In Harm’s Way: Superstorm Sandy

In advance of our new exhibit “In Harm’s Way” this fall, we’re featuring some powerful memories of Superstorm Sandy and other storms on Long Island.

The exhibit will be on view this fall at the LI Museum in Stony Brook from October 5 – December 31st. Stay tuned for more details. And look for our videos on the Long Island Traditions’ YouTube channel in the summer.

Jen and Steven Meschkow live in Long Beach, 1 block from Reynold Channel on the north side of the city. Long Beach was heavily damaged by Superstorm Sandy, along with other south shore communities. Like other residents on Long Island, when they first heard about Sandy they thought “it’s no big deal. We had flashlights, candles, batteries and water. The schools were closed for the next day.” Jen recalls “I remember I went across the street to see a friend, to check in and to say hi. I was there not more than half an hour. I remember walking back across the street and the water was up to my knees. I got back into the house and I started to panic a little bit. The water started coming under our back door, we grabbed towels and we tried to fight it back. We just kept watching the water come up and up and up.”

“The next morning it was like the day after the apocalypse. This whole neighborhood was under water. The ocean and bay water met.” “We saved that water and used it to flush toilets. Who knew that we would be grateful for dirty brown water. Across the street every

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Hudson River and Long Island Maritime Traditions

June 25 & July 15 • 1-5 pm
Rocking the Boat
812 Edgewater Avenue, Bronx, NY

Rocking the Boat is a community based boat building program located on the Bronx River near Hunts Point. They teach youth how to build traditional Whitehall boats that were once common in the Hudson River estuary. During the summer they have community rowing days where you can paddle on this protected section of the Bronx River. LI Traditions is partnering with them to present traditions that were once common, including boat building, model making, decoy carving and tug boat operations. The free program will include tug boat captain Robert Apuzzo with his storied tug boat “The Bronx”, fisherman Chris Letts, and model boat builder Chris Hale. Admission is free and families are welcome. For information call (718) 466-5799 or visit their web site.
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	house had water but our side didn’t. Like everyone else we lost our cars, our air conditioning and our deck.”

Architect Joe Gallinaro also lives in Long Beach and had a private business before Sandy struck. As a member of the profession he has important insights on what has changed from an architectural perspective since Sandy hit.

“Seven houses up from our home a house fire started. There was three feet of water in the street and 60-80 mile an hour winds. The sewer treatment plant overflowed, and the water came on to land. The next day the houses on fire were burned to the ground. It was surreal.”

Immediately afterwards Joe began working for his neighbors and fellow residents. Like other architects, he helped people elevate their homes, clean out the mold, and other simple actions. As you may recall, there was no power for over a week in some neighborhoods. Families relied on generators or moved to FEMA subsidized motels and other lodgings, including family members who lived outside of Long Beach.

“There were times when I would be in a home with a marker and a piece of cardboard, showing them what we could do to renovate their home, from damages that were forced upon them. I liked the fact that they knew where I lived, they came to my home, and I’ve know them for decades. We’re the 3rd or 4th generation of my family that has been here. We’ve had some folks that came from out of town, who don’t do the right thing, and [families] find themselves in trouble.”

“We’re developing new foundational systems. We discussed this within the community of designers and builders. The view from the kitchen to the yard doesn’t exist anymore. It’s as if you’re on the second floor of a house looking out now. Your connection to the yard is completely different. We now bring the yard up to the height of the kitchen through the use of a large deck.”

Architect Joe Pignataro of Freeport has also changed his practices post-Sandy. “From an architectural point of view you can learn how to make the most of a piece of material.
The bay houses were around in the twenties and thirties, and I would put my money up against one of them than the ones built more recently. Now we’re more sensitive to how these houses are fastened. We’re creating skyscrapers just to get them off the ground which may be a mistake. You may be out of the flood zone but you’re higher in the wind zone. There are other ways to make them flood resistant. Who’s going to climb 13 steps just to get to their front door? You have to change the infrastructure in the community.

Unbeknownst to many of us, there are amateur radio operators throughout Nassau and Suffolk County who assist emergency departments on the local and regional level. The Great South Bay amateur radio club and other clubs played critical roles before, during and after Sandy. According to John Melfi of the club, “Some of the streets you couldn’t even get down, there was three-four feet of water. We had one member who actually took his Boston Whaler and went around and got people out of their houses. It was a mess. There were oil tanks, freezers, refrigerators, furniture all out in the street. And houses that collapsed.” “We got a message out on News12 where people could bring supplies. Within 4 hours they had a whole gym at the church packed. We sent operators down to where people were, to let them know what we had. Operators would go up and bring what they needed to the people at home.”

Pumps were in high demand. “One of my guys had two gas powered pumps. And he drained about eight basements for people at no charge.” “Some of the guys transported people out of the bad areas.” Radio operator Ken Maltz recalled “One of the first things they [the county] asked me to do was to get a head count [at the shelter] so they would know how much food to send. One of the big problems was not only was cell phone service down but landline service was non-existent. New York City wasn’t a problem because their landlines were underground. But we had very bad problems. When the grid goes down, we get up.”

These are just a few of the memories we have collected, and they will help us prepare for our upcoming exhibit. If you would like to be interviewed, please contact us.

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**Stony Brook Maritime Heritage Day**

**June 11 at 1-5 pm**
**LI Museum of Art, History and Carriages**
**1200 Route 25A, Stony Brook, NY**

The Long Island Museum in Stony Brook is presenting its’ annual decoy and maritime heritage program on Sunday, June 11 at 1-5 pm. Participating in the event are several master tradition bearers including decoy carver and bay house owner Michael Combs of Freeport, award winning carver Scott Lechmanski of Shelter Island, bayman and boat builder Chip Maran of Southampton, and boat builder and model maker Chris Hale of Medford.

Please join us for this exciting event where people of all ages can learn some of the time honored skills passed down through the generations. While you’re there you can also see the museum’s exhibit “Midnight Rum: Long Island and Prohibition” featuring artifacts and videos about this colorful historical era. For information visit the museum’s web site or telephone them at (631) 751-0066.

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**Bay House Tours**

***Save the Dates***

Our bay house tours will take place on Saturdays August 26 and September 9th. Stay tuned for details. More information will be sent to LI Traditions members first, and will be posted on our web site and facebook pages. New this year will be a trip leaving from Long Beach.
## 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.*

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<td>June 25 &amp; July 15:</td>
<td>Rocking the Boat programs. See article for details.</td>
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<td>July 19:</td>
<td>Bay House lecture at 7:30 pm. Splash Headquarter, 202 Woodcleft Avenue, Freeport, NY.</td>
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Long Island Traditions
382 Main Street
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