part of the drive is fun, because it follows a winding narrow highway through the country side. Parts of the road are covered with a canopy of trees and the trees near the lake have a funny kind of grass hanging from them which I think is neat.

This weekend we were to spend the entire weekend at the Lake House. Friends of ours from the Coast were to join us. These friends are so close that we have the same kind of fun that we have when our cousins come to visit. We got to the Lake on Friday afternoon, a couple of hours ahead of our friends. My sister, Conley, who is 8 and a real pain in the rear to me, likes to fish. As soon as we arrive at the Lake she asks my Dad to drive us to JC's General Store in Pochahontas so we can buy crickets to fish for Bream. Of course, we always get our Dad to buy us candy and drinks when we're there getting crickets. My Dad always brings gas cans with us to JC's to get gas for the ski boat. The trip to JC's is always fun for some reason, I guess because it is out in the country and the road is winding and has pastures with horses on them. Horses are my love.

When we got back from JC's, we saw our neighbors fishing off of their dock and they were catching fish after fish. And these fish were much bigger than the babies we were used to catching off of our dock. So, naturally, my little sister wanted to fish over there. I didn't care too much about it so I stayed at our dock and watched our dog, Scout, jump in and out of the Lake. Nobody loves that Lake like Scout. She even knows what it means when we are at home and my Mom says, "Scout, do you want to go to the Lake?" My Dad gets mad at my Mom for doing this because Scout goes crazy when she hears the word "Lake."

Anyway, I noticed my Dad and sister were having a lot of fun next door with our neighbors, Jimmy and Margie Able. They are from Greenville, but they have retired to live on the Lake. My Dad says they are the kind of people that made him want to live in Mississippi more than anywhere else. They are kind and share and seem to care about us, even though we don't know them very well. My Dad says they are the kind of people who will "give you the shirt off their back." I think I know what that means. Conley was catching fish after fish, and they were big fish. My Dad yelled, "Conley has caught ten fish!" Conley always seemed to have a way with fishing, even though she is just eight. She has been able to put a cricket on a hook and take the fish off the hook since she was four. I suppose I could do it, but I think its gross. But since such big fish were being caught, I went over to see what I could do.

Margie put a cricket on my hook and I dangled my cane poll off the dock. Soon, I got a nibble and was sure I caught a fish, but when I pulled the hook out of the water, there was no fish there and no cricket. Margie put another cricket on for me. (My Dad sat rocking in a chair offering no

help, but seeming to enjoy my troubles. I got another nibble and knew this was a catch. I jerked the hook out of the water, but there was no fish and no cricket. My Dad laughed and said, "Those fish are making a meal off of you." Conley laughed too. And, I didn't like that at all. But, there was no justice, the same thing happened time and time again. Conley and I fought over who got to put their hook in certain spots. As soon as I would pull my hook up—with no fish and no cricket and would get another cricket from Margie—Conley would put her hook into the Lake at my spot. Conley caught fish every time and I got an empty hook every time.

"You're the worst fisherman I have ever seen," laughed my Dad. The words stung like a sting from the wasps that swarm around the Lake in August. I was determined. I put my cricket in the Lake. I got a pull. Suddenly, my poll bent in half and I thought I was going to be pulled in the Lake. I said, "I got one!" But this time, I couldn't pull my poll at all. Margie sensed something was wrong, I guess because it looked like my poll might break in half. She jumped up to help. So did my Mom. They pulled and pulled but nothing happened. The poll just bent in half. I no longer had the poll and turned to see my Dad, just rocking in his chair with a funny look. Margie screamed, "Get the net." My Mom screamed at my Dad, "Mark, do something." My Dad got up and got the net and handed it to Margie. Margie held the poll and my Mom reached down with the net and put it where the line went into the Lake and when she lifted it up, Margie and Mom screamed, "It's a big Catfish, REAL BIG!" Margie said, "Noone catches Catfish in this Lake and this one is HUGE. Get Jimmie," she cried, "I don't want to touch it." My Dad grabbed some pliers and started taking the hook out. Nobody wanted to touch the Catfish. It seemed as big as a SHARK and it had big long mean looking whiskers. My Dad said, "You gotta be careful with Catfish, they have fins that will sting you bad." My Dad got the hook out and Jimmy arrived on the scene to scoop the cat fish up. He was thrilled. He put it on a scale and weighed it: "Five pounds eight ounces. That's a record catch for this dock, Carly, Jimmy pronounced." I WAS SO PROUD.

My Dad said, "Yea, but that hook was stuck in the fish's whisker. He just got caught by the hook passing by." Jimmy defended me, "A catch is a catch," he said. My Dad nodded and I could tell he was proud too. He yelled, "Carly Chinn, record setting fisherman and Queen of the Lake!" Those were some of the best words I ever heard.

