

Winner's dinners Sunday Times 18.4.10

Some alligator, please ... and make it snappy

It was Christmas night in the workhouse/And the paupers was having their dinners/And the preacher called from the top of the hall/"Get down on your knees, you sinners." I'm not sure who wrote that, although a number of rock bands have recorded versions of it. My mind turned to it when thinking of December and January in Miami, Florida. The Arctic would have been sunbathing weather by comparison.

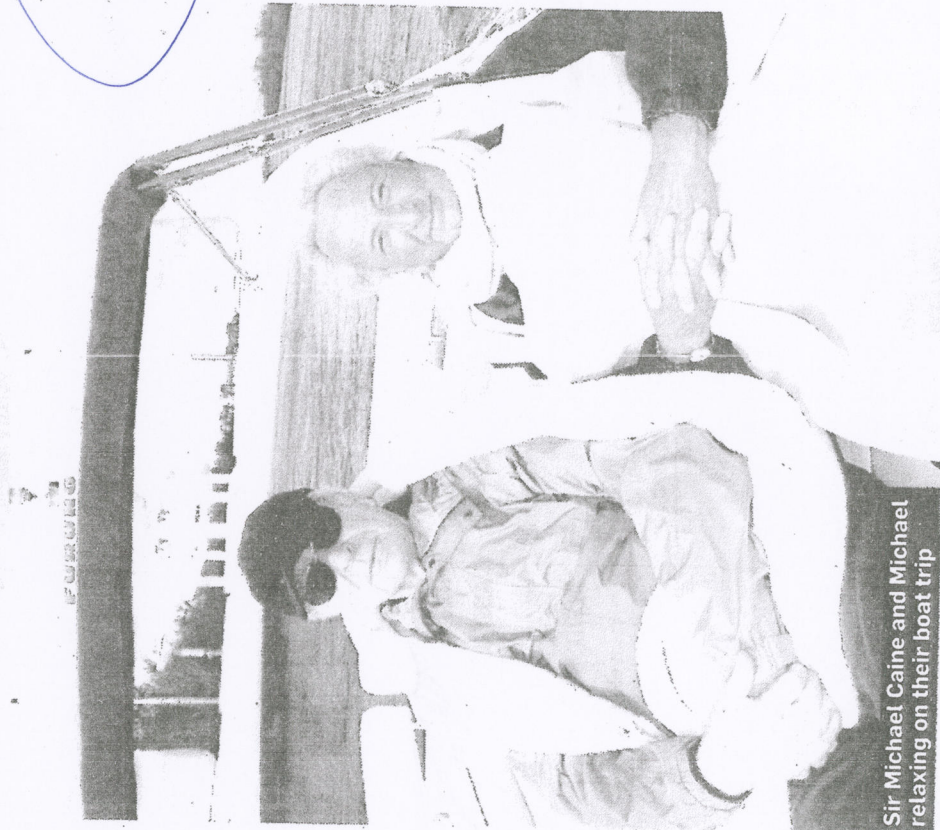
Unable to lie on my lounge (my main holiday occupation) I rented a large boat for a trip to Fort Lauderdale. The crew was a captain and two young girls who could have come straight from Playboy. They were very efficient. The passengers were me, Geraldine, Sir Michael Caine and his daughter Natasha. In our photo Michael and I look like a couple of old tarts freezing to death on a bench in Frinton-on-Sea. Actually I look like an old tart. Michael looks like a distinguished knight of the realm freezing to death in Frinton-on-Sea.

The superb Setai hotel manager, Hans Meier, had booked a restaurant but we decided it was taking too long to get there. "Let's just stop and find somewhere ourselves," suggested Michael.

By now I was going bright blue and my fingers were dropping off. "Good idea," I whispered in a feeble voice.

We landed in a little harbour and headed for the 15th Street Fisheries Dockside Café in Fort Lauderdale. The menu offered Louisiana bayou fried alligator, saying, "It tastes like a cross between chicken and pork, be adventurous — it's great!" We sat on bench seats at a wooden table. I ordered clam chowder and fried alligator. The

GERALDINE LYNTON-EDWARDS



Sir Michael Caine and Michael relaxing on their boat trip

Michael's missives

Your invitation to dinner at the Belvedere reminds me of the groom's speech I made there at my wedding reception. I told guests it was one of your local watering holes. My brother Henry, a wedding organiser, said it was the worst speech he had ever heard. The marriage ended a year later.

Charles Bonas, London

You ask us where you went after deserting the boat on Lake Anney. I say to L'Abbaye de Talloires next door. Half the price and twice the fun.

Richard Hann, Bristol

What a nice scarf you wore outside Amberley Castle. Any chance Geraldine could pull it a bit tighter?

Angus Meaney, Limerick, Ireland

I am seven years old and go to St Barnabas and St Philip's school in Kensington. Would you like to come to our school for lunch? We have a new kitchen that opens tomorrow.

Skye Harris, London

Four lovely ladies booked lunch at the New Angel in Dartmouth, Devon. We didn't sample the food as we were seated in a large upstairs crèche. We asked to go downstairs with the adults but were told there were no available tables, despite seeing three empty tables down there. The manager was haughty and didn't care when we said we'd go elsewhere. How lucky for John Burton Race to be so overwhelmed with diners he can pick and choose who eats there.

Michelle Vine, Berkshire

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