

# OLD PETE: A Reader's Theatre

A FLORIDA GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK RESOURCE

**NARRATOR:** You've heard of Paul Bunyan and his big blue ox, Babe. And surely you've of John Henry the mighty railroad man. But I bet you didn't know that Florida has its very own legendary hero. His name was Henry Peterson and he lived at Port Tampa, Florida. They called him Ole Pete. Now, like every legendary hero Old Pete was born big.

*(Kid holds up Old Pete puppet.)*

**NARRATOR:** No. Big.

*(Kid raises puppet.)*

**NARRATOR:** No. REALLY big.

*(Kid hold puppet up high.)*

**NARRATOR:** And strong, and they said his skull was one inch thick! He could crack coconuts with his bare hands!

**OLD PETE** *(cracking coconuts with his bare hands)*: Here you go, kid! Grab a straw!

**KID:** Thanks Old Pete! Yum! Coconut milk!

**NARRATOR:** And for 5 cents he would crack open coconuts on his very own skull!

*(Old Pete cracks a coconut open on his head. Spectators are amazed.)*

**KID:** That had to hurt!

*(A kid dressed in a white lab coat jumps up)*

**DOCTOR KID:** Please be advised that smashing coconuts on your head can lead to dizziness, headache pain, nausea or vomiting, loss of focus, feeling groggy, confusion. Cracking coconuts on your head may be a leading cause of cowlicks,

not writing down your homework, and broken pencil leads. See your doctor immediately if you ever call your teacher Mom.

**ALL STUDENTS:** *(stop whatever they are doing, look to the doctor)*

Oh no! Not that!

*(A student dressed in a suit and tie leaps up.)*

**LAWYER KID:** Excuse me. The legal advisors of the \_\_\_\_\_ School System and \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School have sent me to advise you that under no circumstances should cracking coconuts on your head be tried at home. Old Pete was a professional.

**NARRATOR:** For 50 cents Old Pete would get into a head butting contest with a billy goat!

*(Stick puppets act out head butting contest.)*

**LAWYER KID** *(jumping up again):* As with cracking coconuts on your head the Administration and Faculty of \_\_\_\_\_ strongly urge you NOT to get into head butting contest with billy goats.

**DOCTOR KID:** Head butting contests with billy goats can lead to headaches and dizziness.

**LAWYER KID:** And that's just to the goat.

**NARRATOR:** Now Old Pete lived and worked in Port Tampa. He started out as a longshoreman.

**OLD PETE:** Got to get all that cargo off the ship and on the wagons.

*(Stick puppet action.)*

**NARRATOR:** After Henry Plant built a railroad to the coast, Old Pete would unload the cargo right onto the train cars where all the things would be whisked away to the markets in the North. Later, Old Pete worked as a railroad switchman.

**OLD PETE:** Need to switch that track so the trains don't crash into each other.

*(Stick puppet action.)*

**NARRATOR:** Soon things got so busy at the port with all the goods coming and all the goods going that Henry Plant said,

**HENRY PLANT:** We need to make improvements to the piers and the railroads.

**OLD PETE:** I'm strong! I can help. But these itty bitty weak little tools are too fragile. I need something big!

**HENRY PLANT:** Well, I don't know...what about this ship's anchor?

**OLD PETE:** Well, it's a little small, but I guess it'll have to do....

**NARRATOR:** One time a huge live oak was in the way of the tracks.

**TRAIN WORKER:** What can we do? Even if we cut the tree down the roots will cause us problems?

**OLE PETE:** Don't worry, I'll just pull up the tree, roots and all. Then I'll take it home and chop it up for firewood.

**NARRATOR:** Once during the dog days, after a long morning of hot work Pete decided to take a nap under the train shed during his lunch break. Using the track as a nice soft pillow, he fell into a deep sleep. No one knew Pete was napping there. While he was snoozing, a switch engine pushed train cars into the shed, right onto his head causing the train to derail!

**NARRATOR:** Train workers ran to the train shed, sure that Pete had met his end.

**TRAIN WORKER:** Oh, no! Ole Pete must be hurt! Pete! Pete!

**NARRATOR:** But Ole Pete wasn't dead. He sat there for a second, shook his head, and got up slowly.

**TRAIN WORKER:** You okay Pete?

**OLE PETE:** My head feels kinda funny. I was having the strangest dream. How'd all these cars get off the track? Well I'll put em back on and get back to work.

**RAILROAD WORKER:** Good job, Pete!

**DOCTOR:** Hold up! He can't just go back to work! He hasn't passed concussion protocols!

**NARRATOR:** STOP! We need to finish this story.

**LAWYER:** If he goes back to work before getting clearance from his doctor, it leaves the railway open to legal repercussions if later something should

**NARRATOR:** Zip it!

**DOCTOR AND LAWYER:** It's very important that all contractual obligations....

**ALL THE KIDS:** Zip it!

*(They zip it. The Lawyer starts to say something.)*

**NARRATOR:** THE END!



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