

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org
info@longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 18 No. 2
Spring 2011

Irish Dance Classes at Mineola Public Library April 16 – May 7

The Mineola Public Library and Long Island Traditions are pleased to announce a special dance class series happening this month, featuring master Irish dance teachers Kevin and Joan Westley. Kevin is a certified Céilí dance teacher from An Coimisiun le Rinci Gaelacha, the only certified Céilí teacher in the New York City area. He has taught in Queens, Nassau, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, upstate New York, Massachusetts and several locations in New Jersey. His students have won numerous awards including first place at United Irish Counties' Dunwoody Feis in 1985 and second place at the Nassau County Feis. He also has danced at Carnegie Recital Hall. Kevin is also the author of a handbook that is commonly used throughout the region.

There will be 5 classes taking place at the library on April 16, 19, 21, 30 and May 7. Each 1½ hour class will begin at 11am and is suitable for ages 7 – 70. The program is free but space will be limited to the first 25 who reserve their space. You can come to one class or to all of them. Types of dances will include the waltz, céilí dances and country dancing. These are the basis for all the Irish stepdances, so if you want to be the next Michael Flatley or Jean Butler, this is the place to start. All the classes will be taught by Kevin and Joan Westley. To register contact the library at (516) 746-8488 x 2. Funding for this program is made possible by the NY State Council on the Arts. ■

Editors Note:

On March 2, 2011 bayman and educator Cory Weyant died in a tragic boat accident on the bay, just a few yards from his home on Woodcleft Canal in Freeport. We hope you will make a donation in his memory to the Cory Weyant Memorial Trust Fund, established for his son Collin. All contributions are tax deductible and payable to Long Island Traditions.

In Memory of Cory

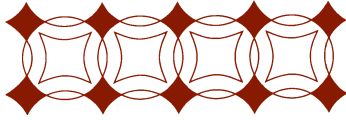
By Nancy Solomon

On May 5, 1987 I first met Cory as he and Captain Tony Sougstad pulled the ET into Captain Ben's dock after a day of fishing. I asked if I could interview Tony, because I was told he could tell me a lot about fishing. When I finished asking him Cory told me if I wanted to learn about baymen I could talk to him and go out with him the next day, at 5 am. He probably thought I would say no, but being a young folklorist, I said okay. He also probably thought I wouldn't show up. So when I arrived at 4:30, he was impressed. We went out on his garvey, and the plan for the day was to pull his eel traps, take what was there, rebait them with horseshoe crabs, and then come back in. He probably



Cory was one of the most popular presenters at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 2004.

See **Cory** on page 3



Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

Executive Director: Nancy Solomon

Board of Directors: Dorothy Jacobs, Mirna Cortez-Obers, Ken Maltz, Ken Robinson, Linda Scholl & Michael Scully

Advisory Board: Paul Bentel, John Eilertsen, 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 or visit us on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org

Copyright 2011 by LI Traditions. Permission to reproduce any article or portions thereof must be requested in writing.



What Killed Martin Lucero

May 24, 2011 at North Shore High School, Glen Head

During the past year LI Traditions has partnered with the North Shore School District on a series of programs exploring Native American and Latino traditional culture here on Long Island. Concluding this multi-cultural program will be a presentation of Teatro Yerbabruja's theatrical production "What Killed Martin Lucero". The play explores the underlying factors that led to the death of Martin Lucero in Patchogue in 2008. Accompanying the performance will be a presentation by North Shore high school students on what it feels like to be an outsider.

This free program will take place at North Shore High School, located at 450 Glen Cove Avenue in Glen Head at 7 pm. Please join us so that we can explore how to prevent future hate crimes on Long Island. ■

Bay House Tours 2011

On Sunday July 17th and Saturday August 20, 2011 Long Island Traditions will sponsor its annual bay house tours in Freeport. The tour will include conversations with local bay house owners and will be hosted by folklorist Nancy Solomon, director of LI Traditions. The trip will visit area bay houses on the 1½ hour tour.

The bay houses have a long history, dating from the mid-19th century when baymen harvested salt hay for the farmers during the winter. The bay houses provided shelter, along with storage for fishermen's traps and duck decoys. They have been used by duck hunters and commercial fishermen, and have been passed down from generation to generation within many families. In the Town of Hempstead stand approximately 30 bay houses on island marshlands, originally built by fishermen and baymen that have been passed down from generation to generation. Take a tour on a comfortable passenger boat for the 1½ hour trip to these historic houses. Each tour will visit two bay houses including the Depper, Seaman and Laudman bay houses. The boat will also visit other bay houses. Come join us for this unique event.

Tickets for the bay house tours are \$40 for adults and children over 10 years old. No children under 10 are allowed. Space is limited. **Current LI Traditions members can make reservations now.** Others must wait until May 1. For tickets call LI Traditions at (516) 767-8803. ■



Become a Member Subscribe to the Newsletter!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____

ST: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

- \$25 Basic Membership
- \$35 Supporter
- \$50 Sustainer
- \$100 Champions
- \$150 Heroes

Please make your check payable to:
Long Island Traditions

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

thought I would just get tired but instead I pulled out my tape recorder, the technology back then, took some pictures, and came back late that same day. Some of the pots were filled, and others had nada. As you know, when Cory was unhappy, he would let you know it. So when the pots were empty, or even worse, stolen, he was pissed. He probably forgot I had my tape recorder with me, so I turned it off. But later I asked him whether he would use the same pots that had nothing in them, and he said “no no no, I won’t use those again.” As it turned out, the pots that were filled were made based on a design from Elwood Verity, a man he described as wild but someone “who knew how to catch the heck out of eels.” He then said if I wanted to watch and record how he smoked the eels I should come back the next day, but at 8 instead of five. I wasn’t sure if the later start was for me or him, since he headed over to the Sportsman bar, which always scared the heck out of me but was his second home.

Immediately I knew Cory was the real thing when it came to tradition, and someone I wanted the world to know about. He was the centerpiece of our first maritime festival at the Freeport Recreation Center in 1988, our first school program in Freeport’s elementary schools, and the person who introduced me to many fine fishermen, bay house owners and storytellers of all kinds. When I asked him why he was being so helpful, he said, “because you’re the first person who appreciates us and wants others to.” I knew then I had a mission in life as a folklorist. We introduced him to radio producers, filmmakers, newspaper reporters, photographers and all who were curious about baymen. Cory was more than a tradition bearer to me, he was a partner, someone who had a natural talent for teaching and educating others about maritime culture. He became the maritime education program. He curated his presentations, created his own displays, decided what stories to tell, and how to get kids excited even though it was school. I remember one teacher telling me – Cory is a natural teacher – just let him do what he wants – sage advice I followed always. When we started



Cory showing school students how to wear a survival suit.

planning the trip to the Smithsonian festival in Washington DC, he knew that he wanted to bring a special smokehouse. I’ll never forget when I saw it. A lighthouse emblazoned on the front, a painting of a horseshoe crab on the side with horsefoot, his infamous nickname, written underneath, a flag and of course Freeport, NY on the front. And I’m sure some of you will never forget trying to get it onto the truck that was going down to Washington.



Cory received the South Shore Estuary Stewardship Award in 2009 for his work as an educator and tradition bearer.

Other memories include him leading a trail of 4th graders down Woodcleft, an annual event, pointing out to them all the different kinds of boats, showing them his yard and smokehouse, bringing them to Fiore’s, and explaining how they could catch killies using a soda bottle and a hook, how to go crabbing using a hanger, and how to go fishing using a wooden stick. Of course everyone else could hear him too, with his unmistakable bark of a voice. And if you loved to eat, he gladly smoked your fish, or his own eels, a commodity that earned him national fame.

Through the years we shared fond stories of skiing, cooking, hunting (although I was not a hunter) and good times at the bay house. Where others assumed that all the bay houses would be torn down, Cory said to me, document them and maybe they’ll be saved (he was right!). More recently he complained, and then embraced the changing technology in the classroom. No more slides, now we have smart boards, something he truly loved.

I, and, I’m sure many of you, feel like a special force in the world is missing. As Charlie Wertz said to me, an icon has vanished. I know my world will never be the same. My deepest sympathies to his wife Priscilla, his son Collin, and to all his family and friends. But thank god we recognized his enormous talent and love of people, in his too brief life. ■

Cory

by John Randel, Cory's friend

*Out on the Bay, at the butt crack of dawn
A Garvey is screamin, the Sea gulls just yawn
A Bay rat, a baymen, Whatever he be,
A shadow and prop wash, is all you can see.*

*Is he out blowin steam off, just out for a ride?
Is he workin this morning, his dog by his side.
Only he knows, this mysterious dark
As the engine noise fades, you can hear the dogs bark*

*Crabin, or eelin, settin or reelin, what is he up to today
He'll be happy to tell you upon his return, but for now stay out of the way
Got bills to pay, mouths to feed, and an insatiable thirst to quench
And sooner or later he'll take off his boots, and bed down with his favorite wench*

*If you happen to catch him on a foul weather day
He'll be drinking his breakfast, is what someone might say
For his days begin early, some last all night long
Boating and fishing and singing his song. (30 days in the hole)*

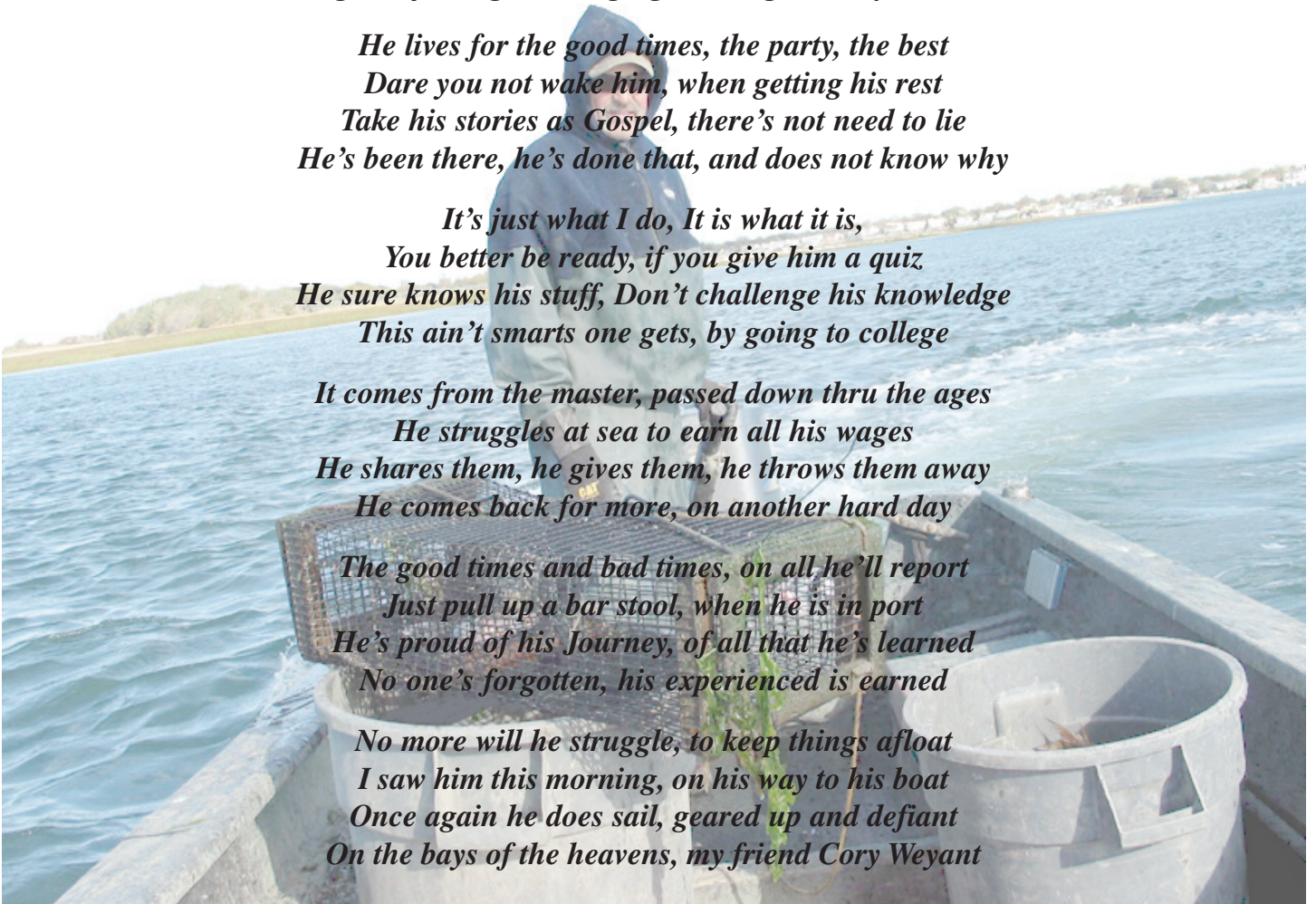
*He lives for the good times, the party, the best
Dare you not wake him, when getting his rest
Take his stories as Gospel, there's not need to lie
He's been there, he's done that, and does not know why*

*It's just what I do, It is what it is,
You better be ready, if you give him a quiz
He sure knows his stuff, Don't challenge his knowledge
This ain't smarts one gets, by going to college*

*It comes from the master, passed down thru the ages
He struggles at sea to earn all his wages
He shares them, he gives them, he throws them away
He comes back for more, on another hard day*

*The good times and bad times, on all he'll report
Just pull up a bar stool, when he is in port
He's proud of his Journey, of all that he's learned
No one's forgotten, his experienced is earned*

*No more will he struggle, to keep things afloat
I saw him this morning, on his way to his boat
Once again he does sail, geared up and defiant
On the bays of the heavens, my friend Cory Weyant*



Tribute to Cory Weyant

By Sue Lyons

Cory Weyant was a member of the Freeport Public School's teaching staff, and passed away suddenly doing what he loved, being on the bay. Cory met his untimely demise in a tragic boating accident on a sunny day, on March 2nd of this year. Cory knew more about our waters than anyone I know, so the tragedy was all that more a powerful blow.

Cory was not a conventional teacher but he was one of the greats. He had no teaching degree, but he had more intelligence on his subject than ANYONE. He didn't take any formal classes on how to engage children, it came naturally to him. The children flocked to him and were mesmerized by both his teachings and his method. He was gruff. He barked and growled like a pirate; in fact, he looked and acted like a pirate at times. He was a member of the Freeport School's family.

He was Cory Weyant, husband of Priscilla and father of Collin (a Giblyn student) and friend of many, including me. Cory taught our students about our waterfront and all that was involved in its history, with growing up on it, making a living from it, and loving all it had to offer.

As a fellow bay rat, I too grew up on the water and have the same love for the same bays, creeks, marshes and cuts as he did. We were kindred spirits in that love. I am alone in my boat out there quite often...and to see Cory skimming along the horizon either coming in from fishing or eeling, or going out hunting was always very comforting. I just knew someone very knowledgeable was out there keeping an eye on things. It is amazing how many people have told me that when they had a problem on the water, he showed up like magic, and handled the situation.

I was thrown from my boat one April (into very cold water) and was unable to surface for air. I was in serious trouble and the bay was empty of boats when I went down. Miraculously, there was Cory, handling things. I don't know how he appeared, but he did. I asked him never to say a word of this (You see, my reputation as a bay rat- especially a female one- was at stake.) He never did, and this was a story he would have loved to tell. He was a natural story-teller, making him a natural teacher.

When his son Collin was in the first grade, a flyer went out asking parents to bring food for the teachers' luncheon, and he was even a teacher there. He didn't respond with a phone call, or a note or an email. On the morning of the luncheon he showed up in his signature white fishing boots, carrying a platter of his smoked fish. This was part of his trade. He caught, smoked and sold this delicacy. He gave the platter to the chairwoman, saying "The tides turning, I gotta go" and off he went. She stood there with her mouth agape seeming to say "who was that masked man?" She served the fish, and it was the only platter licked clean.

Cory would lead field trips down Woodcleft Canal and teach the kids about boats, fishing, hooks, lines and sinkers, and local history. They were mesmerized. He was like a nautical pied piper. He would tell them what it looked like years ago, and condemn commerce for blocking the waterway. The kids joined his cause and condemned commerce too.

On Cory's journey through the waterways of heaven,
MAY HE ALWAYS HAVE FAIR WINDS AND CALM SEAS.

Passings: Bill Powell and Jeff Blossom



Bill Powell at the LI Children's Museum in January.

In addition to the tragic death of Cory Weyant, we also remember the lives of Bill Powell, bay house owner, storyteller, decoy collector and avid amateur historian. Bill passed away just two weeks after our LI Children's Museum programs in January. Jeff Blossom, bay rat and master model maker passed away in November. Jeff was honored at our Honoring Traditions program and was well known throughout Freeport. We shall mourn their loss.



Jeff Blossom with his bay house models at a LI Traditions Maritime festival.

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 June, September, December and March.

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

- April 1 – May 15:** On display at the Freeport Rec Center's sculpture garden are architectural models made by Atkinson Middle School Students. 130 E. Merrick Road, Freeport.
- April 16** Irish Dance Classes begin. See accompanying article.
- April 30** ***Estampas Folkloricas Peru.*** Authentic music, vocals and dancers celebrating the Peruvian experience. Monroe Lecture Center, Hofstra University. \$19, \$17 seniors, \$10 child under 12. For information call (516) 463-6644.
- May 2** Yom Hashoah Program. Talk by Evelyn Pike Rubin regarding her book GHETTO SHANGHAI. 7 p.m. Free. Plainview Jewish Center, Plainview. For more info call (516) 935-1377 or e-mail:evandlenrubin@aol.com.
- May 9** Screening of The Blackboard Jungle with Peter Ford (Glenn Ford's Son) followed by an interview and book signing of Glenn Ford: A Life. Peter Ford will also talk about his pilgrimage to the Thomas Powell homestead at Old Bethpage Restoration. 7:30 p.m. Cinema Arts Centre, 423 Park Avenue, Huntington. (631) 423-7611 [for visit cinemaartscentre.org](http://www.cinemaartscentre.org).
- May 22** Paraguayan dance program with Panamabi Vera. 2 pm. East Meadow Public Library. 1886 Front Street, East Meadow. For information and directions call (516) 794-2570.
- May 24** What Killed Martin Lucero. 7 pm. North Shore High School. See accompanying article.
- June 25** Nriya Saagaram Dance Academy and Shruti Laya present Margam: A Classical Indian Dance Performance with a live orchestra. \$20. 5pm. Landmark on Main Street, 232 Main Street, Port Washington. For more info call (516) 681-2048.

 Printed on recycled paper

Long Island Traditions
382 Main Street
Port Washington, NY 11050