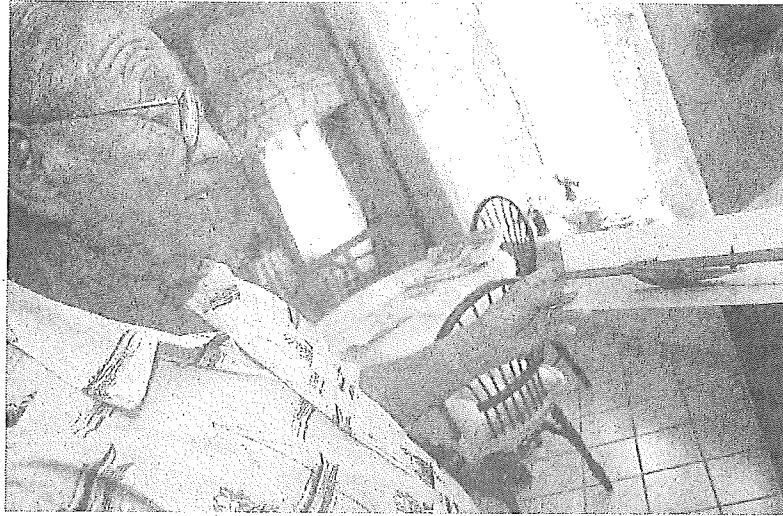


ing components. These boat-building skills became a hallmark of his talents and provided him the opportunity to help build his own garveys, the *Min Kin* and the *Min Kin II*, with the help of his lifelong friend, expert boat builder and designer, Jack Cranmer. The *Min Kin* was his first garvey, built by Woolbert Cramer (Jack's father) especially for clamming and oystering. It had a mechanical oyster dredge and was used for 30



STEPHEN POTTER

Written by Jeremy Stephen Price, Grandson

Stephen "Steve" Potter was born in New Gretna in 1929. His family tree can be traced back to 1702 when Joseph Sooy settled in what we now call Lower Bank. Steve lived in Lakewood for most of his childhood but spent a great amount of time staying with his mother's side of the family — the Sooy's — on Sooy Lane in New Gretna. As he grew older, New Gretna and the Great Bay became his sources of livelihood. His summers were spent learning the bay and all of its profitable endeavors. Clamming, oystering, trapping, hunting, fishing, and boat building all became skills that Steve enjoyed and prospered in.

As a young man, Steve recalls looking forward with great anticipation to arriving in New Gretna. His reasons for excitement are wide-ranging, but one of them was Millie Miller, whom he has been married to for 49 years. However, before meeting her, Steve remembers being a little boy who could not wait to go into the bay with his grandfather Leonard Sooy. As a little boy, he would sit in the boat and fish while his grandfather caught clams and oysters. He would tag along and help tend the muskrat traps, cut down cedar stakes for the clam and oyster beds, and go hunting for ducks and geese. Eventually, these skills would become essential for his family when he moved to New Gretna permanently in 1947.

Steve became a builder for Egg Harbor Boat Co., where he specialized in the engine and steer-

years in the Mullica River and Great Bay. The *Min Kin II*, which was launched in 1982, was his next production. This regal 28-foot garvey, with its powerful inboard engine and shiny blue paint, remains a fixture in the Great Bay, where Steve can usually be found working his clam and oyster

beds with his grandsons and sons-in-laws. The *Min Kin II* is unique because it was built by hand using only the most durable materials. Thick cedar planks and stainless steel make up most of the ship. Fiberglass finish and marine paint preserve the integrity of the hull. To power this ship through the water, a 350 horsepower V-8 engine was installed, with plans for a new, bigger engine on the way. There is no mistaking the *Min Kin II* as it races through the Great Bay en route to fishing holes or clam beds.

The shellfish industry has always been important to Steve. In 1954, Steve took a job on the newly constructed Garden State Parkway because it would enable him to work nights on shift work, thereby leaving his days open to catch

clams, oysters and muskrats. For many years, Steve would work around the clock, shuffling between the Garden State Parkway and the Great Bay in order to provide for his wife and three daughters. Eventually, Steve would become responsible for the Garden State Parkway south of the Raritan River. His duties demanded daytime hours, but Steve never gave up his passion for the bay. The *Min Kin* was kept in top shape, and the leases for his clam and oyster beds were kept current. He knew that his growing family, with three new sons-in-law and future grandchildren, would need the blessings that the bay could afford them. For decades, the bay has provided work when there was none, summertime income for his grandchildren, and most of all, a source of bonding and family pride that finds its heritage in the bayman tradition. Steve has contributed further to the preservation of his tradition by serving for 23 years on the New Jersey Shellfish Council, completing two separate terms as chairman.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Steve's love for the bay is evident in the continuation of his hunting, clamming and oystering after his retirement from the Parkway. Duck hunting on the Mullica River remains a part of his life, and the use and maintenance of his numerous duck blinds are now shared with three grandsons. His oyster beds in the Mullica River and Great Bay remain some of the last working oyster beds in New Jersey. It is common to see Steve and Donald Maxwell working together as they harvest and plant their oysters. Although his grandsons are humbled by their 71-year-old grandfather's ability to pull a clam rake all day long, constantly being "out-clammed" by him, Steve now calls clamming a "hobby." One visit to his home and you can see the extent of his "hobby" as countless tongs, rakes and dredges adorn the walls and ceiling of his garage. As a bayman, both professionally and in retirement, Steve demonstrates two of the hallmarks of the tradition, hard work and dedication.