

# Long Island Traditions

## NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

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### Traditional Stories and Music Play at the Long Island Children's Museum

Some associate the word "play" with children, but the verb also includes those who "play" instruments or perform in concert. In June and July, Long Island Traditions presents four lively acts that will "play" the stage of Long Island Children's Museum. The musicians and story tellers live here now but their homelands span a wide swath including the Caribbean, Central and South America. Each folk artist will convey a diverse and distinctive blend of ethnic heritages folklore and music.

This summer your entire family can share the excitement. If you are not already familiar with our talented performers we have provided a brief introduction:

On June 12th join us for a taste of the Caribbean with Freeport's Adlib Steel Band and sound Beach resident storyteller and comedian Ken Corsbie. We then go to Peru with Brentwood resident Theo Torres and Vientos del Sur on June 26. Our final program features Freeport's Luis Cordero, a master Dominican bachata composer and his ensemble on July 17. All performances are scheduled for 1:30 and 3:30 PM.

Since 1989 the Freeport based Adlib Steel Band fills the stage with the music of approximately 15 children and adults. The band's mission is to teach children about the culture and musical heritage of Trinidad. During the 1930s and 1940s, when U.S. military forces were stationed in Trinidad, local residents especially the working class and unemployed envisioned an instrument for the empty oil barrels. The drums were transformed into musical instruments called pans or steel drums. This unique instrument evolved from an ancient wooden version. The musicians, also known as *pannists* played popular, classical and of course, Calypso melodies. The founders of Adlib Steelband, Franklin and Jean Mayers, came with the wave of migration from Trinidad into Brooklyn and Long Island in the early 1970's and brought with them their wonderful sounds.

Ken Corsbie grew up in Georgetown Guyana on South America's Caribbean coast. His family heritage spans the globe

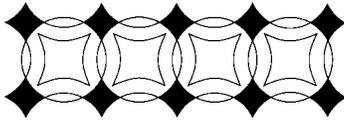
and describes Guyana as "very multicultural, multiethnic, multi-class." With such a diverse background to draw on it is no surprise he entertained others with tales and jokes. After studying drama for three years in Great Britain he returned home and worked as both an announcer and producer for a Guyanese radio station. Corsbie moved to Sound Beach, Long Island in 1996 and has since produced four CDs of original and traditional material. His repertoire includes Guyanese folktales, stories relating to his childhood in the Caribbean, the immigration experience, poetry and comedy.

The Peruvian born composer Theo Torres and his group Vientos del Sur play instruments including guitars, pan pipes and shakers using traditional Peruvian sounds along with Latin American influences. The instruments derive from the Incan and Mayan civilizations. Theo Torres was born in Peru in 1952. He beautifully weaves traditional Peruvian songs with the popular threads of Latin American rhythms. Torres' music includes salsa, techno cumbia and Peruvian *música criolla*. Recently he was awarded an apprenticeship grant from the New York State Council on the Arts in recognition of his talent and dedication to preserving traditional Peruvian music.

see **Traditional Stories** on page 3



Luis Cordero and ensemble



## Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

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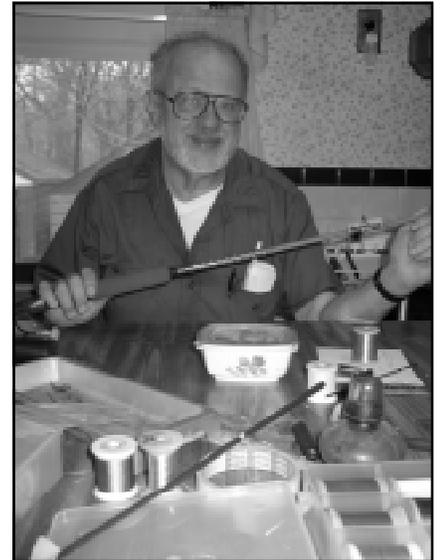
## Pete Ames: Master Fishing Rod Maker

**B**orn in Little Neck, Queens, Pete Ames is a 3rd generation fishing rod maker who has made hundreds of fishing rods for sport fishermen on Long Island. He is one of a very few traditional rod makers left on Long Island, a craft that he learned from his father and grandfather as a young boy. As Pete recalls:

*My earliest recollections were here in Little Neck which is bounded by water on three sides There were boatyards at the end of the street (Little Neck Parkway). People took me out on their boats because I gravitated to water. My father and grandfather were fishermen. We used to go fishing in Patchogue back in the 50s. My earliest memories were fishing here on Peterson's Cove with a drop line. I remember catching flounders as a kid. Father enjoyed fishing. I took to it as a child.*

Like most fishermen, commercial and recreational alike, Pete enjoys the escape that going fishing brings. *I've fished everywhere from Canada down to the Florida Keys. I never cease to get tired of it. Fishing is one of the few enjoyments where you can get to know yourself - it's you, the water and the fish.*

To the uninitiated, fishing can be a wonderful and at the same time complex endeavor, especially here on Long Island, where there are many different environments for fish and fishermen. The three major bodies of water, Long Island Sound, the south shore bays and the Atlantic Ocean attract similar species, including bluefish, fluke and flounder and weakfish, but at different times of the year due to water temperature differences. In addition the depth and rockiness of each body of water varies, which greatly affects the fishing methods.



Pete Ames, Sr.

*Flounder fishing began in the middle of March. Fluke was after the weakfish run in May. In June came weakfish, fluke, bluefish. And in April it was stripped bass. Striped bass were most commonly referred to as stripers.*

When Pete first started fishing there were plenty of fish to catch. *Fishing was more plentiful then. It was before pollution which did not become a factor until the 1960s. You could fish all day for flounder without the use of chum. There were great runs of fluke and weakfish back then. Along with fish Pete also caught blue claw crabs in Moriches by using a killey ring, a traditional recreational tool made out of wire or coat hangers that is still used today. Menhaden are the most common bait fish, which was traditionally harvested in the Peconics but today typically comes from as far away as North and South Carolina.*

Pete's earliest memories of fishing were as a 5 year-old, using a simple string and a hook. When he got a little older, Pete remembers that *"We would go to Geiger's boat rental in Center Moriches, it's no longer there. We'd rent a rowboat in those days. Motors weren't as plentiful. You could do well just drifting on the bay."* After his grandmother died Pete's grandfather moved to their home. Pete recalls

that "I used to fish right here on the Sound with a drop line. We had blackfish, striped bass and a few other things."

From the age of 8 Pete began fishing on his own, using fishing rods made by his father and grandfather, as well as new ones manufactured elsewhere. "When I was 10 my father bought me one of the first spinning rods that came into this country - it was a Japanese made rod. Like a good little 10-year old I went off to Little Neck bay. I was fishing with a blood worm. The rod was bent in half. I was watching the line peel off the reel. I saw which way the line was going. About 25 minutes later I brought in this 35-pound stripped bass. I broke the reel. After I showed him (my father) the fish he just said "oh." The next Saturday my father bought me a new "top of the line" reel. One time I stripped down a Japanese rod and rewrapped it with new guides. Dad thought it was a new rod. He eventually retired from rod making and asked me to take over."

Since then Pete has made fishing rods not only for his family and friends but also for people who have heard about him through word of mouth. Pete is active in the Manhasset Bay Sportsmen's Club, whose members have frequently asked him for custom made fishing rods, along with other sports fishermen.

According to Pete "The hardest part is the laying out the parts. A lot of different things go into it. The range is unbelievable. You are basically making something to fit that specific person. It helps to be a fisherman and imagine how your rod will work. It has to be laid out symmetrically and give the illusion of being one solid piece. It's got to be the most tedious thing in the world. The hardest part is having the time. I can usually do it in one sitting - 3-5 hours. I hate to leave something undone." Pete's most unusual requests came in the 1970s, when people would ask if he could make the rod the same color as their car. "They liked the idea of the color coordination." In order to accommodate them Pete had to paint the rod blank. Pete explains that his fishing rods "can run anywhere from \$80 on up" depending on a number of factors including the guides used (gold plated cost more), the design of the wraps that hold the fishing guides, and other materials used.



**Pete Ames, Jr.**

Council on the Arts has awarded him an apprenticeship grant, which will compensate him for teaching his son Pete, age 24, who has watched and assisted his father his entire life, the intricate skills and knowledge that he learned from his father and grandfather. Pete recently graduated from the School of Visual Arts, a testament to his talent and creativity. Like his father "young Pete" is also a gifted fisherman.

However the quality is unquestioned. Pete recalls that one time a sports fisherman on board a party boat was bragging about a rod he designed. "There was this loud mouth fisherman bragging about his fishing rod and how he made it. I looked at it and thought it looked familiar - it had my name on it." When Pete asked him whether his name was Pete Ames, he remembered "I've never seen a person turn so red."

In recognition of Pete's work and his commitment to tradition, the NY State

"He can fish, says Pete. He has a gift. He won the party boat pool - everyone chips in money \$3 or so. The person who catches the heaviest fish that day wins. I would never bet against that kid anyday. The first 8 times he won the pool every time. It's scary. Last time he was sitting in a boat cabin and he came out, drops his line overboard and not a minute later pulls up the biggest flounder. He goes back inside. And he won the pool. I have no explanation for it."

Pete was one of the participants in the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival in 2004 and he and his son both participate in Long Island Traditions' arts-in-education programs. Given the talents of these two, we can expect to see the tradition continue far into the future. ■

## JFK Architecture Project

Currently underway at the JFK Middle School in Port Jefferson Station is our model traditional architecture project with the social studies department. Maureen Coppola completed two units that examined building practices in English and Dutch farmhouses and barns, and Mallack Walsh compared the St. James General Store with the Oneta Brothers Store in Carson Hill, California. Justin Seifert is delving into the history and architecture of Setauket's Caroline Church (built c. 1728) and the Bethel AME Church (built c. 1909), asking his students to research the Anglo and African American populations of Setauket during the 1860s, including their occupations, place of birth, level of education, property holdings and other demographic information. These projects enable students to learn important skills on researching their community's history, as well as understand the design principles that were part of traditional culture. Long Island Traditions is currently preparing a teacher resource guide on Long Island's traditional architecture, which will be released in early 2006. For more information call us at (516) 767-8803. ■

## Traditional Stories continued from page 1

Luis Cordero is from the Dominican Republic. He learned to play the guitar from friends and family. In 1973 Luis and his family moved to Santo Domingo where he formed his first band playing *merengue*, *bachata* and *boleros*. *Merengue* is a traditional type of dance music accompanied by the tambora and güira. The güira is an instrument that is played with a stick run over a grooved tube. Its' raspy sound is almost synonymous with merengue style. *Bachata* is a style of romantic guitar music. In 1978 Luis left the Dominican Republic for the United States. Luis Cordero y La Orquesta Dominicana recorded their first album in 1987. Since then he has recorded several more tapes and CDs. Luis composes the songs they play and his writing and lyrics are based on the romance and struggles of his homeland.

Frequently play is the prelude to work and sometimes survival. As both entertainers and parents our performers encourage self discovery and improvement through the arts and education. The Long Island Children's Museum is located at 11 Davis Avenue in Garden City. Their phone number is (516) 224-5800. Admission is \$8 per person including children over age 3. ■

# 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. The deadline is the 1st of October, January and April.

- May 4:** Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) 7:00 PM. 430 North Broadway, Jericho. For information call 516-938-2540.
- May 13-14:** Rahel Musleah: The Jewish Rhythms of India: Scholar-in-Residence at Cong. Beth El, 99 Jerusalem Ave., Massapequa, NY 11758 (516) 541-0740.
- May 15:** Quilting on Long Island with Ina McNeil and Joan Hodges. East Meadow Public Library. Front Street & East Meadow Avenue. 2 pm. Free admission. For information call 516- 794-2570.
- May 15:** Taste of Israel Family Fun Day. 11:30 - 2:00 pm. Temple Or Elohim, 8 Tobie Lane, Jericho. \$18/ family and \$7/ person including food. For information call 516-433-9888.
- May 21:** Mulvihill-Lynch School 7th Annual Feis (Irish Dance Competition). SUNY at Stony Brook - Student Activities Center. 9am - 5pm. \$10.00. For information call 631-738-1242.
- May 21:** Young Indian Culture Group Spring Festival. Herricks Middle School, Herricks Road. 2 pm. Free Admission. Call 516-365-4859 for more information.
- June 5:** Duck Decoy Day. LI Museum at Stony Brook. 12PM - 5PM. Call 631-751-0066.
- June 5:** Concert with cantors Jacob Ben-Zion Mendelson, Abbe Sher and Nathan Lam. 7 PM. Temple Or-Elohim, 18 Tobie Lane, Jericho. Tickets \$36. Call 516- 681-2820 for information.
- June 12:** Caribbean Traditions day with Adlib Steelband and Ken Corsbie. See accompanying article.
- June 19:** An Evening of Yiddish Theater and Song. 7 pm. Midway Jewish Center, 330 South Oyster Bay Road, Syosset. Call 516- 938-8390 for ticket information.
- June 26:** Theo Torres Peruvian Musician and ensemble. See accompanying article.
- July 10:** Bay House Tour. 10:30 am & 12:30 pm. For reservations call (516) 767-8803. \$25/person and \$40/couple.
- July 16- Labor Day :** Baymen's Art Exhibit, East End Seaport Museum. Greenport. Free admission. 631-477-2100.
- July 17:** Luis Cordero - Dominican Bachata Group. See accompanying article.
- July 20:** Long Island Yiddishfest. Clark Botanic Garden, 193 I. U. Willets Road, Albertson. 7 pm. Free admission. For information call (516) 794-0506.

**Spaces still  
available for  
the July 10th  
bay house tour!**

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