



By Michael Heller
Water LIFE editor

I came across some Tar Off Towelettes in an old beach bag stashed in the garage since way before Charley. I hope it was not an omen. I grew up with tar on the beach. If you hung out on Miami Beach like I did in the 50s and 60s you would remember the bottles of solvent and oil-covered rags that bathers used to clean their feet before they left the sandy beach and headed home. All the big hotels had tar removal stations as well. The tar came from the shipping lanes and the Port of Miami. It was hard, dark brown and oily, thankfully there wasn't a lot of it.

I got up this morning and put on my old jean shorts. Outside it will be 93 and humid. We have no oil or tar around here and I am going to be in the water early. While I have coffee I wonder what BP's oil will do to our waterfront real estate value.

The heat seems hotter now. We just got back from Colorado where it was in

the 50s at night and 80s with no humidity during the days. Our *temperature tolerance requirement* went from being comfortable before we left with the air in the house at 80, to now needing the air set at 76 and still being hot and sweaty all the time. In Denver it was cool ... and no one talked about oil.

All those years in the sun take a toll. The skin doctor told me to wear sunscreen, long pants, a long sleeved shirt and one of those silly Little-Bo-Peep hats. 'Boating or wade fishing are bad because of the reflections,' he said.

I found a hat with an oversize brim and a drape that covered the back of my neck. Problem was, the bill had little flaps on the side and they limited my peripheral vision so that I was bumping into things. The big brim also caught the wind hard on the boat. So I got some shears from the garage and modified it. After that the hat was much better for my vision, but when I wore it for the first time in front of my wife, she said I looked like Rocky the Flying

Squirrel. So that hat is now history.

Next I found a nice white Columbia, round-brimmed, hat. Twenty two bucks at Bass Pro and I brought it home.

'Thanks,' my wife said and she has taken to wearing it. She needed sun protection too and it looks so good on her so I won't ask for it back. I'm convincing myself it was a ladies' hat anyway.

I looked for a hat while we were in Denver. At REI, the mountain outfitters store, they had some really nice summer hats, but they were too hot for Florida. At Schepler's Western wear I found a great straw summer cowboy hat that fit perfectly, but when I looked at myself in the mirror and envisioned walking into Fishin' Franks I put it right back.

Maybe I'll just get one of those Gilligan's Island hats with brass eyelets and a little rope through it. At least that will cover my ears. And as far as the Tar Off Towelettes go, I hope we don't need them. I think the ones I found may have dried out over the last 20 years.



Tar removal packets like these were popular beach-bag accessories on Florida's southeast coast 20 years ago.

Potential Consequences of Oil

Oil spill outline as of June 25

Biologists have little experience with undersea oil plumes.

"This is going to be groundbreaking science," said Roger Helm, chief of the environmental quality division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Microbes that customarily feed on oil seeping from the seabed are expected to consume most of this oil, but that creates its own problems. The bugs use up oxygen needed by other sea creatures, potentially creating dead zones devoid of animal life, says Frank Muller-Karger, professor of biological oceanography at the University of South Florida.

Stony Brook's William Fisher says that the spill might promote bacteria that convert inorganic mercury into toxic methylmercury, which is then taken up in the flesh of fish and other seafood.

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