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IN MINNESOTA

BIG REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD FIGURE-8

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NORTH AMERICA'S MUSKY AUTHORITY

JANUARY 1997



- **MUSKY LEGEND HOMER LeBLANC**
- **THE ART OF PLACING A LURE**

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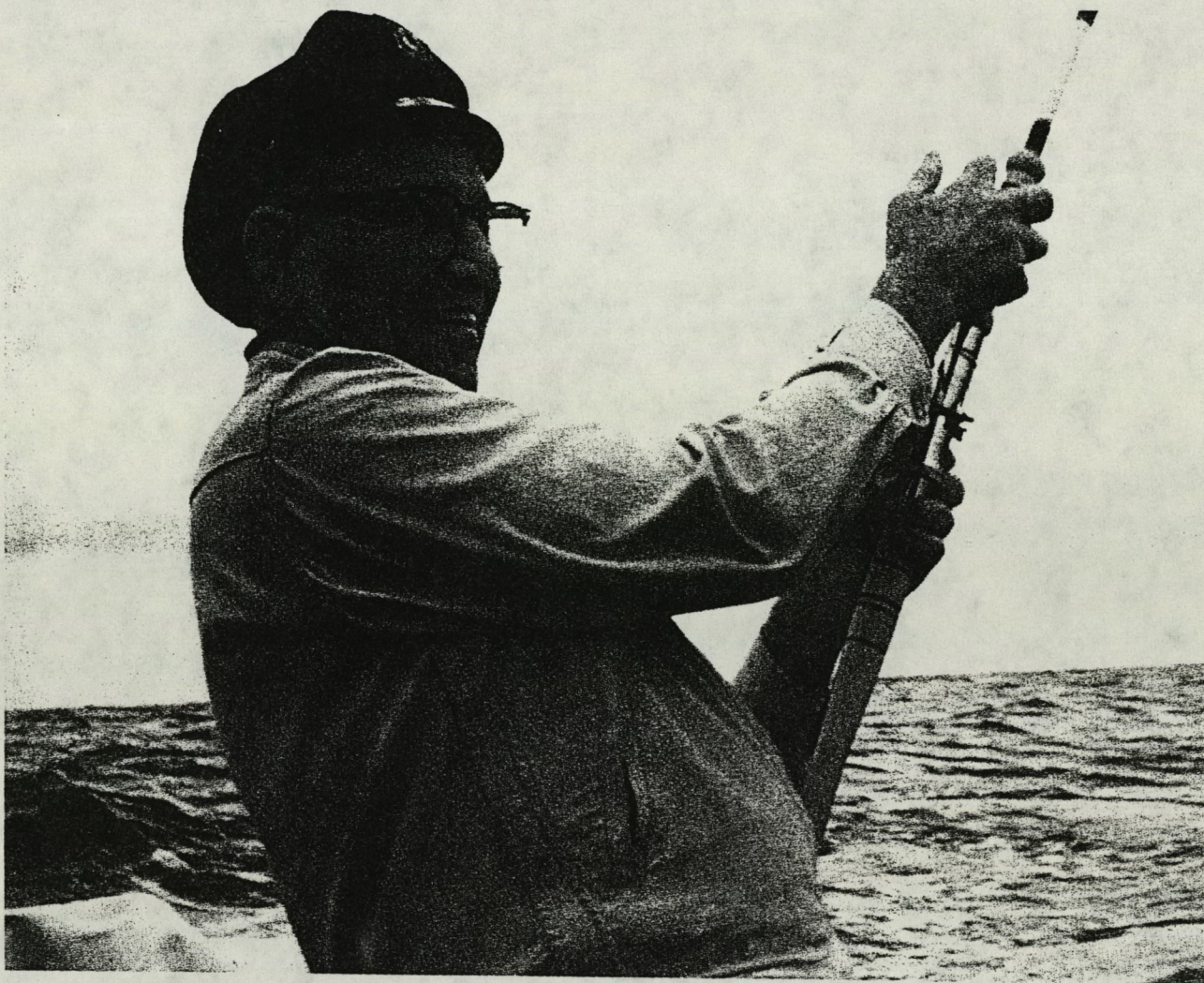
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"Big Timber Musky," by wildlife artist Rodd Umlauf, 7881 Rainbow Road, Lake Tomahawk, WI 54539, telephone (715) 277-4474.



MUSKY LEGEND HOMER LeBLANC

He wrote the book on Lake St. Clair and the propwash trolling technique

By DON MILLER

It was in the early 1980s when I first met Homer LeBlanc. Over the next decade, he became the best fishing comrade that any fisherman, pro or otherwise, would ever want to have as a mentor: "Mr. Muskie" himself. I was amazed at the thousands of antique lures, many pictures, and other fishing artifacts that gave a mute testimony of a restless, tinkering mind and of many years of fabled musky fishing on Lake St. Clair for big ones that didn't get

The late Homer LeBlanc battles a musky on one of his last trips to the fabled Lake St. Clair.

away. His basement was literally a museum, and all who entered had to sign his visitors' book.

Author of a book entitled, *Muskie Fishing, Fact and Fancy. Lore and Lure* and characterized as Mr. Muskie throughout his career, Homer was constantly inventing and making lures to go musky fishing. He ran the state of Michigan's most successful charter boats and guided on them for over 30 years. He also had his complete, distinct line of tackle that he made and sold.

Homer may never have set the world's record for the largest catch, but no one disputes the fact that he caught the most. When I would ask him how

many he caught, he would candidly reply, "Thousands." Any musky fisherman would acknowledge that there aren't any bad muskies — small or large. On September 11, 1986, Homer was finally inducted into the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. "Fish hard, and think like a musky" were Homer's fishing words of wisdom.

Born in Stoney Pointe, Ontario, along Lake St. Clair's shoreline on August 3, 1901, Homer began catching muskies when he was six years old while fishing with his grandfather.

A jack of all trades, Homer worked as a carpenter, ran a laundromat, boxed as a prize fighter, and even sold eggs and

DON MILLER

butter until 1933 when he retired so he could make being a musky guide his primary profession.

PROPWASH TROLLING PIONEER

Before he made fishing his livelihood, Homer made frequent trips to Florida and noticed how the churning waters of the boat engines would attract fish. He then applied his theory of salt-water fishing to freshwater tactics, placing a bait right behind the boat for Lake St. Clair muskies. His theory was if muskies had no natural enemies that inhabit the water, why would they be afraid of a boat.

Homer set out in his first boat, which was 12 feet in size and had a 2 1/2 horsepower motor, purchased for a sum of \$40, to prove his theory. He hadn't traveled a mile on his first outing when he caught a musky right in the boat's propwash!

Once he was convinced that his theory was correct and muskies were fearless and didn't know what boats were, he perfected the Homer LeBlanc trolling setup on a 26-foot Chriscraft, his first professional boat. His design was such that you could fish eight rods off the boat while trolling. LeBlanc's theory was a stunning success, and he began to conduct seminars across the state of Michigan from sportsmen's clubs to school gymnasiums and marinas, where people would come to be instructed on

Homer LeBlanc in his younger days, holding a good fish caught on his Swimm Zag spoon.

how, what, when and where to catch muskies. However, his technique and tackle were often considered ridiculous by those uninitiated to the LeBlanc method of fishing.

More naive, yet somewhat more polite, neophytes considered the crusty oldtimer's approach to catching musky illogical. In the end, neither group could refute his success. LeBlanc could produce hookups with big fish when everyone else on the lake was producing zeros.

From 1935 to 1940, Percy Haver was claiming sensational catches of muskies, but Homer never gave any credence to him because Haver was always fishing alone, or no one was around to observe him. Personally, LeBlanc never acknowledged Haver's records, which have since been proven to have been falsified.

The word was out in the early 1950s about Homer's success and the type of tackle he manufactured. Several tackle shops wanted his tackle, and nothing else would do. After a day's outing on the lake, Homer would come in and make more tackle and lures to wholesale to the local area tackle shops. It's a fact that because of supply and demand,

the LeBlanc tackle setup was often rented to an angler for \$2 (with a \$15 deposit) because Homer couldn't supply the requests fast enough.

Throughout his charter career, Homer taught thousands of people and fished with notables like former Michigan governor G. Mennen Williams, baseball great Ted Williams, Michigan Out-of-Doors television host Mort Neff, and almost every major outdoor writer in the country.

TACKLE MANUFACTURING

Homer went into the tackle business in 1952 because he was dissatisfied with the musky lures that were on the market. He wanted a spoon that wouldn't twist the line and had better hooking qualities. He had some dies put together and developed the Swimm Zag spoon.

A couple years later, he developed the 4-B spinner, which was created because of lost muskies that would bite the wire shank and spinner blade, missing the hook with the bucktail on it. His 4-B spinner added an extra hook rolled in the wire with strung beads in front of the spinner blade, as well as the standard hook at the end of the spinner. The

