

CAPTAIN DELLWIN SOOY

Being a sea captain kind of runs in Dellwin Sooy's blood. His grandparents were sea captains and his father ran a freighter up and down the coast. When his dad was shipwrecked off Hatteras, and he and the cook came ashore in a dory. That took all the salt out of him. Dellwin tried to get his dad to go out with him — but he couldn't get him out of the creek.

His dad was born in Greenbank and moved to Leeds Point where Dellwin was born. Dellwin's house is just a hundred feet from his birth house, next door. He played down at Oyster Creek.

When he was finally old enough, he became a

mate on a party boat. When he was 18, Dellwin went to Philadelphia to take his captain's license exam. He passed with flying colors, and was told to go next door to the Commander's office to be sworn in. The Commander was a dour, old codger with a mean voice, and he barked, "raise your right hand." Dellwin raised his right hand and started repeating the oath, and just then the Commander stopped in mid-sentence. "Wait a minute, you're only 18. Get out of here till you're older." With that, Dellwin stood tall and self-assured and said crisply, "Sir! It says in the book of rules that you have to be 18 to take this test. Please look it up." Pages rustled, eyebrows furrowed, the Commander looked back at Dellwin and barked, "raise your right hand!"

Dellwin had his own boat built by Charles Leek. A beautiful 36-footer he named *Marion*. He started running parties out of Oyster Creek until the war came. The Navy let it be known they wanted men with experience with the sandy inlets of New Jersey. Seven of them volunteered. Now, the Navy didn't really lie about things, but he ended up on a mine sweeper in the Mediterranean.

The kind of marvelous history you'd never find in textbooks.

When the war was over, Dellwin worked for Captain Starns, running party boats, paying Starns 15 percent of his take. Then he went to Liber Rich Plumbing and Heating, taking the job of running his pleasure boat spring and summer and working in the shop in the winter.

The son was crazy for tuna and marlin, so he was kept busy. Then he'd take the boat to Florida for the winter and bring it back in the spring. As for harrowing tales about being caught in a terrible thunderstorm or being lost in the fog, Dellwin has this to say, "I won't admit anything like that. I'd be a fool if I did."

He retired five years ago — when on his way back to the Jersey Shore for the season, someone thought he could break a speed record with the boat open throttled. Dellwin vibrated and shimmied and shook all the way home, and that night at the dinner table, he said to his wife, "Katey, I got some news for you." Katey asked, "Is it good or bad?" Dellwin replied, "I'll leave that to your own opinion." "Well, what's the news?" "I retired today." "Yippee!"

Well, Dellwin lost Katey a few years ago, and doesn't go out in the bay much anymore, being 80 years old. He did save one rod and reel and he doesn't even know where they are. But he lives an active lifestyle, and even went down the Mississippi on a paddleboat a couple years ago with a lifetime friend.