

## Catch of the Day

By: Janie Wiltshire

They say there is such a thing as beginner's luck. I have always been skeptical about that. Just fix yourself a cup of coffee or your favorite adult beverage and read this one!

On my first day at Edisto Beach as a resident, I stopped at a yard sale and bought a rod and reel. Everybody needs one, right? I asked the two guys selling off their priceless fishing gear to "fix me up." It was my intention to leave the massive display of worthless items and start my career as a lone fisher woman.

Jim and Larry, the proprietors of said yard sale, were veterans of the sea as well, so they spent 25 minutes collaborating about which rig would best prepare me for braving the waters. Once the discussion was over and the decision made, they carefully instructed me on how to cast and exactly what would happen when I had my first go using the Shakespeare Rod and Reel (new meaning to the words "Be gentle - this is my first time."). I paid them \$24 and expected a lot. (By the way, I did not know that Shakespeare had ventured into the fishing business. Theatre and Fishing. A vast difference.)

Jim and Larry (we are now very close) put a double hook on the line and informed me that I now had twice the chance of catching a fish. They fully acknowledged I was armed and dangerous. Look out Nemo! With rod and reel in the back seat of my car, I took off and headed for the water. I knew down deep inside I was going to win the fish lottery!

Just minutes later, I realized that carrying a rod and reel down the steps to a dock can be tricky the first time, especially for someone who is lost with imaginings of the big catch. I slapped myself back to reality, though, and began to watch my every step, my new priceless piece of fishing equipment under my arm, hooks dangling dangerously and closely to my skin. Nonetheless, I had a lot riding on the whole thing since I considered fishing to be a monumental undertaking on my part.

My son and his friend were watching and if this were not enough, my former husband walked out onto the dock as well to see exactly what all the commotion was about. I hate to be quiet about exciting things and this was a huge moment in my life. I could actually feel my capabilities coming on. Thoughts matter!

Baiting the hook was not the easiest thing to do...wasn't the cleanest part either, mind you. I tried to think of it as having a plump and juicy shrimp cocktail and then to envision my bait on a fork and not on a hook. I don't like the bloody stuff. I then tried to convince myself that the red part was cocktail sauce. It didn't work. Not only did my imagery fail, but I found myself developing an aversion to shrimp in general. Hooking it was nasty anyway you looked at it. A downright gross thing, indeed, and I now blush to confess that I fell into the stereotypical woman. I howled "Yuck!" several times especially when a weird shrimp juice exploded on my fingertips. OMG - this is someone's hobby?

Once the bait was skewered, I made a swing of the rod and the cast was solid. It went exactly where it was supposed to go: square dab in the middle of the stream and right where I had planned. From that moment on, everything happened in a dream. Hard to imagine that moments earlier I had thought of myself as a mere rookie. I had been locked into a daydream in which I was the envy of people everywhere. And then my trance was broken and my fishing life changed. I knew I had a bite. I mean, the rod moved, and though I know little of fishing, I was pretty sure I had not snagged a log or some piece of under water debris. This was a tug and it was strong, really strong.

I had to think quickly and gather my composure. This was the moment of fishing truth, and I had to make rapid decisions. Much was at stake. I wasn't quite sure what to do and tried to remember all of the episodes of Andy Griffith, those that highlighted Andy and Opie on the banks of a pond, confident in their abilities. They could always handle whatever they fished out, so to speak. I needed a little coaching, and would have welcomed Sheriff Taylor's help at that moment.

As I began to reel in the line, everyone watched and waited in anticipation. Suddenly, I was not the only one involved in the catch. Everyone wanted a piece of the action. Words of encouragement seemed to be closing in just as the sea closes in on the beach at high tide. My son, his friend, and even the ex got in on the "**1-800 help janie catch a fish**" advice line!

I, on the other hand, was thinking "I am independent. I can do it. LEAVE ME ALONE! This one is mine!" I know they were all upset because no one had caught anything previously, their well-experienced casts having been in vain. This was an exclusive moment for me. Where was the fishing channel film crew when I needed them?

I did reel it in, but not without a lot of sweat. My triceps haven't had a workout like that in years even though I struggled with my catch for only ten minutes. The water rippled as I watched my fish fighting the line. What a thrill, but thrill or not, I realized that this was not a little fish. No small fried catfish plate for my dinner that night. This was a hum-dinger. It was HUGE!

Remember how Jim and Larry had doubled my chances, placing two hooks on the line? Obviously, they had known what they were doing because I suddenly knew that not only was I battling one fish, but two. I was out for only one and I had caught two fish...at one time! But wait! There's more: these were not just regular old fish. These were not the run-of-the-mill fish. This was not a southern catfish - I was reeling in SHARKS! I had caught two, and I had a flash that another Jaws movie was in the making. I was out of my mind with both horror and delight I managed to reel them to the dock. By now, I had an entire audience of on-lookers, all envious, of course.

"How did she do that?"

"And this? Her first time."

These were just a couple comments that were made at the moment of impact.

When I finally got the sharks onto the dock, I knew immediately that their names were Jim and Larry. They had Jim's eyes and Larry's complexion. Mothers can best name their children when they look into the faces of the little ones. This was the case with Jim and Larry. They were my new babies.

Then the issue of choice was upon me, was I really a pro-choice woman? At that time, I was totally unaware of the concept of "catch and release" How could a mother give up her twins after a ten-minute period of labor? But give them up, I did. I cast them back into the waters from whence they came and went home to my new beach house feeling quite smug with myself and extremely happy that others had been there to share in the struggle. I had witnesses. I didn't have to say, "You should have seen the one that got away..." Nobody would have ever believed it!

Even now you, the reader, may not. So here's a photo to prove it. Beginner's luck? I prefer "Skilled Professional," if you please. That is certainly more appropriate! I am presently shopping for a boat...if you know a **man** that needs to sell one!



**Mother's Day Weekend 2008 and my 2 baby sharks - What a catch of the day!**