

# Born on the Bayou

(Kraemer, Louisiana) Roland Torres wants you to know a few things. He lives in a rural area where life is pretty straightforward. His family has been active on the bayou for five generations, witnessing a daily battle of survival of the fittest. The birds, animals and reptiles who inhabit the vast swamps of south central Louisiana live only as long as their wits and luck hold out. They are on their own 24/7.

So is Roland.

A former game warden, Torres is of Spanish descent and still speaks the language of his Cajun ancestors: French. He makes a decent living giving tours of the bayou and asks for nothing from the powers that be. What he has, he earned. He does not understand why some Americans accept government assistance. In this very poor part of America, someone who works hard can still earn a decent living.

Roland Torres also has guns. And they came in handy immediately after Hurricane Katrina when a horde of folks fled New Orleans about 70 miles away. Roland says "the good, the bad, and the ugly" flooded his zone, looking for safety from the storm, which just glanced his bayou. When some city thugs began to show menace, Roland calmly produced his arsenal. The danger quickly passed.

For almost 70 years, Roland has lived on the bayou. He has never ventured out of Louisiana, yet loves America. He cherishes the values his family handed down to him. He and his wife have been married for 51 years. They met in high school at age 16. Roland calls his wife an "angel."

They have three sons, two of whom work the bayou with Roland. They are entirely self-reliant. If he had to, Roland says, he could survive in the wilderness with a penknife, a spool of thread, some matches and a cache of dried rice. That's for

luring birds which he would trap with the thread and cook with the matches. He says he could live for years off the land, even explaining how to eat sawgrass. "That can keep you alive if you know what you're doing," he told me.

Roland Torres watches some of the news programs on cable TV. Almost every modest dwelling in the swampland has cable. He likes the conservative shows. He doesn't quite understand the big social changes taking place. He protects his family with guns. Why should that bother anyone, Roland asks? I have no answer.

To Roland, President Obama is an enigma. He doesn't understand "income redistribution." Roland charges a fair price to show you his world and you can take it or leave it. If you leave it, he'll find other work. There's always something a man can do to feed his family.

Millions of Americans believe exactly what Roland Torres believes. But they are seldom heard. Not many live shots coming out of the bayou.

[Premium Members can check out photos from Bill's trip to the Bayou [here!](#)]