

38-inch 'Thing' put up a fight

Steady Eddy pointed to the Polaroid snapshot like Babe Ruth pointing to the centerfield wall at Wrigley.

"That is George Bierman," he said proudly, "the one with the railroad cap. He is flanked by wife and daughter who saw it all."

What they saw, Steady explained patiently, was George hooking and landing the 38-inch Thing he was holding. The Thing looked like fat garden hose.

"It's a brown eel," Steady said. "A three-pounder. George caught it on a nightcrawler at Westport. Some doc at the university says they're kinda rare around here."

"That Thing," I told him, "is as long as your arm."

"That Thing," he told me, "is as long as my leg. Bierman says it fought like sonofagun. Actually he said something saltier but you get the idea."

I remember the time we were catching mud puppies eons ago in Pewaukee when we bottomfished for bluegills and I'd cut the hooks off rather than touch them.

"At first, he was thinking of having it mounted," Steady said. "But now he thinks he'll just eat it. Bierman says the eels taste just like

muskie. Nice white meat. You just skin 'em and steak 'em."

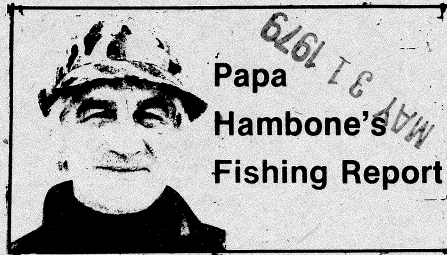
Steady allowed that he himself didn't have a recipe for eel because "I wouldn't ever touch anything that ugly myself."

Later, Dick Stenlund, who fishes catfish and isn't put off by ugliness offered a recipe for Stewed Eel From Mel Thornton's Hungry Sportsman's Fish and Game Cookbook:

Skin and clean a two to three lb. eel and cut into two-inch pieces. Place in kettle with just enough water to cover, season with one t. salt, six-inch pieces of celery and four peppercorns. Cover and simmer until fish is done, about 45 minutes. Remove celery and peppercorns from liquid, add four T. butter, and thicken with one T. cornstarch dissolved in a little cold water. Pour over stewed eel.

"And if there's any water left," Stenlund concluded, "pour it over the stewed cook."

LAKE MENDOTA: Catfish are going pretty good at Westport. Walleyes in University Bay, on the bayside off the boathouse. Fish are two, three, four pounds. Mostly jigs and minnows. In six to eight feet. Good bullhead action in the bay, some biggie bluegills mixed in. Full of spawn, not on their beds yet.



Smallmouth action in Maple Bluff area. Some northerns off Governor's Island, but nothing real big.

Northerns off Six Mile Crick at Camp Indianola. Sucker, six to eight inches your best bet. They're getting largemouth bass here — some nice fish — mostly on crawlers.

Northern fisherpersons are trolling the West side of Maple Bluff with No. 9 and No. 13 Rapalas. They're taking good fish trolling from the CMI building up to the university area. With Siver Rapalas, No. 13. Small crappies are still everywhere at Tenney Park. Small minnows, small jigs. Some bluegills off The Hatch Cover, but nothing fantastic yet.

Folks with a little luck on the big water:

• Kerry Adler, Cross Plains. Musky, 10 lb 3 oz, 35 inches, on a Sucker.

• Gordon Harvey, Madison. Smallmouth Bass, 5 lb 8 oz. 20 1/2 inches. On a Rapala.

• Lyle Holbach, Monona. Smallmouth, 3 lb 3 oz on a crawler.

• Chuck Belz, Madison. Largemouth Bass, 6 lb even, on a spinnerbait.

LAKE MONONA: Some walleyes off The Rockpile, on leeches. Nothing big. Still getting small crappies at The Gas Outlet. Average size northerns behind the old Post Office, four to six pounds.

At Turville Point, some decent panfish in six to eight feet.

In Squaw Bay, bass action pretty good in three to four feet. Bass are right around two to three pounds.

Try off Olin Park for crappies. They're here, but they ain't big.

Some muskies of Law Park, most just legal size, 30 inches but there was a 10-pounder taken.

Lucky folks on Monona were:

• A. T. Richman, Madison. Walleye, 3 1/2 lbs on an Ugly Bug.

• Bob Hujick, Monona. Northern Pike, 6 lb 12 oz, crankbait.

LAKE WAUBESA: Scott says there are "a million crappies" out in front of Christy's Tavern. They're small, but they're sweet.

A lot of walleyes, at night, out by The Trestle and off The Bible Camp. Mostly on jigs and minnows. Some folks are using leeches, but the jigs seem to work better until the water warms.

A few bluegills off Christy's and Goodland Park on worms.

UPPER MUD: Some largemouth bass, two to three pounds, mostly on crawlers. A few Northerns off The River, a couple in the 10 to 12 pound class. On Rapalas, Gold and Perch colored. Lots of crappies yet.

LOWER MUD: Mostly bass here. For folks who are working the cat-tails and drifting. That's the story of Stenlund's Life. Mine, too. Crawlers best bet. Not much on the bluegills.

LAKE KEGONSA: Nice walleyes at The Rivermouth. Jig and minnow. Or Rapala, No. 7, just tipped with a splitshot to get it down a foot or so. Walleyes at Colliday Point too, at night.

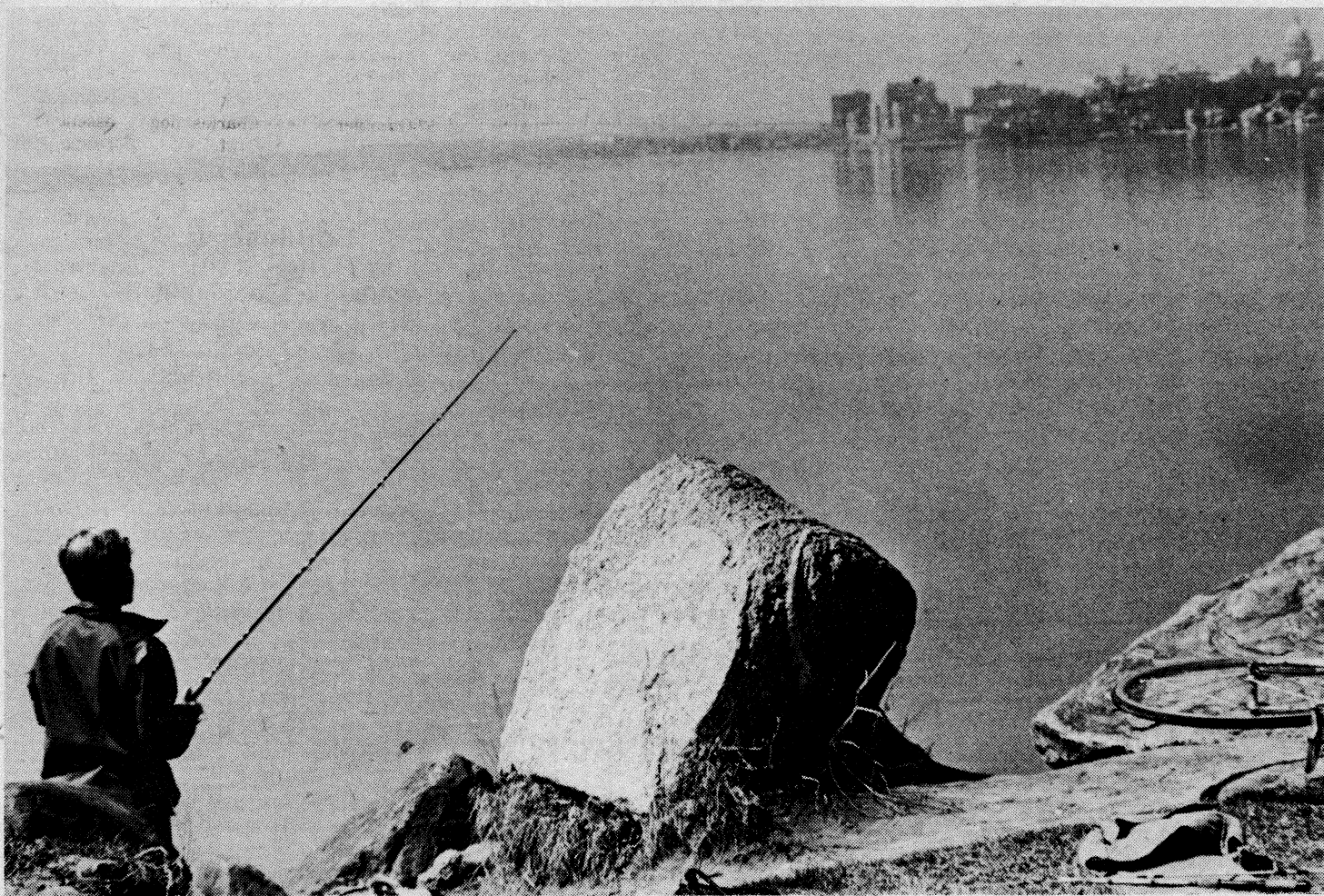
Crappies aren't huge, but take Scott's word that they're running "a little bigger" here than on other lakes. On small minnows. Jim Erickson of Milton took a White Crappie that went just over a pound and measured 13 1/4 inches. On a Pinky.

Overall, look for a whole lot more bass action, Scott says. Look for the bluegills to start poppin' with the temperatures up. Scott says he's not complaining but with The Captain away so much, Somebody has to watch the store, and he just hasn't had a chance to get out in the boat much yet.

"A wise old fisherman once said," The Captain twinkled, "a boat is like a candle. You start burning it at both ends, and pretty soon there's no place to sit."

I asked him what wise old fisherman that was.

He said George Bierman.



—Press Connection photo by Carmie A. Thompson

Madison's skyline forms the backdrop for this youngster fishing Lake Monona.