

A shore thing



Some of my fondest childhood memories include summers on the Chesapeake Bay with my family. On many occasions, this meant that my company included my dad, my uncles, my cousins, and my beloved grandfather. With our moms working back at home, and our dads running trot lines, we kids spend time exploring the islands or small, rural communities (and cool old houses) we got to call home for a week or two. We cooked (Uncle Martin taught us his crab soup secrets), swam in the Bay (always under supervision), and told scary stories (which often resulted in us sleeping with all of the lights on in the enormous room we shared). The whole experience was a little bit like a cleaned-up version of Lord of the Flies.

Eventually, my parents and my aunt purchased a rancher in an area near Deal Island in Somerset County called Chance. My dad stays there frequently during business trips to the Eastern Shore, and my cousins pay a visit to the Chance house when they need a little escape from the hustle and bustle of urban and suburban life. It's amazing what a sojourn by the water will do for the soul.

A sunny weekend showed up on the five day forecast, so my dad and my brother decided to spend a few days fishing and crabbing in Chance. This time, they invited Collin to come along. Naturally, I agreed, but only after I reminded them that cookies are not an acceptable breakfast - not even on vacation. Collin and I threw a few items of clothing and a couple of toys into his travel bag, rolled up his sleeping bag and kissed goodbye as he embarked on his first journey to Chance.

The next morning, I woke to find two pictures of Collin fishing, including his first big catch, a perch that would fit nicely in a toaster oven. Within a few hours, there were videos of him swimming in the bay, making "sand angels," and roasting

marshmallows by the fire. I didn't need live updates to reassure me that Collin was safe or having fun, but it made me smile when I pictured him having as much fun as I did when I was 6 on the shores of the Chesapeake. They call it God's country for a reason.



As they were getting ready to leave, Collin called me frantically. "Mom! I caught something and I don't know what it is. It has the head of a minnow and the body of a snake. I don't know what it is!"

"It's an eel," my brother said in the background. "A two foot eel."

When he got home, Collin told me about the eel again and that a crab got loose in the boat. "And guess what else!" he said. "They took me to Burger King by the big bridge, and I got chicken fries!"

And on that note, I knew that Collin had the perfect Eastern Shore trip with his grandfather and his uncle, just like I did when I was a kid.

