



The CRAYFISH TALE

CELEBRATING SIX YEARS OF TRAP SALES

Time flies when you are having fun. And after six years of importing, making and selling crayfish traps, I must admit that I have been having a lot of fun watching my business grow. After retiring my computer career at Motorola, I first started growing organic vegetables on our five acre 'farm' near Payson. It was never my intention to get into that business, it just happened. I started gardening to have something to do, and before you knew it, I was producing too much for our own consumption.

A similar thing happened with my crayfish traps. For years I had used the Swedish crayfish traps my brother sent over. With those I became thoroughly hooked on catching crayfish, and, of course, eating crayfish. For years, while still working as a computer programmer, I took home a thousand crays every summer we went up the Arizona mountains for recreation.

So for several years, while I was growing organic veggies in my back yard, I was also catching large amounts of crayfish each summer following in my father's foot steps. Soon catching crayfish became more than just a summer pastime. I started really enjoying not only catching these interesting creatures; I also became addicted to eating them. Going up to that wonderful crayfish haven up in the Arizona mountains among Apache Indians became a family ritual that we all looked forward to. Well, at least I and our son, Peter, did. My dear wife unfortunately had, and still has, an allergy to crustaceans so she had to suffer on the sidelines.

Then one day I decided to not only catch crayfish but also to make my own traps. Not that there was anything wrong with the traps my brother had sent me. But the incentive to make my own traps overwhelmed me. Soon my garage was full of all sorts of different sizes and models of crayfish traps. Maybe you recall my story about making my first trap from a collapsible metal fish basket while trying – unsuccessfully – to catch trout on an Indian reservation. The fact that I could make a makeshift crayfish trap from a fish basket enticed me enough to go whole hog. I started making some traps from poultry netting and hardware cloth and to my great delight, they all caught crays, more than I could eat.

That's when I found out about how to preserve cooked crayfish by freezing them. That was at least 25 years ago, and now I always have a load of frozen crayfish in plastic containers in our freezers.

As a retiree I was always looking for something to do. Well, first it was growing veggies for the 'pick-your-own' market around Payson. I even helped start a farmer's market with some success. Then I expanded on my collection of crayfish traps by starting to build my own. Big boxy traps, most of which got stuck in the bottom debris of lakes all around. That was the time before I bought my boat. A must if you want to place and retrieve crayfish traps without losing too many of them.

Then I bought a computer and started surfing the internet. There I found who would become my mentor for making crayfish traps, a fellow up in the north-west called Bullard. He had been a professional crayfish catcher for years and had just started making and selling traps on the internet. I became intrigued by both the idea of selling on the internet as well as designing my own web site to do it.

I bought one of his traps off his web site and became infatuated with the idea of selling something on the internet. Inspired and encouraged by Bullard and his web site and his home made crayfish trap, I made my own website with the purpose of selling crayfish traps.

On April 1, 2004, I sold my first crayfish trap on the internet. At first selling crayfish traps was tough sledding, and orders barely trickled in. My west-coast mentor encouraged me, though, and gave me advice on both building and marketing crayfish traps. To my surprise he actually egged me on to join him in the business as a competitor.

Sales were slow at first, but when the year was over, I had actually sold almost two hundred traps; some my own hand made Trapper, some of the Swedish imports, the Jackpot and the BlueBoy. My wife who had at first doubted success, admitted defeat.

The following year was much improved. Sales increased by 52% and I started believing that maybe I had found something else to keep me busy as a retiree. As I improved my internet web site and saw better responses on search engines, sales also improved. A large order from a university biology department temporarily taxed my production ability, but a couple of weeks of intensive hand crafting rowed the order ashore. The first 100 traps sold was a mile stone, but when I reached the 1000 and 2000 marks, I knew I was on the right track. Each year sales increased by more than 25%.

Keeping up with orders for my hand crafted traps became increasingly difficult. I decided to handle increasing sales without taxing my own production ability by importing more of the fine traps coming out of Sweden. The Trappy, the Jackpot, the Cray Shack became my main trap lines soon to be joined by the large Trappy XL. The hand made Trapper, an outstanding producer, took too long to make. One of my best producers, the big Jumbo, became too time consuming and hard to produce and has joined the Blue Boy and the Cray Shack on the retired shelf.

The coming year, twenty-ten, will be represented well by the Trappy XL, the Trappy, the Trapper and the Jackpot crayfish traps. With the demand for crayfish

traps still increasing, this new year may become another Trapper Arne banner year.

Trapper Arne