

Summer break had begun with our annual grandparent visit to California. The airplane rides had taken considerable time from Alaska to California. The first few days of being a guest at Grandma and Grandpa’s house included dog walks, a trip to the farmer’s market, good family meals, and card games. Relaxing in the sun without buzzing mosquitoes or no-see-ums was welcome.

After day four, my son, Jasper stepped forward with his heart felt confession. He was aching to go fishing. There was an ocean and sea smells nearby, boats of all types and a seemingly strange illusion that everyone was doing what they ought to be doing in a hurried fashion. While my daughter, Wren was happy to go shopping with Grandma, it was obvious that Jasper had different desires.

“Please, Mom, we can go to the pier, get some line like Baba and I had done,” he said with added depth of his big brown eyes.

“I think this is a great idea!” I chimed in.

His eyes lit up, looking alive.

There was something that ticked in the eyes of his mother.

“Yes, let’s go fishing!” It was just not part of our normal routine on these visits.

Grandpa’s love of sailing and being on the water did not combine fishing rods, though his childhood had many days fishing that were all but memories. This, my son did not know.

By 1 pm, Jasper gathered snails. Three from the yard, placed carefully in a plastic bag. Game on! My own motherlike distractions get in the way and it’s already 1:45 pm. Grandma walks into the kitchen with a limp plastic bag holding three almost escaped snails.

“I found these in the bedroom ...YUCK!” she says.

“Whoops! We’ll take those,” I grab the bag and hand them to my son. “Jasper, your snails!!”

“Let’s go!” we say in unison.

We’re in the car, and I think of the windbreaker jacket. As I return, Grandpa has emerged out of his den. He moves slower now, yet his spirit is eager as a young snap.

“We’re going fishing!” I say.

“Can I go?” says Grandpa.

“Why yes!” I say, almost as if I’ve been caught, heading out on our own, breaking the habitual routine.

“We’ll meet you in the car,” I add.

I am elated. We are all going fishing.

Suddenly, I feel the excitement, the anticipation, the get-out-of-jail card of routine.

We’re going fishing!

“Grandpa wants to go,” I tell Jasper.

“Great!” he says.

When the three of us are driving, there is something special going on and there is no need to say a word.

We have amazing luck in finding a parking spot on the Pier.  
We rent a fishing rod, and the frozen bait of cut up fish comes in a cup.  
The man tells us the drill.  
“Keep your bait close, or the birds will get it.”  
“Here are paper towels, put them in your pocket or they will blow away.”

We look at each other, and I realize I am a tourist for the first time.  
This thought makes me laugh and I realize the binoculars around my neck are a dead giveaway.  
Not something that I usually wear and it shows, though I am happy to have them, so that I can extend my vision for ocean views.

“Here’s the reel. No flip of this or else you will get a tangle,” the man goes on.  
“I’ll need an ID.” This man has lost any sign of enthusiasm from perhaps too many years on the Pier.  
Grandpa is quick to pull out his wallet and I accept his gesture.  
We’re going fishing!  
The merchant, I know at this time has labeled us as not very experienced fishing-nerds. We are. Well, we are out of our element. Ocean fishing from a public pier that is 40 feet above the water is far different than our quaint Alaskan lakes, trout streams and glacier fed rivers.

We are three generations getting ready for a good time.  
We have no idea what fun that we will have.  
A \$10 pole rental for an hour. Hmm, nothing to lose.  
It takes us a few moments to geek out ...our first location is past the arrow marked sign that indicates ‘no fishing’.  
“Oh yes, now I see,” I say.  
We are excited. Nervous. Anticipating.  
The first cast, I take the honors...after Jasper willingly nodded.  
“You go, Mom.”  
I feel proud of his good manners. I cast out into the deep blue.  
There is vast ocean beauty all around. Wide open ocean with all types of boats, sailboats being my favorite. Sea birds, activity, people...hustle, bustle. Quite a contrast to our northern home.  
There are also tourists like us. We are not alone.

We are amongst many fishers and perhaps the only ones with the rented rod.  
There is some casting and reeling in, but no fish.  
Then, the first nibble. Game on!  
The first bait is gone. Quick, there is a school, lots of fish! Oh yeah!  
Fellow fishers are reeling in lines with 3 fish on.  
Jasper loses a second bait.  
OK...Grandpa is excited!  
“Is this fun? I exclaim.  
“Yes it is!” he says.  
I’d spent many a day with my Dad on his sailboat, though Pier fishing was something

we had not done before. He is man of the water and holds a deep love for all things sailing. I am beyond happy to be sharing this moment on the Pier that we usually see for a short glimpse as we depart the harbor in his sailboat.

“You fish, Mom.”

“OK,” I say, watching the water intently. I hook one, snag one and I am ready.

I have one on the line. I kindly hand it over to my son, who is six at the time.

He reels it in and is thrilled to pieces.

We are almost ready to really be having some fun.

The first mackerel, we release.

The second one, it takes 4 minutes and there is another.

“Is this fun?” I say.

“Yes it is!” Grandpa and I give each other high fives.

Jasper reels in the second.

It’s Grandpa’s turn. There is momentarily embarrassment as he snags our neighbor with one of the slimy snail bait hooks.

And it is stuck on his shirt’s left side.

Eww!

“Sorry, sir, we are so sorry!” Dad and I say in unison. The man is fishing, he’s unfazed.

Phew.

“Cast again, Dad!” and he does.

Perfect cast, and boom...another beautiful mackerel and it is the biggest one yet.

My oh my, he’s smiling, reeling in.

Out of the blue, a predator seizes the moment. A sea lion comes from the dark depths of the pier’s deeper shadows. Chomp. Our mackerel is gone.

We pause, looking down. We are not the only ones fishing.

The sea lion left the head, as to avoid the hook and we know this is not its’ first stolen lunch.

Game on...more bait on the line.

Octopus left over from our neighbor who has now moved on.

It all happens fast, 2 more fish. 2 in the bag.

A bass, released.

Jasper experiences catching some of his own and we are all electrified with the fishing buzz.

I look at my son and he examines the other neighbors fish being filleted.

“Shall we keep a couple?” I ask knowing of the satisfaction of providing a wild caught lunch.

We do. Before too long, we are all in unison, ready to go home.

We return the rod, and there is a momentarily realization that we are not total geeks after all,

but three generations sharing some simple fishing family fun.