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Few of us get to experience true greatness in the line of work or hobby we choose. Those of us who have had the good fortune to work, fish, travel, argue, socialize, or just be around Wright have been exposed to *his* personal greatness, in all its perfect and imperfect human form, only limited by his time on Earth. Wright passed away on January 23, 2023, at the age of 79, after a long and difficult battle with Alzheimer’s disease.

AUSTRALIA AND THOSE GIANT BLACK MARLIN

When it comes to the best of the best in any arena, in their time and place, everything comes together to create an opportunity for incredible success. In Wright’s case, it was the fledgling black marlin fishery at Cairns, Australia, that brought together a collision of his skills, inquisitiveness, love of fishing, and sense of adventure that created the mind-boggling career he amassed there.

To be sure, no one did more to promote the Cairns fishery to anglers in the US with his stories and photographs. He created an opportunity for an industry by mixing his skillset with a business acumen and his ability to entertain guests in a safe and big-fun way.

Capt. Peter Bristow, who ran *Avalon* for the heavy-tackle season there for more than 25 years, came to Cairns a year after Wright, and they became quick friends. Bristow says: “Peter was the most prolific promoter of Cairns who ever set foot on the dock, who ever existed. I mean, George [Bransford] set the place on fire catching that first world-record grander. Peter was his crewman after that. The place where it all came from was that heavy-tackle group in Bimini and Cay Cay [in the Bahamas], and fortunately for us, we had the honor of the anglers coming down who brought their captains and crews with them. Peter really put it on the map with all the people he brought down. He was the strongest promoter we ever had.”

A TIRELESS DRIVE FOR SUCCESS

All this talk of greatness would lead one to believe that the person was near-holy, a spiritual icon able to walk on water. Wright was fully human. He made mistakes,

and freely admitted it when he did. He’d sometimes cut his schedule too close, so he didn’t have enough time to properly prepare. He relied on his deckhands to make up for it. He could argue with a tree if he had a point to get across, which made many folks bristle at his stubbornness or conviction in his position.

The scientist in him collected data points all the time, and he used that data to make his points. And you’d better not try to argue with him without a large proven data sample of your own. If you speculated or fiddled with the facts, he’d nail you.

Wright had great compassion for family and friends. He’d go out of his way to help with something if he could. He was patriotic and proud of his birth country, and his adopted one—Australia.

Wright used his acute understanding of the mechanics of his job with ease, mastering the logistics of supplies, provisions, tackle and crew for those long seasons on the reef. When you fished and traveled with Wright, he made sure that the guests had a full day. He’d introduce them to diving, fishing, throwing poppers, vertical jigging, shooting flying fish off the bow with a shotgun—whatever that place offered—while he squeezed all the benefit out of it to give you a complete and robust experience. There was no sitting at the dock, but there was always an adventure awaiting.

INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Another icon from the Cairns fishery, Capt. Dennis “Brazakka” Wallace started fishing there the same year Wright did. The two had endless adventures together throughout their lives, and saw the development of so many things with tackle and gear that are regarded as commonplace today.

“In the early days [in the 1970s], we were having a lot of trouble with wire,” Wallace says. “We were using 0.040 piano wire, and that was good strong wire, but not for these marlin bouncing all over the back of the boat. Pete was the one who instigated like he always did and got us all together, saying, ‘We’ve got to do something about this.’ So, we started double-wrapping it, and that’s where the double-wrapped leaders came from. Then we went to



Wright possessed a highly inquisitive, scientific mind and was always seeking to learn more about the ocean and its inhabitants (above). He collaborated with the author (opposite, on right) on numerous projects throughout his career.



COURTESY IGFA / IGFA.ORG (TOP RIGHT), CAPT. KARL ANDERSON (2)