

JOE REID

Joe Reid built boats from full-size garveys to miniatures. He's given lectures and has been the subject of a documentary.

Joe was the youngest of eleven children. His father was a deep water sailor who left Scotland as a boy. When he was 28 years old he was shipwrecked off Seaside Park where he met and married Joe's mother. He never went back to sea as a sailor, instead went to work in bridge construction for the railroad. After being laid off from the bridge work, Joe's father became a bayman. As a bayman he used a sailing garvey and owned the last sailing garvey in the area. When it was sold it was turned into a houseboat. He also owned a cat boat with the mast in the bow. The cat boat was one half as wide as it was long, and looked something like a pumpkin seed. Joe's father was old, impatient and quick to anger by the time Joe was born. His harsh lessons taught Joe the value of self-reliance. Joe was thirteen years old when he started clamming. He had a little garvey in which his father would tow him out in the morning so he could clam; then his father would tow him back in - if Joe could get to him. Back then they poled the garveys, and if his father was upwind from him Joe wouldn't be able to get back to him and he would have to go ashore. Joe's father wouldn't come and get him, but told Joe that he had to learn to do it on his own. Joe said this made him angry at the time, but he learned very quickly. He clammed the bay in the summer when school was out; after high school he worked at Pinewald. His house burned down while he was working at Pinewald, and he built another house himself. Joe turned down a scholarship to Rider college and drove heavy equipment at a construction site to support his parents and two of his sisters.

Joe served in the army during World War II. (He said it was the only time he had a boss.) He was a supply sergeant, both in the U.S. and Europe. After the war he returned to Waretown to work the bay in summer and build boats in winter.

Joe built his first boat in 1936 with help from his brother. It was a partnership boat, and the biggest garvey around, 34 ft. long by 10 ft. wide. The only garveys around that were larger were the rum runners. This garvey had a 1918 Pierce Arrow car motor converted for a boat. Other boats he built besides garveys were v-bottomed charter boats and row boats. He also built funnel drive garveys. He said in Waretown you needed the tunnel drive garvey for scratch raking scallops. Joe said he prefers a flat bottom boat because they go faster, and

lay better for clamming and tonging.

Joe built his boats in a workshop behind his home in Waretown. His flat bottomed garveys were made from Jersey white cedar; he referred to Jersey cedar as the best wood that grows for boats and described its virtues for boat building. "It plans well, doesn't slip off, and has a long grain that can be steamed and shaped to the forms of Jersey boats." Joe likes to say Jersey wood is best for Jersey boats.

Joe did not use blueprints - the plans were in his head. No one ever taught Joe to build nice boats. His brother and he constructed their first garvey out of necessity in 1936, and Joe later made a seagoing boat for a man who provided the lumber. But when approached by his first paying customer Joe told him "I don't know anything about building boats". But, he figured he could do it. So one November he built a shop behind his house and worked alone on the boat that winter. The first one turned out nice; Joe says his instincts served him well. Joe works alone; sometimes a customer will join in to make him feel like he's part of it, but generally it's just Joe and a garvey out in the shop. Joe didn't have a teacher and he never took on an apprentice - he believes that boat building, like anything else a person does should come naturally.

Joe also makes tong stales, the shortest ones were 7 ft. long - the longest ones were 20 ft. long. The 10 and 12 ft. ones were the most popular, and he made several thousand of them. The tong stales were stamped with numbers and dates on metal plates that were stamped with a machine. Joe kept records of the numbers, dates and owners, and when the police found stolen tong stales they called him for a record of the owner.

Joe quit working the bay when he was 65 and then just built boats and made Cranberry scoops for ornaments. He said he has built over 100 boats. When he was 70 he started making boat models. He made a model of a Bateau (French for boat). Joe carved sneakboxes with tiny handcarved ducks, skiffs and, of course, garveys. He has always been happiest when he is around water. He likes to walk in the woods and to watch nature.

Joe served on the Township Committee for 12 years and drove an ambulance for the first aid squad for 30 years. He and his wife, Gladys, were active in the PTA when their children were young, and for many years Joe was a popular scout master.

(Mrs. Reid's great-uncle invented the curved tooth cranberry scoop. It's called an Applegate Scoop and has wooden maple teeth.)