

TOM NICKERSON

Tom has spent his whole life making a living from Barnegat Bay.

Born in 1918 in New York, Tom got an early start on the water. His dad ran barges up and down the East Coast delivering lumber when Tom was a child.

At age 12, Tom started to work the bay. He and his dad made \$5 a day catching clams. He modified a garden rake to use as his first clam rake. He still clams six days a week if the weather is good.

Oysters provided another source of income. When oyster season opened up, Tom would move his boat from Barnegat Bay south to Great Bay for oystering on the Mullica River. He did this for about 10 years, keeping his boat at the Mystic Island Marina and at Elmer Mott's dock.

Tom averaged about 12 to 15 bushels of oysters and a few hundred clams a day. His highest daily catch was 32 bushels of oysters and 3,000 clams. He sold his first oysters for between \$1 and \$2 a bushel and his later catch for \$6 a bushel to Jack Ashton, who had a clam house where Margo's Marina stands today, at the entrance to the Long Beach Island causeway.

Tom also dredged for scallops. In the 1960s he could bring in seven bushels of scallops and rake 2,000 clams a day. Dredging also yielded crabs in the winter. Before World War II, Tom earned extra income this way by selling them to dealers from Maryland. His best catch was 20 bushels a day.

Tom has a 26-foot garvey that was built by Pat Winn and Aston Reed in 1954 with a 1955 Buick motor. He still uses this boat today.

Tom now lives in Waretown with his wife, Amanda, and he still clams six days a week.