

Remembering Rosa Lee 'Hump' Chisolm, a woman of the water

Echoes still ring across the creek from a Hilton Head Island woman who all but lived in the water.



Rosa Chisolm

Not many women did what "Ms. Hump" did. Rosa Lee Chisolm rowed her bateau up and down Broad Creek until she was pushing 80 years old — when her children insisted she come up on the hill and rest with her ducks and guineas.

She went into the creek alone, wearing pants, a cap and warm clothing.



DAVID LAUDERDALE

dlauderdale@islandpacket.com
843-706-8115

Others say they loved to hear her singing or whistling as she pulled the oars, always in rhythm with the tide, wind and moon.

Spiritual songs echoed across the

creek, a sweet sound against the clanks of buckets and the buzz of outboards. But Elizabeth Chisolm says her mother's favorite song was the Ray Charles hit "(Night Time Is) The Right Time."

Rosa Lee Chisolm was born almost 89 years ago to Richard and Viola Chisolm on the south end of Hilton Head Island. She was raised on the water in an area now called Calibogue Cay in Sea Pines. When she died Nov. 4, she was buried beside her parents in the Braddock's Point Cemetery in Harbour Town.

She lived in the same ways of her parents: eating fresh vegetables, fruit

and nuts from the land and fish from the creek. They raised hogs and chickens to eat, and cotton to sell. "They got everything from the earth," Elizabeth Chisolm said.

Her daddy made "Hump" a shrimp net and a mullet net. He got Solomon Campbell to build her a bateau. She could always bring home more fish than anybody. People wondered how she did it, just as they were puzzled by how she got her nickname. She knew the silent signs in the creek, and passed it down to four generations.

As a young woman, she earned her living from the creek. Elizabeth said

her mother would pass big barrels of crabs straight from her boat to one from the Blue Channel cannery in Port Royal. In the winter, she shucked oysters for Frank Toomer on Skull Creek.

At some point, "Hump's" daddy moved up the island to farm a tract on Marshland Road now called Chisolm Place. When I met her there in 2005, she sat in her neatly raked backyard, surrounded by potted plants in a warm December sun. Beside her were two buckets filled with pecans. In front of her was a pen of yacking

Please see HUMP on 5A