"The Crappie Catcher" Gramps Woomp Fish Tale

GRAMPS, SAGE of the Chesapeake Bay, was sitting in the shade, smoking his homemade pipe, and whittling a stop water to cure the stem leak in an old oyster boat when the fellow who had asked about the Woomp fish drove into Charlie's boat yard.

Gramps kept right on shaping the stop water and started telling us about this strange sea critter that took over the Chesapeake way back in his grand pappy's day--about the same time as when the Red Coats burned the White House.

"Them Woompers was startin' to leave the bay where I was a young lad, but I remember them real good, Lad, because they was so different from any other fish in all the seven seas. They was down right strange fish.

"The Woomper didn't cotton to no hook and line like other fish. He were darned peculiar about his eatin' and he wouldn't come close as a mile to nothin' dangling on a fishing line.

"You goin' to find it hard to believe, Laddie when I tell you how we caught them critters. You used hard-cured chawin' tobaccy to catch them Woompers. You chopped it up in little hard pieces 'bout the size of a pea.

"You fished them critters from a rowboat with a partner. You rowed around scannin' the water for a school of Woomp fish. They was big fish and they schooled-up in big numbers. One school of them critters covered more than a acre. You could spot a school ten miles off shore on a clear day. They make the water boil with the air bubbles they spit.

"YOU ROWED real easy like right into the middle of them bubbles, and you would throw a few pieces of that hard-cured tobaccy right down side the boat.

and pretty soon they would come right up side the boat to spit. That's when you had to be quick, Laddie.

"When the Woomper spat, his eyes blinked shut. The critter couldn't help but shut his eyes, just like when you sneeze, Lad, you can't keep your eyes open so help you. Try it.

"Just as the Woomper spit, you had to hit him quick and hard with a belayin pin. Then you lifted him into the boat, and gave him another lick for good measure.

"You could load your boat right up to the gunnels in no time, if you was quick.

"Sumthin' else about the Woomper that were darn peculiar, you couldn't fry fish the critter like any other fish. His meat was too strong and you just couldn't eat him fried. You had to bake the Woomp fish, son, sort of special like.

"Now, you didn't just throw a little salt and pepper on him and run him in the oven. No sir-ree, not the Woomper.

"FIRST OFF, you had to skin about 3 foot of green bark off a hickory tree. You seasoned the critter with a heavy hand. Plenty of salt, sage, red pepper, and a pinch of tartar. Next you stuffed his innards with onions, rice, and sausage meat. Wild rice was the best.

"After you sewed that stuffin' in good, you wrapped him up tight in that green hickory bark and made it fast, Laddie, with some stout twine.

"Next you had to get you a bucket of that soft mud from along the creek banks--the gooey kind that squirts up twixt your toes when you walk in it. You packed a couple inches of this mud all 'round the fish, stuffed, and wrapped in that green hickory.

"You had you a pit dug in the sand and a red hot charcoal fire goin' in it. You took a oyster rake and raked them hot coals off to one side and dropped the mud-packed Woomp fish down in the fire bed, then you raked them hot coals all over and 'round the critter. You covered the whole fire and everything over with a couple of foot of wet seaweed. No too wet, Lad, or it would kill the fire. Just wet enough to steam.

"You left her alone then till there wasn't no more steam coming from the seaweed. Took about four hours for this, son. Then the critter was all good and done, baked to a turn, and brown as a chestnut.

"You took your oyster rake and raked the whole thing out of the fire pit. Then you took your cullin tool and chipped all the baked clay off'n the fish rolled up in the hickory bark. When you chipped all the clay off, you wiped the thing good with wet seaweed to get all the dirt off.

"You cut the twine and then you unrolled the hickory bark. Then you took the back of your rake and pushed all the Woomp fish back in the ashes, and you et the bark.

"Sure was some good eatin'--hickory bark flavored with Woomp fish.

"By golly Lad, you act just like you don't believe old Gramps."

Mingo Reports To Saints

SHREVEPORT, La. - (NPI)--Elton Mingo, a 205-pound speedster who can hound pass receivers relentlessly in the deep secondary or bring his power and zest to high efficiency as a running back, joined the New Orleans Saints last Friday, upon completion of six months of active duty with the army at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Mingo immediately went to work galvanizing himself for the hard hocks of professional football. He has been working out at Grambling College, his alma mater.

A POISED, self-assured halfback and defensive end during his college playing days, Mingo's biggest asset has always been blazing speed. It could prove a precious asset for New Orleans. He has been timed repeatedly in 9.5 for 100 yards.

Grambling coach Eddie Robinson pointed out that Mingo can stay with receivers or go get a flying football. He added that Elton has great natural ability and the speed it takes to make it big on tough National Football league proving grounds.

Mingo was with the Mobile Tarpons last season, where he was one of the top scorers and receivers in the North American Football league.

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Bill Russell Lectures At Coaching Clinic

LORMAN, Miss. - (NPI)--Bill Russell, defensive genius and player-coach of the ex-champion Boston Celtics pro basketball team, last week, was among the lecturers at Alcorn A&M College's coaching clinic, hailed by participating coaches as "one of the best organized (coaching) clinics in the South this year."

Russell lectured and demonstrated some of the basic basketball patterns curfently in use. He also gave high school coaches some guidelines to better coaching.

Purpose of the clinic was to provide high school coaches with information on the newest trends in football and basketball.

With the success of the clinic as an incentive, Alcorn officials are already anticipating and planning for an even bigger session next year.

ICE CAPADES FEATURE SALUTE TO KING COLE

ICE CAPADES is coming to Las Vegas Convention Center for a limited 4-day engagement beginning September 6. In its first Las Vegas appearance, the famous ice show will feature many figure-skating champions and six lush production numbers, as well as a number of variety acts.

HEADING THE Championship Lineup are Guy Revell and Gertrude Desjardins from Canada who hold the Worlds Professional Pairs Title; Japanese Champion, Sashi Kuchiki; North American Champion, Donald Knight; U.S. Junior Champion, Richard Callaghan; Swedish Champion, Gisela and Mitsuko Funakoshi, Charlene McLaren, Michael Garren and Janet Runn.

Variety and comedy acts include Spanky (A Chimpanzee) and his partner Dave Pitts, English comic Terry Head, Bussey and Mueller, Daredevil Bob Hubbard and Vic Zoble and his Trampo-Diving routine and the Three Toddy's.

Production numbers, all lavishly costumed, range in variety and interest. Being billed as America's #1 Family Show, Ice Capades produces numbers that appeal to all age groups.

KIDDIES WILL enjoy "A Flintstone Fantasy" where their favorite top cartoon characters come to life. For Teens there's an A-Go-Go number "Wonderful Day" that puts all the latest dance crazes on ice as well as "Inca Exotic" set to Beatle music.

Other productions include a salute to the late Nat Cole in "The King Lives On"; an Ice-version of Broadway hit musical "High Button Shoes" featuring the "Magic Screen" process which integrates live and filmed action, and a precision-skating routine in a stirring Finale "Strike Up The Band."

ICE CAPADES' Las Vegas engagement will be sponsored by the Variety Club for benefit of the Variety Heart Fund. Tickets can be ordered by mail by writing to Ice Capades, Convention Center, Las Vegas.

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