



ALSTON ALLEN

Alston Allen was born July 17, 1930 in New Gretna. When he was nine his dad Leslie Allen took him on as a mate on his party boat he'd bought for \$600. Chet Allen, who loaned him the money, told him he could make payments on it and when the time came to make the payment his dad dug up a jar full of money that he hid in the yellow sand. He had the money saved the whole time.

During his idle time before he was on his dad's boat he caught perch around the docks. A guy from Chips Folly told him he'd pay him 50¢ a fish. Well, he went on his dad's boat and dad rigged him up with his best rod and reel and bait and he caught more perch than he ever had before. When he went back to Chips Folly for money the man reneged on his offer but gave him a fifty cent piece and a new Pflueger reel and it was the best one he ever had. He could have played baseball like all his friends but he liked fishin' better.

Alston went to Tuckerton High School and clammed and trapped in his spare time. He and Norman Cranmer had been doing it together since they were little kids. Henry Opdyke was the fur dealer and they used to watch him skin everything. They could skin (muskrats) in grade school. They got one or \$2 for each skin. He and Norm played hookey often (40 days in their senior year). They had their traps out and the end of the season was March 14. Their principal was Charles Sprague. They asked him if they could go get their traps. To their amazement he said yes. He was a great Principal. He even let kids go out on the first day of oyster season.

Alston spent four years in the Army and when he got home he worked the blueberry bushes and cranberry bogs. Mick's bogs in Jenkins paid \$6 a day for blueberries and \$7 a day for cranberries. He had 500 acres. Scoopin' cranberries was hard work.

The first boat he got, his father-in-law, Otto Kalm, built in 1954. The lumber came from Milton Kaufflin's sawmill on South Maple Avenue in New Gretna. The lumber cost \$150 and he gave Otto \$100 to build it for him. He thinks the reason he only charged him \$100 was he didn't want his daughter to starve to death.

Alston ran his garvey out of Tuckerton Creek. In the early morning, with the sun in his face Old Bill Bennett came up behind him fast and, of course, he let him go by. After he got out of Tuckerton Creek he saw Bill's boat rockin' cross-ways in the water. Damned if he didn't run right over a boat. Fortunately, the clammer was in the water. He drove up to him, grabbed his arm and got him on board. It was Oscar Allen. He was yelling and screaming at Bennett and Bennett was yelling and screaming that he needed a tow. His prop cut through one side of Oscar's boat and out the other. Poor Oscar claimed he lost \$300. Alston took him to Tuckerton Yacht Club to get help. In the end, Bennett had to pay restitution. Bob Frazer was asked by Bennett, "Would you believe I didn't even see him," to which Frazer replied, "You're either blind or crazy."

Working on the old Ship Bottom bridge as an attendant was another of Alston's jobs. It was in terrible shape with all those planks. One kid fell through when he was on duty and skinned his legs from foot to knee. And every time it rained they got a shock from those gates.

Alston worked in law enforcement, Division of Shellfisheries, for quite a while. It got him in trouble some times, though. If he thought the perpetrator would learn from a warning, that's what he got. If he did it again, he'd arrest him.

In the fall they would take their fishing poles and troll in their Barnegat Bay Garvey off of Big Sheepshead where those big poles were. One day he was trollin' and he looked up and saw the pole coming at them. They hit it broadside and scared them to death.

Alston Allen got his captain's license in 1954. All the years at Shellfisheries they weren't allowed to clam. Now that he's retired he's clammed for the last 18 years. In the winter he takes his boat out of the water because the cold bothers him. His last boat was built by Bob Fricke. It's a 20-foot Garvey with an 8-inch V in the bow and a 4-inch V in the stern.

Everything Joe Forsyth said in his Hurley Conklin write up was true. It happened just like he said. Alston's dad had 140 acres of meadow and everything was poisoned with DDT. It killed the muskrats, the fish, the birds, the crabs—everything! But—the tide's gone in and out many times since then. 🐦