

THOSE FRESH WATER MUSSELS CAUSE SORE STOMACH MUSCLES

12/5/95

An interesting letter from Ed Ludwig of DeRuyter prompted a visit to Mr. Eldridge Moon's home on Bear Creek Road in Woodgate. Mr. Ludwig thought Mr. Moon was a man I should know. To quote him: "He is truly an Adirondack man. He's as much of the mountains as black flies and brook trout."

I received a most cordial welcome from both Mr. and Mrs. Moon. The conversation was easy and it was no surprise that our interests and acquaintances were similar and paralleled each other's.

We both had been avid trappers and had spent many days camped out back in the woods. Eldridge was one up on me though, because Mrs. Moon had on occasion shared his trapping trips with him.

I began dropping names and Eldridge was quick to pick up on many of them and relate his recollections of the people.

Two of the first were Carl and Tub Kornmeyer, forester brothers who worked for Gould Paper Company. Eldridge ran into them on his way into his beaver trapping camp. They were on their way out from cruising timber in the early 50s. After introductions were over they cautioned him about a bear den adjacent to the trail. They allowed as how they had prodded the bear with a long pole for sport and had left the bear in an agitated state. Needless to say, he was thankful for the warning.

Cliff Griffith was another person we both knew and admired. Cliff was Eldridge's cousin and as one might expect, shared many outdoor adventures. I also learned that they had each built a number of state lean-tos on Alger Island.

I was in charge of the operation of Alger Island in the early 60s and Cliff worked for me building a number of the later lean-tos.

Cliff was an interesting character and one of the finest craftsmen I have ever known. The lean-tos on Alger remain a testimonial of both his and Eldridge's skills. It was another matter, however, that I best remember Cliff for.

I informed Cliff that we would be re-roofing the lean-to on Middle Branch Lake and he was ecstatic. He gushed on about the excellent fresh water mussels in the lake and

how we should plan on a big batch of them for lunch.

On the appointed day we went prepared with cocktail sauce and vinegar, our appetites whetted with the thought of how good they would taste. Clyde Schwartz was working with us and at lunchtime all three of us waded into the mussels. I correct myself – Cliff was the only one doing the wading.

After only one apiece, Clyde and I had some reservations. We did each get one more steamed mussel down when we called it quits.

I spent the night on the john eliminating the effects of those two mussels. Bright and early the next morning the phone rang and it was Schwartz. He wanted to know if I was still alive and when he learned just barely he replied, “Cliff must be dead.” Clyde had the same results I did and we both assumed that Cliff had to have had a fatal result from the number of mussels he had consumed.

To make a long story short, Cliff proved that he was a true Adirondacker, suffering no ill effects whatsoever.

I forgot to ask Eldridge if he had ever tried fresh water mussels. I plan to have ample opportunity to do so on my next visit with him.

For myself, never again.