

First Place Nonfiction ~ Age 14-17

“The Wave”

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As we walked from the car, all the hours of practice, all the days of rain, did not amount to the complete unsettling feeling I had in the pit of my stomach. I opened the trunk door, retrieved my skim board, Brookesona, and set her under my arm. I had learned from my father that all watercrafts were women because they're mild tempered, and she was no different. It actually seemed on some days when I decided she would be ok with just a quick rinse off; she punished me for it the next day.

“What are you waiting for Dude?” My friend Jimmy called from ahead on the dock. I strode to him and we slowly walked up the boardwalk. We had decided to come to Indian River Inlet that day. It was like Broadway for a small town skim boarder like me. I came from Prime Hook Beach, where the waves were two feet at the largest. Indian River blew me away.

We made our way quickly over the winding boardwalk to view a swirling water monster, which I thought was the ocean. I looked to my left as another gargantuan 7 foot wave crashed, like a groping tentacle reaching for unsuspecting swimmers. Nothing in my life had prepared me for this, and I was still going to skim it! I took another deep breath as Jimmy patiently waited near the end of the boardwalk, as it became the beach.

We found out - after asking one of the tall lifeguards - that you could only skim past the red flags about 50 yards down the beach. Great. Another 50 yards to prepare myself for what I thought would be my Step Mother's embarrassment. We set up camp, and my Grandparents arrived. My grandparents may just be the best in the world. They have a house in Rehoboth and years of wisdom, both of which they've shared with me. When I was just little they would take me down to Rehoboth, where I could boogie board my heart out, and then take me home to shower outside.

“You're a good boy John D. You know that?” My grandfather would say. And I never thought twice when any one told me different.

Standing where the cool, smooth ocean meets the hot, gritty sand I stood holding Brookesona, admiring her, all her various stickers, her one solid black streak on the bottom of her, as I cursed myself for being so careless. Even that once. And I still can't recall what it was from. Brookesona was different than any other board I had ever owned. She was an E-glass, fiberglass blend and was supposed to let me ride waves. And she was 100% mine. My mission for the 09' summer was to ride just one wave. And I was about to take my first shot.

A wave crashed and I started to run. It was almost automatic. My brain screamed at my legs to stop this instant! But I kept charging at the wave, my eyes locked on my target. I tossed Brookesona down, just an inch or two in front of me, jumped, and prepared for one of the best rides of my life. As I hit the break, I instantly gained altitude and turned my feet underneath of me as I faced the beach. And I will never forget those four seconds of my life. I could see absolutely everything. I saw Jimmy, looking on at me, his face a smiling approval. My grandfather, smiling, though I could not see his eyes, only his smile as he started to clap. Mrs. Kathy and Mrs. Deb also smiling, and my grandmother, sucking in her breath, as she does when

she's worried about me. And how everyone around our area was staring in admiration. The ride of my life was short lived, as it brought me back to earth with an explosive fury that awoke me from my dream like state.

I walked what I call the "Hero's Walk" back to our place on the beach. The Hero's Walk consists of tons of people congratulating you on something, and I usually received this honor after skimming. Jimmy and I walked over to our blanket behind my family, and I bit into my sandwich.

And as I slowly fell back against the blanket to look up at the sky, I whispered "I love this place" and drifted to sleep.