

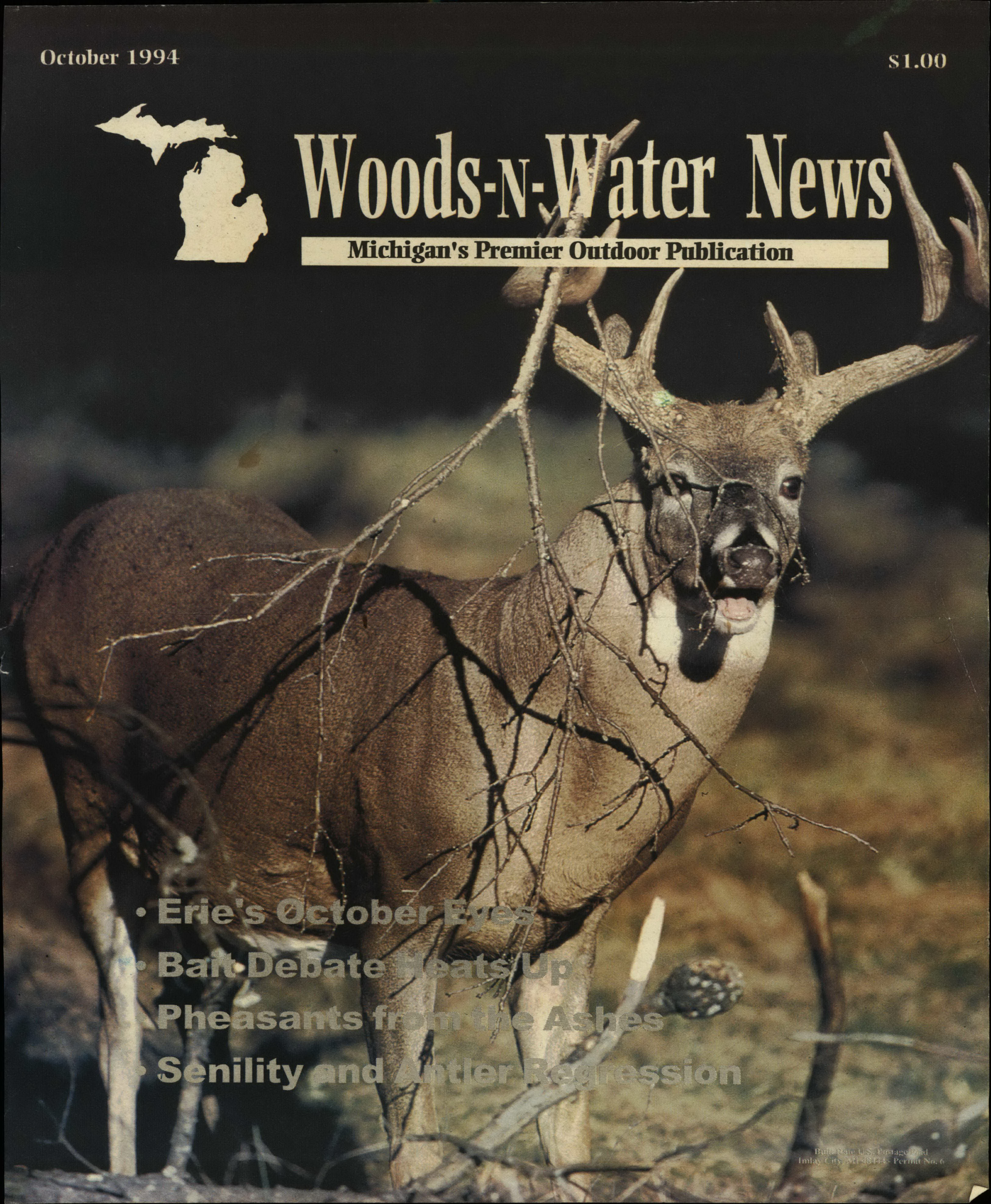
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# Woods-N-Water News

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# Muskie fishing is big on thrills and catches

By George Richey

"There's one — It's on the down rod," said Captain Don Miller. A person would have to be both blind and deaf not to see the rod jerking in the Down Easter rod holder, or hear the chatter from the Penn reel as line was being pulled off in bunches. I was the first person to the rod, and had a hard time getting it out of the rod holder. A heavy thumping on the other end told me I was tied to an angry muskie.

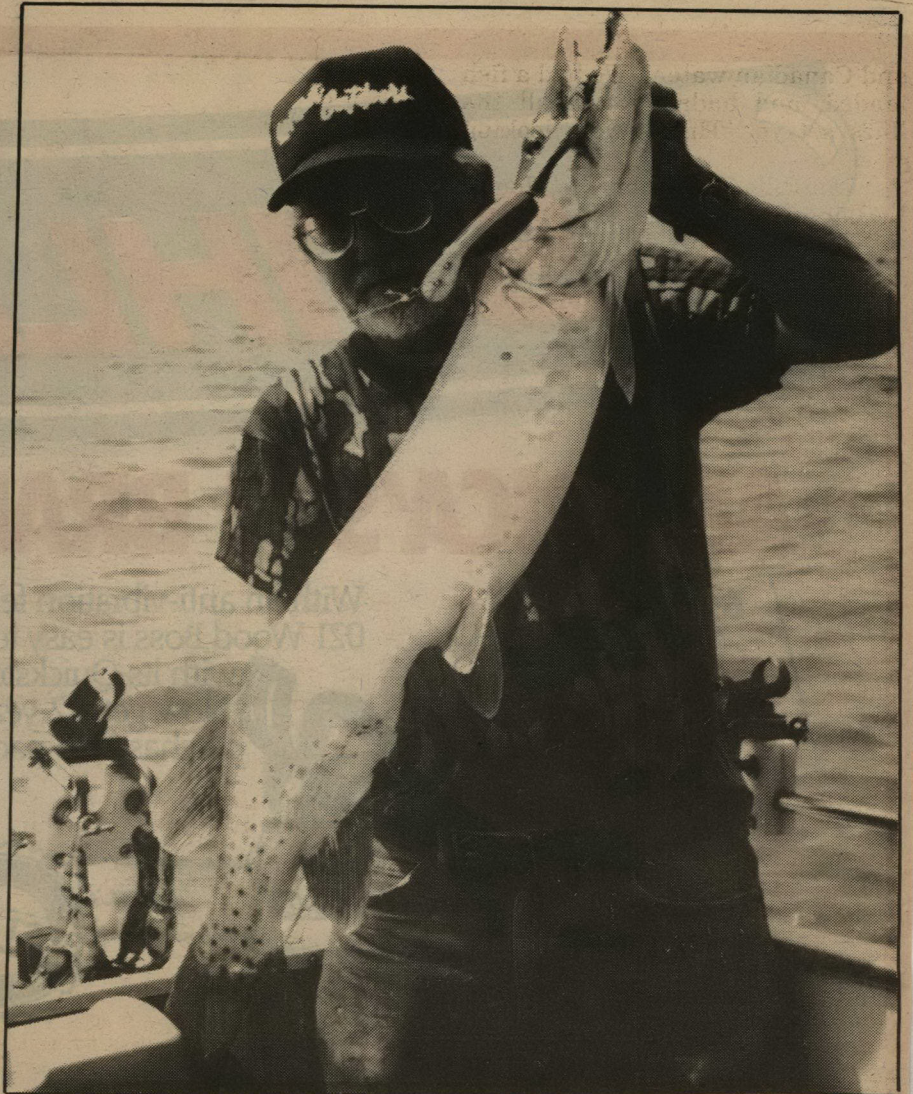
Leonard "Butch" Thompson of Honor and I were trolling on Lake St. Clair with Captain Don Miller who runs the Muskie Hunter charterboat for the big black spotted Great Lakes Muskie. Don learned much of his muskie knowledge from the famous Captain Homer LeBlanc. He developed a trolling system, where rods are positioned on the boat to allow the lures to run right in the prop wash, off the

corner of the boat. This is a very unique system, and as our day would indicate, it's also highly productive.

The muskie on my line hit just five feet off the corner of the boat, and he didn't want to get any closer to the boat. Rod pressure finally wore the fish down, and soon I led the muskie in next to the boat so Don could extract the hooks from the bass colored Believer from the jaw of the black spotted fish. The muskie was about three or four inches short of the 42 inch minimum, so I took a quick photo of Don with the fish and he returned the fish to Lake St. Clair to continue growing.

A 38 or 39 inch muskie looks pretty good size, but there are lots of muskie in this size range, which indicates good growth thanks to a catch and release ethic, and a 42 inch minimum on both Michigan

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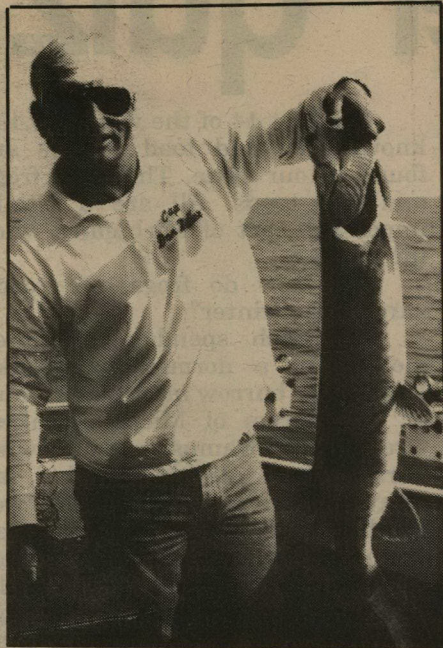
After a photo and the lure carefully removed this 22 pound muskie was released by the author.

and Canadian waters. We had a fish landed, and hadn't gotten all the lines set yet. Things were looking good!

Don filled us in on the Homer LeBlanc trolling system as we ran at five miles per hour in search of another muskie. "Long ago, Homer figured out the muskie, and determined these fish are fearless. Running the baits close behind the boat works the best — pure words of wisdom from Mr. Muskie — Homer LeBlanc," said our 40-year-old grey haired charter skipper.

About the only thing different we were doing that Homer LeBlanc didn't do, was running a planer board out on each side. We had two down rods with the lures running tight off the corner of the boat, and two rods with the lures running about 25 feet behind the boat. Rod placement, with varying amounts of lead weight and distances behind the boat allowed us to run the lines and never tangle — and take muskie.

Butch was next up, when a black spotted muskie hammered a white perch colored Mason plug that was also run on a down rod. The reel was screeching, and the rod was trying to jerk out of the rod holder. Butch managed to get the rod out, and went to work on the muskie. As soon as I heard the reel, I looked at the corner of the boat, and the



Captain Don Miller about to release another muskie. Photo by Author

muskie actually came up within a foot of the corner of the boat.

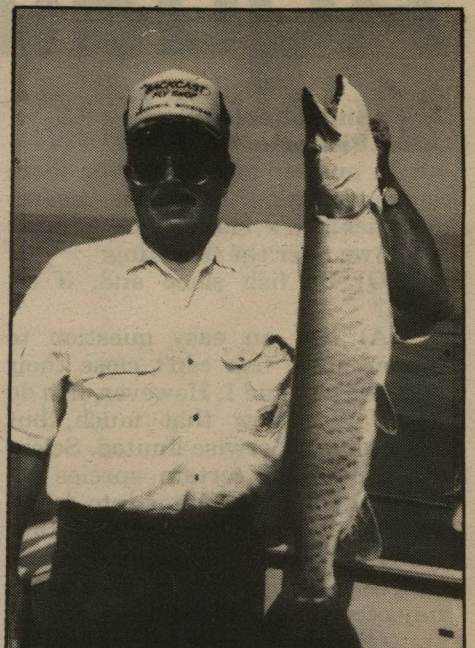
"It feels good — I don't know if it's a legal fish or not, but we'll see," said the postmaster from Honor. Gradually, he wore the muskie down and led it in where Don could get the hooks out. A quick photo taken of Butch with his first muskie, and this fish was released — missing the minimum size by about four

inches.

Two muskie landed out of two strikes and both in less than an hour! We got the rods set again, and continued our search for a legal size muskie, or a wall hanger to take home. I asked Don how his year has been so far. He replied, "so far in 1994, we've landed 80 muskie with one 53 inch muskie landed, four muskie over 50 inches landed (with one 50" fish released), and a 48 inch fish released. It looks like I'll pass 1993's totals, when we landed 103 muskie out of 159 fish on," said our personable charter skipper.

"Homer knew Lake St. Clair like the back of his hand. He didn't need Loran or GPS — you could take him anywhere on the lake, and he could tell you how deep the water was and if there were any weeds or not," said Don Miller, talking of his instructor and good friend who passed away in late 1993. Homer LeBlanc was a legend, and was a Legendary Guide and Honorary member of the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame, and of the National Fishing Lure Collectors Club. Homer originated a lure called the Swim Whizz, which the Believer lure was patterned after. Homer LeBlanc caught a bunch of muskies over the years, and it was obvious Don had paid attention to the lessons taught by his instructor.

The down rod began shrieking,



Butch Thompson of Honor with his first muskie, about four inches under the legal size limit. Photo by Author

as a good size muskie was taking line in short spurts. As I reached the rod, I looked backward, and saw a good fish boil on the surface. Keeping a tight line on the muskie was my first priority, and to take my time until Don was able to clear the other lines. This fish was strong,

*LeBlanc  
8/10/94  
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