

## Long Island Traditions

# NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org  
info@longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 20 No. 3  
Fall 2013

### “Working the Waters: Maritime Culture of Long Island” at the Tobay Boat Show

Saturday and Sunday, September 28-29, 2013  
Massapequa, NY

Long Island Traditions will present “Working the Waters: Maritime Culture of Long Island” in collaboration with the NY Marine Trades Association “Tobay Boat Show” in Massapequa, New York. “Working the Waters: Maritime Culture of Long Island” will present to the public first-hand accounts about the contemporary and historic traditions of commercial and recreational fishermen, the factors affecting these traditions and their future on Long Island in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and the decline of the bays. Special guests include journalist Hugh Merwin, food editor of *New York* magazine, retired fisherman Bob Doxsee of Point Lookout, and boat builder Paul Ketcham of Amityville.

See “Working the Waters” on page 2



Photo by Nancy Solomon.

Bill Hamilton, a bayman and pound trip fisherman, will be on hand at the Tobay Boat Show.

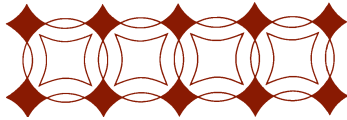
### A Story By George Merritt

In 1929, when I was two years old, my Uncle Walter and Aunt Kathleen Peters bought a brand new home on Cortelyou Rd. in Merrick, which was separated from the Village of Freeport by a stand of woods that later partly became the Meadowbrook Parkway. My sister Jane and I often visited for weeks at a time because they had no children. My Uncle Walter was a big game fisherman who fished with the Freeport Boatmen’s Association on Woodcleft canal. Often on Sunday when he didn’t go fishing we would ride down to the dock to see what the fellas (as he called them) might have caught. We would ride there in his big 4-door black Buick, with the suicide doors that were suppose to let you out easily.

When we got down to the dock, to check out the catch, maybe they caught something and maybe they didn’t. They caught a lot of tuna, bluefish and striped bass. Most of the 20 boats that docked there in the 30’s were deep-sea charter fishing boats that could take out 2 to 6 men. Two of the best boats and captains were the Empress Ann and the Julianna, captained by Mel Eldred and his brother Ben. A boating accident killed Capt. Mel; he drowned in Jones Inlet after WWII. His passengers and crew mates were saved by the Coast Guard, but he was lost and never seen again.

One of the boats that took a larger group of people was the Albert and Howard. It was a dry, safe old tub, and very slow. It had pipe railings around it, so small children and land lovers couldn’t fall overboard. Fred Carmen was the captain. After a while we would take a ride further down to the east point and on the canal on the right there were many small bungalows, right on the water between the road and the water and Guy Lombardo’s house, which had 8 to 10 foot hedges out in the front. You couldn’t really see the

See **George Merritt** on page 2.



## Long Island Traditions Inc.

Dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Long Island's living cultural heritage.

**Executive Director:** Nancy Solomon

**Board of Directors:** Mirna Cortez-Obers, Ken Maltz, Ken Robinson, Jude Schanzer, Linda Scholl & Michael Scully

**Advisory Board:** Paul Bentel, John Eilertsen, Dorothy Jacobs, Dave Opatow, John Pulis, Jean Ritchie & Wayne Wink

**Newsletter Designer:** Barbara Koelbel Bange

LI Traditions is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered with the NY State Board of Charities.

For more information call: (516) 767-8803, fax: (516) 767-8805, write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050  
E-mail: [info@longislandtraditions.org](mailto:info@longislandtraditions.org) or visit us on the web at: [www.longislandtraditions.org](http://www.longislandtraditions.org)

Copyright 2013 by LI Traditions. Permission to reproduce any article or portions thereof must be requested in writing.



## "From Shore to Shore" Exhibit

**F**rom Shore to Shore: Boat Builders and Boatyards of Long Island and Westchester" has finished its run at the Port Jefferson Village Center. This interpretive exhibit examines the history and traditions of contemporary boat builders and boatyards, exploring their commitment to an endangered way of life in the wake of superstorms, decline in fishing and the expenses associated with traditional boat building and preserving boatyards.

**The exhibit's next scheduled stop is at the Sachem Public Library for November 2013.** On Saturday, November 2nd at 11 am, curator and LI Traditions director Nancy Solomon will give a curator's talk. The event is free and open to all. A short gallery tour will take place afterwards. The library is located at 150 Holbrook Road, Holbrook, NY 11741. For information, call (631) 588-5024 or visit the library's website.

The exhibit is available for rental to area museums, libraries, and cultural institutions. Inquiries about the exhibit should be sent to [info@longislandtraditions.org](mailto:info@longislandtraditions.org) or by calling (516) 767-8803. The full exhibit consists of 36 framed panels measuring 36" x 38", a historic timeline measuring 15 feet x 3 feet, and an iPad with installed videos. The exhibit can be subdivided according to region, type of boat builders, and types of boatyards.

## Become a Member Subscribe to the Newsletter!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_

ST: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

- \$30 Basic Membership
- \$40 Supporter
- \$50 Sustainer
- \$100 Champions
- \$200 Heroes

**Please make your check payable to:**  
Long Island Traditions

**Mail to:**  
Long Island Traditions  
382 Main Street • Port Washington, NY 11050



Photo by Nancy Solomon

Costello Marine and Wooden Boat Works are based in Greenport's Hanff boatyard.

## George Merrit continued from page 1

house. There was a space for two boats underneath -- usually two boats, one named the Tempo.

We would continue down to where there were just small bungalows until we got to the east point where there was Restaurant called Johnny Liota's East Point House. In the 20's and 30's Liota's had plenty of gambling and drinking. We could see from that dock if there were any other boats coming. If not, we would turn around and drive back further north across from the Boatman's Assoc. where the Midship Cocktail Lounge owned by a fellow who was in show business and retired owned

and worked the bar. My Uncle would sit, have a beer, I'd have my Shirley Temple, before our ride home to Merrick.

At the north end of the dock was a coop for homing pigeons. The captains would take pigeons with them just in case the radio didn't work in an emergency. When they came back through Jones Inlet, which was a very dangerous inlet at that time, they would let the pigeon go, giving them exercise, and let everyone know they were coming in soon.

Friday was fish day in the Peters household. So that meant a ride to Woodcleft Canal, where you could get the freshest fish anywhere. We would go down past Randall Park, make a right turn, and there was the Viking fleet. Carl Forsberg was the owner and captain of one of the boats. It took a large amount of people, they also had rods and reels on board for you to use. I was told that many local fishermen, after a successful day on the charter boats, would go into the bar with the water up to their knees. They would belly up to the bar anyway and have a drink, the bartender wearing hip-boots. Many of the people down on the waterfront (on the commercial boats) wear hip-boots. I had a pair myself when I worked out on Meadow Island in 1942 on the bait dock. Some people would cut them, and never wear shoes, from sunrise to sunset.

The west bank of the canal was filled with all kinds of boats, trawlers, dragger, charter, open boats, boat and yacht sales, and even rowboats. After a rainy day I would go down and bail out the rowboats. My pay would be taking out one of the rowboats, where I would row up and down the canal.

There were two shipyards further down the Woodcleft canal. There was Bob Lakes, and if I'm not wrong he had a regular rail line across Woodcleft Avenue so he could take the boats out and bring them into the lot where he worked on the boats. The other yard further down was the Scopinich's, they made crash boats and picket boats for the U.S. Navy in WWII. These were rather big vessels that went out in the ocean and did all kinds of work for the Navy. They received the "E" for efficiency in WWII from the Navy and flew a flag on their flagpole, which was a great big "E".

The only two restaurants of note that I can remember were Otto's Sea Grille, where the Freeport Boatmen's Assoc. had their meeting. It was a regular restaurant that was opened all during the 30's. The other was the Schooner, and that was almost near the end of the Canal, very close to the East End of Woodcleft Canal. At the very end of the point was Bill and Johnny's Fish market, It had the finest fish on L.I. – most of it caught by L.I. baymen. At the Dock behind Bill and Johnny's was a big sailing boat, maybe 50-60-70 feet long called the Selanada It was owned by Wink Carmen, it blew away some time in the early 50's and landed up on the Meadows and was left there as long as I can remember. To the west of Bill and Johnny's were some shacks that the local baymen put their equipment in. Capt. Jack Combs and his son George kept

their garvies there. I went out clamming with them one night during the war, dragging a Shinnecock rake with an extended handle, out in a spot off Massapequa. We caught 10 bushels of clams. I know because I cleaned them off (in the water) and put them in bushel baskets the next day. It may have been illegal, but at that time people needed food and no one cared if they were out there at night or not.

In later years Bill's moved a few blocks down on the west side of Woodcleft Ave in a large brick building that also had a clam bar. The parking lot was all broken clamshells, which you often saw in driveways and everywhere else on Long Island in those days. There wasn't much else on the west side of the road, empty lots, a few cottages.

Someone took me for a ride down to Woodcleft Ave. the other day, it looks like the rebirth has started. A few of the restaurants have opened. Some looked alright from the front, but were yet to be opened. I'll tell you, it will come back, I'll guarantee you, Woodcleft Ave. the restaurants, entertainment, fishing, and all the businesses... Will come back! ■

## “Working the Waters” continued from page 1

Highlights of the event include the first Long Island home cooks Manhattan clam chowder contest, which will be judged by *New York* magazine's food editor Hugh Merwin along with others; decorative decoy carvers Ken Budny, Tom Stewart and Pete Palumbo, fishermen Bill Hamilton, George Rigby and Chuck Tekula, and boat model builder Chris Hale. A storytelling tent



Photo by Nancy Solomon

**Bayman and decoy carver Ken Budny will be participating in the Tobay Boat Show on September 28-29.**

featuring marine trade workers, boat builders, and retired or former clammers will be part of the activities, along with children's fishing lessons taught by a master recreational fisherman.

Boat Show and Festival admission is \$10 (seniors \$8, children 12 and under are free) and will take place at Tobay Beach on Ocean Parkway in Massapequa. Working the Waters Festival Hours are 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The Tobay Boat Show event hours are Thursday and Friday, September 26 & 27 at 12 p.m.-6 p.m., Saturday & Sunday, September 28 & 29 at 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information, call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803 or the NY Marine Trades Association at (631) 691-7050 or visit [www.nyboatshows.com/Tobay](http://www.nyboatshows.com/Tobay). ■

## EVENTS OF INTEREST

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you have a Long Island concert or program that focuses on some aspect of traditional culture, drop us a line and we'll put it in our "Events of Interest" column.

*Don't forget to visit our web site and our Facebook page for timely information.*

**September 28 – 29:**

"Working the Waters" at the Tobay Boat Show (see article). 10am – 4 pm. Tobay Beach Park, Ocean Parkway, Massapequa. For information call (516) 767-8803 or (516) 679-3900.

**October 12 (raindate Oct. 13):**

Greater Westhampton Kiwanis Oyster Festival (see accompanying article). One Library Avenue, Westhampton Beach. 12 – 4 pm. For more information call (631) 288-3337.

**October 28:**

Lecture by Nancy Solomon on South Shore Maritime Culture. 1:30 pm. Massapequa Library, 40 Harbor Lane, Massapequa Park. Free admission.

**November 2:**

From Shore to Shore Curator's talk by Nancy Solomon. 11 am, Sachem Library, 150 Holbrook Road, Holbrook, NY 11741. For information, call (631) 588-5024.

## Westhampton Oyster Festival

On Saturday, October 12 Long Island Traditions will be participating in the Kiwanis Club of Westhampton Oyster Festival. The event takes place at the Westhampton Beach Marina on Library Avenue. Rain date is Sunday October 13, 2013. According to the Kiwanis Club "One goal of the Oyster Festival is to raise awareness about our Waterways and the importance of preserving their Eco-systems. This will happen while enjoying oysters, clams, seafood, music, kids' rides and Marine related interests. We hope to educate attendees on the reasons why we should care for the Bays and what can be done to preserve our seaside way of life. Funds from the event will be used to help revive our Waterways and support other Kiwanis initiatives." Participating in the event will be bayman and decoy George Rigby, along with boat builder and model maker Chris Hale, and bayman Chuck Tekula. This free event runs from 10 am – 6 pm. For more information call (631) 288-3322. ■

 Printed on recycled paper

---

### Long Island Traditions

382 Main Street  
Port Washington, NY 11050