

ALLEN TONNESON

Allen has been a bayman his whole life. Born in 1924 in Perth Amboy, Al learned the bay from his dad, Alex, his Uncle Lester Cowperthwaite and his friend Willard "Bill" Inman.

Al caught his clams by tonging and raking for them. He would sell his clams to his dad, who owned and operated a clam stand on the north side of the causeway going to Long Beach Island.

In 1938 at the age of 14, Al started to go duck hunting, and went to work for the Happy Day Club and the Egg Island Club doing various jobs from painting the decoys and sneakboxes to sodding the sunken blinds. The Happy Day clubhouse is the little shack that still stands today on the southeast side of the causeway bridge going to Long Beach Island. Then from 1948 to 1955, Al guided hunting parties for the Main Point Gun Club of Manahawkin. They hunted for brant, broadbills and black ducks.

In 1956 Al started to guide hunting parties for himself. He leased some property with sunken blinds on it and hunted parties of four for broadbills and black ducks.

Boat building is another pastime that he enjoys. Al has built about 300 rowboats for various U-drive boat rental marinas along the Barnegat and Tuckerton bays. Al has also built about 100 garveys of all different sizes, nine Barnegat Bay sneakboxes and two Delaware River skulling boats.

He was a mate on his Uncle Lester Cowperthwaite's charter boat, *The Mary Ella* during his high school summer vacations. Les chartered out of Beach Haven and Barnegat Light from the 1920s to the 1970s. Al also maintained and repaired his uncle's boat every spring, from replacing a plank to repairing the motor.

This spring and summer Al has been busy restoring an 80-year-old boat named the *Highland*. When he finished it in August, it looked like the day it was built, quite a difference from its appearance in April when it hadn't seen sunlight in almost 40 years.

Now Al can get ready for another season of duck hunting on Barnegat Bay.