



#### Contact the Artist

www.GregAragon.com  
727-639-1848

#### LA: When are you the most proud of your work?

GA: When the scales and other details of the fish show up good on the rubbing and the colors match or come very close to the natural colors of the fish. Gytaku (fish rubbing in Japanese) is a tricky procedure because you're working with the actual fish as your canvas and then pulling your work of art off the fish by rubbing or pressing paper on the wet painted fish. I have perfected this method through 15-years of trial and error and my rubbings look like the actual fish that was rubbed. I've always made sure not to do any detailing or painting after rubbing which keeps the artwork a true Gytaku of the fish that was rubbed and doesn't interfere with its natural features. Occasionally I still will do traditional black ink on white rice papers that shows the traditional ancient Japanese method of Gytaku with much detail.

#### LA: Who are some artists that you enjoy and draw inspiration from?

GA: I met Diane Rome Peebles years ago when I went to her studio to get a limited edition (Tarpon Bust) and I just missed the last one. But it was a privilege to get to meet the artist and I have a few of her limited editions! She also signed one of her great, fish ID posters for me at an art show. She did a couple of famous fish rubbings, a tarpon bust and some lookdowns, many years ago. I have the lookdown

*I could go on forever about the pier but I've got to mention this one evening at the Blind Pass Jetty. It was a sunset outgoing tide and we were anchored-up, catching snook after snook on live bait. About a half-dozen dolphin move in and start chasing the snook, catching them in mid-air and swallowing them whole. They would smash the bigger, 15 or so pounders in half and then swallow them. I wish I had that on video! It lasted 10 to 15 minutes and drew a crowd on the beach.*

limited edition print. I use Diane's great fish illustrations sometimes to get color and detail ideas. I've been privileged to have my Gytaku art on display in some of the same, fine restaurants that feature her work.

#### LA: Where is your favorite place to go to get inspired?

GA: Anchored at John's Pass or any of the other great local passes on a sunset outgoing tide with big grunts and shad on the bottom (big rigs) in the rod holders, waiting to get bent by a big snook, cobia, keeper gag, goliath or tarpon (mostly snook, which I love to eat and is one of my better fish rubbing subjects).

#### LA: You grew up locally and have spent quite a bit of time on the water. What alarming changes/trends have you observed?

GA: One thing I think is really wild is how 30 or 40 years ago, fishing was unbelievably great and you saw things you never see anymore. Things like giant schools of spotted eagle rays or (leopard rays) by the hundreds – giant manta rays – tons of mullet schools. As great as the fishing was then, nowadays we're catching fish that would have been major news back then; fish like big permit on the wrecks, blackfin tuna and all the sailfish being caught near-shore during the kingfish season. Techniques have improved and I think conservation (net ban, etc.) has also helped.

#### LA: What are some of your greatest memories of the time you've spent on the water?

GA: In the 40 years I've spent on local waters, some of my most unbelievable experiences were growing up fishing off the Big Indian Rocks Pier! I always thought I could write a killer book on the stories of fishing that historical fishing pier that bred many (pier rats) in to great local fishing captains! Stuff like the 300-pound southern stingray caught by a shark fisherman and the 1000-pound tiger shark Terry Gue caught fishing with me, Mike Busch and Bob Henderson. But mostly it was sights like giant manta rays coming down the coastline in groups, bringing lots of big cobia with them. They would stall at the pier and some baby, 400 to 500 pounders would go sideways between the pilings. There was all the big snook, giant schools of jacks tearing up baits and beer cans crushing railings to alarm fishermen that their jewfish ropes were about to break another railing unless two to five strong men ran over and pulled up the 300 to 400 pound goliath.