

SAM LEIFRIED

June 30 was Sam Leifried's birthday. He chose to sit on the porch of his home to talk because it was a beautiful day and the birds were singing.

Sam was born in 1912 on Parker Avenue in Manahawkin. He never knew life without the bay and the woods and he grew up just doing it — fishing, crabbing, clamming, hunting and gardening, that is. Nobody had to teach him anything. Kids grew up with that way of life. He may have gotten some of his respect for it from his grandfather, who was in charge of the Loveladies Coast Guard Station.

In the spring his family planted the fields and they had fruits, vegetables and jellies. This complemented the seafood he brought home from the bay. In the fall, his mother would spend hours canning to prepare for the long winters. Sam hunted for all his meat. He brought home deer, ducks, rabbits and pheasants. Now he says you hardly ever see a rabbit anymore because all the fields and farmlands are gone.

He remembers always having a boat. Every kid had a boat. They just beached them and staked them and nobody ever bothered them. If a person had to use it, it was always put back the same way. You can't ever leave a boat like that nowadays.

All of Sam's money was earned from fishing, clamming, or working in people's yards. For his clams he earned a penny apiece. He didn't have any big dealer he sold to; he just sold them to anyone who came around.

As a teenager, Sam got a job for the summer working on the Pennsylvania Railroad. They ran excursions over to Beach Haven. When the train would come through Manahawkin, he had to go outside the station and stop car traffic. He went out to Bay Avenue with a stop sign in his hand and hoped the cars would stop.

In the summer, on the weekends, the first train in the morning was called the fisherman train. It arrived in Manahawkin at 5 a.m. The fishermen stayed in Beach Haven anywhere they could be put up, and they all went back home to Philadelphia on Sunday evening.

Jay Parker, a decoy carver, was a very good friend of Sam's. Jay had been asked to display one of his miniature carved sneakboxes, completely outfitted with miniature decoys, at the

1939 World's Fair. It was a great honor for him. But it was a greater honor for Sam because after the fair, Jay gave that very sneakbox to Sam. Jay had made only five of them and gave one to Dr. Powitz, Dr. Hunter, Sam's son, Sam and one more. He stopped at five because in carving that one he cut a finger off.

Sam has been out of the bay for a long time now. He can't remember anyone having bad accidents back then because everyone respected everyone else and they went by the rules of the road.

After he and Stella were married, Sam left the bay for a while and worked in the American Store in Ship Bottom. They moved to a nice house in Tuckerton on Center Street. Then he got a job working on tugs and dredges as a diesel mechanic.

He was away more than he was home, and his wife practically raised their son herself. He would get home for most weekends, then go back out to sea for the week. He retired from that when his son was a teenager. Then he took over the service station at the lake and worked for Atlantic Richfield. It was during a trip to Brazil that Stella's mother died, and Stella decided she wanted to live in her parent's home. So they

sold their house and moved into the beautiful house on Bay Avenue where this interview was taking place.

While the Leifrieds lived on Center Street, they had Mrs. Anna Rider for a neighbor. Mrs. Rider's former home had been on Little Beach. It was destroyed in a terrible storm, but she was able to salvage the elegant stairway with double doors at the top, and she incorporated them into her new home on Center Street.

What gets to Sam the most is people coming down from the city to our beautiful country and then they want to change it. We will never get it back to the way it was. All the runoff from all the buildings and yards have upset the balance of our bay. Life was more simple back then. And better.