License to Fish

As we mentioned in our last issue, there is a proposal to create a New York State recreational marine fishing license, the result of a federal mandate, which could potentially provide more information on the numbers of recreational saltwater fishers in the state, but also impact the recreational fishing industry on Long Island. Currently the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) can only estimate the number of recreational fishers based on problematic data gathering, which then determines how many fish recreational fishers can catch and keep. NY State is currently challenging this method and hopes that a state registry will ultimately allow more NY State residents to catch smaller and larger amounts of fish. However there is considerable resistance to the proposed license, as it may deter younger fishers and families from going fishing, haunted by the prospect of receiving a fine for carrying on a tradition that is part of their family and Long Island’s heritage. As one recreational fisher stated, “Sports fishing is a tradition handed down from generation to generation. A percentage of people will not obtain this “license. And a father will not teach his children about the excitement and satisfaction of hours spent catching snappers off a local pier.” Although LI Traditions cannot take a formal position on this legislation, we do hope that if the license is enacted, that it will be executed in a respectful manner that is sensitive to the needs of local fishers and the recreational fishing industry.

Hindu and Islamic Religious and Cultural Traditions

May 20, 2009

Join LI Traditions and the East Meadow Library for an exploration of Hindu and Islamic traditions through an exciting all day field trip. In the morning we will visit the Hindu Temple in Flushing where we will learn about the Hindu holidays and other religious traditions, along with a performance of traditional Bharatanatyam dance by Malini Srinivasan. We will eat traditional Indian foods during lunch. Afterwards we will journey to the Islamic Center of Long Island in Jericho where we will meet Egyptian calligrapher Reem Hussein and learn about the Islamic traditions and holidays.

This program is being coordinated by the East Meadow Public Library. The bus will depart at 9:30 am and return at 3 pm. To sign up call the library at (516) 794-2570 after April 24th.

Boating with the Baymen: Behind the Scenes at Fire Island

June 7, 2009

On June 7, 2009 join Long Island Traditions for our 4th “Boating with the Baymen” tour, this year exploring Fire Island, where fishermen and baymen whose family histories date to the 1600s continue to work on the water, despite increasing obstacles. Our tour will take place aboard the Lauren Kristy, departing from Bay Shore at 2 p.m. Meet and talk with baymen Flo and Paul Sharkey, bay house owner and year-round Fire Island resident Pete Clock, and Paula Valentine and staff from the Fire Island National Seashore. Long Island Traditions’ executive director Nancy Solomon will lead the tour and discussions.
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Boating with the Baymen

While visiting the shores of Fire Island, we will also learn about the complex relationship between the Fire Island National Seashore, its year-round residents, and the baymen who have historically worked its shores. Participants will discuss how their lives and responsibilities have changed since 1964 when the Park was created, both from an ecological as well as a daily living perspective. To order tickets, fill out the order form which you can download from our web site, or pay online. Tickets are $40/adults and $20 for children under 16. After June 1st, the tickets will be $5 more. For more information call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803.

Bay House Tours

On July 11 and August 9th Long Island Traditions will sponsor its annual Bay House Tour in the Town of Hempstead. Don’t miss this opportunity to visit these reminders of Long Island’s nautical past that are still used today by the area’s baymen. A comfortable passenger boat will leave from Freeport for the 1½ hour trips to the houses. Tours will depart at 10am and 12pm on July 11th and 9:30 and 11:30 am on August 9th. The tour will be led by LI Traditions director Nancy Solomon. Those on board will be treated to a brief history of the bay houses, the first of which were built in the 1700s. Bay houses were traditionally used by fishermen who harvested clams, oysters, crabs and other species from local waters. The surviving houses date from the period between 1870 and 1950. Each tour will visit two bay houses including the Remsen house, and the Sheehan-Van Wicklen bay house. The boat will then proceed to other nearby bay houses.

For an excellent preview of the bay houses and their environs, visit the Long Island Marine Education Center, 202 Woodcleft Avenue (Nautical Mile) in Freeport, where a diorama by Jeff Blossom is on permanent exhibit. The center’s number is (516) 771-0399. You can also read at your local library On The Bay written by Nancy Solomon which documents the history of the bay houses in the Town of Hempstead. Reservations are required (sorry, but this trip cannot accommodate children under the age of 10.) Tickets cost $40 per person and $75 per couple. Members of Long Island Traditions will receive a $5 discount per member. Member only reservations will be accepted from April 1 – April 15th. General tickets will be available after April 15th. 2 tickets per order limit. For more information call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803.
ASCAP Foundation Supports LI Traditions

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ince 2007 the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) has supported Long Island Traditions “Sounds of Suburbia” arts in education programs in the Freeport school district. This grant allows elementary school students to study with master Peruvian composer Theo Torres, in both in-school and after-school programs. Since 1996 Long Island Traditions has presented Torres as part of its ethnic and maritime folk arts programs in the Freeport district’s elementary schools. Students of diverse cultural backgrounds learn how songs are composed and developed, working with Theo Torres, a master Peruvian composer and musician who has composed hundreds of songs about his native homeland and life on Long Island. Torres is also the recipient of an apprenticeship grant from the NY State Council on the Arts. We thank the ASCAP Foundation for their recognition and support of this program.

“Woman of Distinction”

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folklorist Nancy Solomon was recently named a Woman of Distinction by Senator Craig M. Johnson. She was among 15 honorees from across the 7th State Senate District that were recognized for their work in education, community service, advocacy, neighborhood activism, and other areas.

“Each has shown a real dedication and an inspiring record of real accomplishments in their respective fields,” Senator Johnson said. “These women are here every day striving to make our communities better places and are a key reason why Nassau is such a wonderful place to live. I am honored to have this opportunity to recognize them, especially during Women’s History Month.”

Nancy Solomon of Roslyn Heights is the Executive Director and founding member of the Port Washington-based Long Island Traditions. Long Island Traditions is an organization dedicated to increasing awareness of the traditions of other cultures, through public programming events and school based programs, among other avenues. Her work has led to a greater appreciation and understanding of the many cultures of the people that call Long Island home.

These women were honored by Senator Johnson at a recent dinner at the Swan Club in Glenwood Landing. The reception featured a keynote address by Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice, the first woman to be elected as Nassau’s top law enforcement official. The event was co-sponsored by the Long Island Fund for Women and Girls, and the North Hempstead Business and Tourism Development Corporation.

Passings: Ray Milek and Vivian Youngs

D

uring this past year LI Traditions lost two valuable tradition bearers: Bay House owner Ray Milek and Vivian Youngs of Youngs Farm in Old Brookville.

Ray Milek was born in Mineola in 1915 and raised on Long Island. From an early age he was on the bay, going duck hunting and clamming with his childhood friends. He also witnessed the rum runners who profited from Prohibition during the 1920s. As a young man he served in the Navy, returning to Long Island where he lived the rest of his life. Like other local residents Ray became a duck hunter, a tradition he maintained for over 60 years until the 1990s. When he was in his 30s he began hunting with John Magnus, who grew up in nearby Baldwin. The two spent countless hours hunting and visiting local bay house owners, many of whom were lifelong friends. Eventually the two began building their own duck boats, selling them by word of mouth to friends and other hunters. Their boats were extremely popular, and sold throughout Long Island and New Jersey. Like other duck hunters, Ray also made his own duck decoys out of cork, emulating local carvers like Bud Ward and Al McCormick. Milek and Magnus were active in the Long Island Decoy Collectors Association, founded by their friend George Combs Sr. In the 1980s Ray and John acquired their own bay house, where they frequently hosted local baymen and hunters. He was a frequent host on LI Traditions bay house tours, often telling stories to the guests. Ray was 93 years old when he passed away.

On Hegeman’s Lane in Old Brookville stands Youngs Farm, founded in 1893 by John H. Youngs. The farm grew bibb lettuce, potatoes and sweet corn and raised cows, chickens and pigs. These crops were the main staples of the operation until the 1950s. After World War II supermarkets began to open on Long Island and many residents started shopping in them. “Fortunately there is a segment of the population that has tasted freshness and knows what it is. All of our product is picked fresh the same morning.” In order to retain their customers the Youngs and other farmers opened farm stands so that residents could buy fresh produce including sweet corn, strawberries, tomatoes and various kinds of lettuce. As John Youngs recalls “around 1960 my two young daughters [Jo-Hanna and Paula] got the idea of selling sweet corn along the highway and it did very well. It finally got through to me ‘why am I hauling all this stuff to the New York market when they come right to my door and buy it?’”

A few years later the farm stand encompassed a large shed that was enlarged and increased. Today the Youngs grow tomatoes, peaches and berries, bake pies and muffins and sell items such as pasta, cheese and other foods. Vivian Youngs worked alongside her husband John, who passed away in 2000. Like many farm women she was the bookkeeper, but she was frequently seen selling the farm’s goods alongside her daughters Jo-Hanna and Paula who currently operate the farm. Vivian will be missed by many. A memorial service is scheduled for Sunday, April 4th at the Brookville Reformed Church at 4 pm.
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.

April 26: Chinese Culture Performance, Chinese Centre on Long Island, 395 Hempstead Turnpike, West Hempstead. Fighting in the Dark features Peking Opera acrobats, a percussionist, and a face painter. Followed by a workshop teaching interested attendees how to use martial arts sticks. Sponsored by the Long Island Arts Council at Freeport. For more information call (516) 223-2522.

May 3: Society for Preservation of LI Antiquities 2009 Preservation Awards program. 3 pm. SPLIA Gallery, 161 Main Street, Route 25A in Cold Spring Harbor. For more information call (631) 692-4664.

May 20: Hindu and Islamic Religious and Cultural Traditions trip. Sponsored by the East Meadow Public Library. Bus departs at 9:15 am. Cost of this trip is $30 and includes transportation, guided tour, entertainment, gratuities and lunch. Tickets go on sale Friday, April 24 online or in the Public Relations office. For more information call (516) 794-2570.

June 7: Boating with the Baymen tour, Bay Shore. 2 pm. $40/$20 with discount of $5/member. See inside article for information and reservation.