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## Weekending in Woolsey

Walter Fulton

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Walter Fulton

Dr. Brandi Bradley

English 1101 Sec. 314

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### Weekending in Woolsey

The sun begins to peak through the blinds, rising over the lake in the backyard. Birds have been chirping for the last 30 or so minutes, and I roll over to grab my phone and check the time. 6:45. I try to get 15 or 30 more minutes of sleep to no avail. I can hear my little brother upstairs running around and figure I will get up to make some breakfast.

I head up from the basement and discover Elijah, my 5-year-old brother situated in the living room playing with his train set. I step outside onto the back deck and can sense that it is going to be a beautiful, but very hot summer Saturday. Heading to the kitchen I assess my options, but settle on the usual. I scramble some eggs with cheese and cook some bacon, throwing them onto a bagel and scarf it down. I am eager to get out on the water, because weekends are meant for fishing and the morning mist has yet to dissipate atop the water.

I run out to the driveway and grab my poles and bait from the bed of my truck, and venture on down to the water. I lay my poles and fishing gear in the kayak and drag it out knee deep, hop in and take off. Nothing but the sounds of birds and cicadas echo out across the water. There is something so peaceful about being one of the only souls out on the lake before the day gets too hot. The serene sounds of nature allow every other thought I have to rest for the time being. Whether or not I catch any fish, I know that the day is shaping up to be a great one.

Paddling out from the cove in our backyard, I begin to work my way around our side of the lake clockwise. Throwing a line out as I navigate every little cove and branch I pass, I am

really just anticipating to get some bites at the honey hole on the other side. By the time I make my way to the bridge, the sun has really started to beat down. Something about being on the water in the summer heat feels like home.

I decide to set the poles down for a couple minutes and jump out into the water to cool down. Hitting the cold spots in the deeper parts of the water brings a second wind into me, and I hop back into the kayak to fish the other side. I meander over to the sweet spot, drop the little anchor I have fixed to the boat, and sit and wait. I've been throwing plastic lizards and crawdads on my two different poles, as these baits always seem to bring me the best luck in the summertime. It isn't until nearly 11 or so when I get my first bite. I set the hook, and my line shoots off; whatever is on the end of it was certainly hungry. I wrestle with this fish for nearly a minute or two, and it finally tires. As the fish nears the surface, I see the shimmery scales of a largemouth bass and to my pleasure it is over 12 inches, which means I get to bring this one home. I toss the fish into my cooler and keep casting lines.

After a while I get a phone call from one of my best buddies, Miguel, and he's looking to come over either to my place or our other friend Willy's and get some fishing of his own in. I tell him that I'll head back to the house shortly and have him call Willy to see what his plans are. I set the poles in the rod holders and start my trek back to the house. I am a little disappointed to only be returning with one fish to my name, but it's past noon and I'm starting to get hungry for lunch anyway, so it isn't the end of the world.

Getting back into our cove, I drag the kayak out of the water and unload all my gear and the cooler. I flip the kayak up onto the rack and walk to the back deck where I am going to clean and fillet the lone fish really quick. Breaking out the electric knife, I get to work on the fish and rinse everything once I have my two fillets. I'm not quite as good as my neighbor, who originally

showed me his filleting technique, but it gets better with practice. I throw the fillets into a freezer bag and pack my fishing gear into our old '95 Wrangler. The day is too pretty to not do some driving in the Jeep. I call Miguel back, and to my delight he says him and Willy are planning on grabbing some lunch at Wings and Things, a hometown staple, and then planning on hitting the river at Willy's for fishing and maybe some swimming later in his pool.

The drive to meet them at the restaurant is as refreshing as they come. The Jeep was once my daily driver through high school, but nowadays we keep it in the garage with the top down and doors off waiting for days like today. I throw on my 60's/70's rock playlist, driving backroads with the wind shooting across my face as Gimme Shelter by The Rolling Stones blasts through the speakers. It's times like now that make me grateful my father decided to buy this Jeep 25 years ago. I pull into the parking lot and see my friends have also just arrived. Thankfully it doesn't appear too busy today; we head inside and get seated immediately.

Wings and Things is by no means fine dining, and it certainly isn't the healthiest, but it is the epitome of greasy feel-good food. I settle on the usual; an appetizer of fried mozzarella sticks for the table, and a 10-piece lemon pepper wings with onion rings. We have the same sweet older waitress who is always working, Amanda, and she ensures that our food comes out in a hurry. She always loves seeing us when we come in and hearing about what's going on in our lives. We jokingly assure her that we are up to no good per usual. We wrap up our meal and decide for sure that we are going to fish at Willy's place.

Willy's house is a favorite amongst the group. His family owns over 100 acres of land back behind his house, with everything from open fields to shoot skeet, to wooded areas with trails for hunting, standing ponds, and even the Flint River running through to fish. To top it off he has a beautiful backyard with a pool and a hot tub. We drive down the gravel driveway past

the house and hang a left into the woods. Our favorite fishing spot on the Flint is roughly a mile back from his house. It is probably where the Flint is both widest and deepest on his property, equipped with a rope swing on a tree if we want to take a dip, and a giant concrete firepit on the bank for any fires at nighttime.

I park the Jeep and hop out, and we proceed to bait our hooks. Miguel is without a doubt the best fisherman out of all of us. Though it certainly takes some luck, Miggy consistently outperforms the rest of us on the water. The Flint always treats us well, especially in the early summer when it's spawning season, plenty of the bass are out looking for a meal.

It isn't long until we start getting some bites. Unfortunately, no one would really want to eat the fish coming out of the river, so it's a lot of catch and release, but it is still rewarding every time you feel a bite and set the hook. We fish for a couple hours and decide to call the rest of our friends and see if anyone wants to come swim and have a fire later.

The sun is still beating down, and the late afternoon heat is definitely taking it out of us. Driving back up to the house I am eagerly awaiting running and jumping into the pool. We get up to the house and can smell Willy's dad whipping something up on the smoker as he so often does, which means we have dinner sorted. Our friends Andy, Liam, Fran, Adrianna, and Camille all show up as well to swim, and we spend the next hour or two playing pool basketball and winding down. Willy's dad lets us know that he's finished up on the grill and that we have some food inside, so we all hop out and start to dry off. Ribs and brisket are on the menu.

The spread for dinner is fantastic. Willy's parents love hosting the friend group over for a meal, and we all certainly love partaking. We sit out on his back deck and dive in, sharing plenty of laughs as we eat. As we are wrapping up our meal, the sun is starting to set a little bit and the

heat is finally vanishing. We confirm that everyone wants to stick around for a fire, and head out to get started on it.

Piling everybody into the back of a couple trucks and the Jeep, we drive down to one of the many bonfire locations on the property and start scavenging wood from the forest nearby. Some of us stick around to get the fire going, while others make a quick run to the gas station for some beverages and some snacks. We break out a speaker and get some tunes playing, and plan to spend the remaining hours of the night sitting around a fire singing, drinking, laughing and telling stories. The crackle of the fire and the smokiness in the air is a gentle reminder that there is certainly no place like home. Looking around the fire, I see some of my closest friends and truly feel content with how our summer evenings always play out. As the night rolls on and we have decided to let the fire burn down to coals, we sit back and stargaze until we decide it is finally time to get some rest. Some friends head home, but a couple of us stick around and sleep out in the newly renovated barn Willy has by the firepit. I lay my head down and begin to doze off, thinking about the fish we are going to catch when we wake tomorrow.