



STANLEY CONKLIN

I was born March 21, 1924, the first day of spring. I went to school in Manahawkin, on Beach Avenue. The first time I went out in the bay I was five years old. When I was eight, I used to go out with Marshall and my other brothers. I would take my Dad's rowboat and start treading, and by the age of 10, Dad thought I needed a boat. So off we went and saw Hurley Conklin's father, Uncle Charley, who was a boat builder. Dad says, "Uncle Charley, we got a problem."

"Well, what's wrong now?"

"Charley, there's no real problem," Dad said. "I just want to get a boat here for the boy. Only a small boat, maybe about 10 feet. I need my own rowboats for my own business." So he made this boat, and how I loved that boat, and he stopped in three or four days later and says, "There she is, it's all yours." And Dad says "How much I owe you, Charley?" And she's all painted up and ready to go in the water — "Ten dollars!" Uncle Charley said. That was in 1934.

I never went to Tuckerton High because Pearl Harbor came out and I went in the Coast Guard. I got out in 1945 and went in partners with my Dad. When I came back the clam prices were Little Necks 20 cents a hundred. That was \$2 a thousand. Today you get \$270 a thousand. The cherries and the chowders were 35 cents a hundred, all through the 1930's. When they went to 50 cents a hundred, carpenters and painters were quitting their jobs to go out into the bay for clams 'cause they were only getting 40 cents an hour working.

My Dad's business used to handle eight to 10 million clams a year. We supplied Campbell's Soup Company with the big ones and sold the cherries and necks to the Fulton Fish Market in New York. We took them to Philadelphia for a market in Chicago and they were shipped from there.

We had the first separator in the area. We got the pattern from a guy at the Fulton Fish Market.

I used to help Cotrell's out sometimes with their shipping orders. I got him a 100,000 Cherry Stones in two days.

I was also in the scallop business. They came into the bay in 1954. Then they legalized it in '62 and I turned my place into a scallop business. I had around 18 to 20 girls opening for me. They make the best openers. We used to get nine pounds to a gallon and they got a quarter a gallon and a quarter a pound to open them. The last year we did it I had them up to 40 cents. They made good money. They called it their Christmas money. The last ones I handled were in '74. I handled 12,000 bushels that year.

Back in the '60's I started adding trucks to the business. I had eight straight jobs and four tractor trailers. I carted tilefish and all the fish from Beach Haven and Barnegat to the Fulton Fish Market. It took out seven truckloads a night. Not every night, though.

I've had as high as 200 clammers working for me in the summertime. I've gone up to handling eight million clams a year. Back in the '50's they were plentiful.

I was just thinking of a scary situation I'd like to tell you about. My brother Marshall and I were working together and we needed clams to fill our orders. It was storming, you

can't get guys to go out in a storm, and we had about a million surplus clams overboard. The bay had been frozen and was starting to break up and it was wintertime still. I said I had to have them and Marshall said he'd give me a hand. So we went out and it got rough. Then when I had only about a foot of free board I said we'd quit. Marshall says "I guess we are gonna quit...look behind you." A big piece of ice had broken loose and was bearing down on us. The wind and the ice flow were carrying us toward the inlet. So I saw a clearing off the starboard side about 3/4 of a mile away (and said) If we both work at these two poles without losing these clams and our lives we just might clear it. That ice floe was half as big as the bay. So we started and poled and poled and poled for all we was worth and watched that thing bear down on us. There was a point of ice that we were rushing to and we just got around that and that big piece of ice just floated right by us. Then we had to wait an hour while it went by and poled around the back of it to get back to the dock. We were polin' a 16-foot garvey Hurley's brother built.

My dad always told me never to go in the bay without a settin' pole and never have your gunning boots pulled up to your hips.

Now this other time I was out in the bay with Lou Allen from New Gretna. There was going to be a Nor'easter overnight and I was hoping there'd be no damage. Boy, that night she cut loose.

The next day I went down to the water. It was New Year's Eve and it just came into 1960. The tide was all over, the ice was broken up and all over and half my dock was gone. Two of my 16-foot garveys were gone too, and you know where Hoss Point is? We got in Lew's boat and I was at the tiller to go get my boats. I had gotten my hood and my gun boots on and hiked them all the way up to my hips. We got a half-mile out and darned if I didn't hit a submerged telephone pole. I can feel it now. I went straight over the back of her. It was blowing 60 MPH, ice all around, and my boots pulled up. I thought I was going to drown. So I swam toward shore and I hit land in about a half-mile. I made it. Lew was going around in circles then hit the bank and stalled and he jumped out and the boat was carried off toward the woods. We walked, we walked, we walked. When we walked to the first bridge of the Cedar Run Landing Road and Ralph Sprague came over in his boat to get us, there must have been five hundred people on that dock that watched what happened and cheered us on.

I never did any carving but my cousin

Hurley did. He would bring in a piece of wood and his knife and hold a conversation with you and never look at his hands, and when he was done he'd hand you a stool. Hurley and I were very, very, close. We grew up together, gunned out of the same box, clammed together. Hurley's brother Ed built 14 rowboats for me. Hurley built three houses. They always said "give any of the brothers a hatchet, a saw or hammer and they will build you a house or a boat."