

Yeopim Pork Men

by Kitty Boots

Ten of the best hog cookers in the state were invited to the East Carolina Barbecue Cook-Off. The Yeopim Pork Men, consisting of Mike, his brother, Eric and friend, Danny Ray, were stunned by the invitation. Mike kept walking around saying, "Man, I don't fuckin' believe it! Goddamn, we gotta chance. We finally gotta chance!"

Mike is the local go-to in Hertford to cook a hog. Got a community fund raiser, wedding, truck-pull, Pow-Wow, family reunion? Call Mike. His hogs are as legendary as his six-foot something Lumbee-Tuscarora presence. A warrior at the grill.

The trio stuffed their grilling equipment in a battered van and left for Dixieland Speedway at 4:30 am. The hog had to be on by 7:00, salted and peppered, skin side down. Eric rode shotgun cradling a jug of homemade sauce, his specialty. Danny Ray sat in the back of the van steadying the hand-painted Yeopim Pork Men sign.

Firing up the coals, Mike got the hog on. At 8:30 Eric and Danny Ray had started on the weed and liquor. By 12:00 noon they were totally fucked up and had attracted a crowd of like-minded hangers-on. Mike towed his face, slogged through the August heat to the van and said, "Hey, you motherfuckers, get the hell out of here. This ain't what we came here for. Sorry-ass fuckers."

The judges came around for the first part of the competition, the sauce. Mike

poured the required amount from the jug into the judge's glass jar. Eric, shirtless, barefoot and wearing shortie overalls cut to the nuts, staggered out of the van, grabbed the jug of sauce from Mike and zig-zagged through the crowd after the judges, his size 15 feet raising atomic mushroom clouds. "The sauce, hey, the sauce, you forgot the sauce," he yelled, and disappeared into the crowd.

About 1,000 barbecue aficionados had gathered in the bleachers. A disc jockey from station W05.7 Country was introducing the participants. "From Hertford, we have the "YEE-OH-PUM" Pork Men." Eric stomped up bleacher seats, joggling sticky-faced kids and weather-beaten grandmas. Grabbing the microphone from the disc jockey, he said, "It's "YO-PUM" you asshole." They were immediately disqualified.

The crowd screamed and hollered. Eric scrambled down the bleacher seats and tackled Danny Ray. "It's all your fault, motherfucker," screamed Eric. They traded fists, rolled around in the dust. Eric picked Danny Ray up by the heels and spun him around in a circle about six inches off the ground. Danny Ray's prosthetic leg came off in Eric's hand.

