As long as the swamp keeps calling, Dewey Patin will keep returning

Swampy's grip just grows stronger over time

By Angela Rozas
ST MARTINVILLE - Dewey Patin dances among the cypress stumps and mossy canopies of the Atchafalaya River Basin with the skill of a man who has spent a lifetime in the swamp.

As Patin's night is fading, his heavily accented Cajun French slightly slurred from home in St. Martinville for pounds. At 92, Patin's sight is fading, his heavily accented Cajun French slightly slurred from home in St. Martinville for pounds.

"Pouf! De grosse!" he says, stepping into an empty fish basket, and _'tit peu,"_ he tells his father. Patin's son, Carol, 60, sits up next to a fishing line stretched between two stumps jutting up at the edge of the water. Carol pulls up hook after empty hook, some with bite of shrimp or fish dangling from their prongs. He floats like a fish among pieces of fresh eel. Father and son talk in French about the kind of heat they're using and why the fish isn't biting.

Finally, Carol pulls a hefty yellow-cauliflower from the brick-red water, and his father squawks with delight.

"Pouf! De grosse!" he says, having a quarterly fetched goal. The fish is big, at least 55 pounds, a good catch.

This is their routine. Every day Carol picks up his father from his cabin on the water in the summer and hunt alligator. Sometimes they go for a few hours. Sometimes they go all day. But rain or shine, they always go.

"This is what he loves for his love of the swamp. Cajun French is his language, English something he learned from his children and a worldly neighbor from Arkansas.

"I done walked all over this country," Patin said, pointing to an expanse of trees at the edge of the Atchafalaya Basin. "If I couldn't be for three know, I'd be out here. I'm going to keep hunting and fishing in the basin," and returned to the little house," says his daughter, Velma Carline.

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Dewey Patin has lived most of his life in the swamp. Born to a Cajun farmer and fisher, he grew up in a cabin on the water near Butt la Rose. He never went to school, instead learning to fish, hunt and trap like his ancestors.

"I been walking all over the guest room. And if I couldn't be for these kids, I'd be out here. I'm going to keep hunting and fishing in the basin," said his daughter, Velma Carline.

"He'd spend days, sometimes weeks, out on the swamp," said Carol, the second-oldest of the children. "That's his life. Dad and son fish every day in the summer and hunt alligator when the season opens, just for fun. They have no use for the window air conditioner that sits unoccupied in the summer and hunt alligator when the season opens, just for fun. They have no use for the window air conditioner that sits unoccupied in the summer and hunt alligator when the season opens, just for fun.

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